

Quick Review (Flamingo Prose)

Recommended style of writing answers –

Start with a sentence addressing the theme of the question followed by evidence of reading (2 relevant text details for 2 Marks, 4 details for longer answers) and conclude by linking the answer back to the opening statement. If possible, also establish a link to real life example or another story/poem/play you may have read. Solved answers have been provided for the first lesson to help you understand this.

THE LAST LESSON (Alphonse Daudet)

Franz – The name is a pun and word play based on the name of the country – France. This child therefore is a representation of the general attitude of the French people towards education.

Q.1. How is Franz the mouthpiece of the author about children's attitude towards studies?

(For a short answer, write only the second paragraph. For a longer answer, write all three)

Ans.1. Franz prefers to be outside the classroom more than inside it – a temptation to which most students relate.

Listening to the birds chirp at the edge of the woods, watching the soldiers drill or to go sliding on the Saar river, appeals to Franz far more than memorizing rules of grammar. He does not realize the importance of a language class till it is too late as is common among students even today.

One often finds children paying least attention in language classes or skipping revision for these subjects until the exams are around the corner. Most indigenous languages in India are considered second tier to English and by the time the youth wakes up to this part of its cultural identity, it may be too late. Franz was also too late to take a step in the right direction and we know that,

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.” (Lao Tszu)

M. Hamel – The man is a representative of the teachers and teaching methodology of that era.

Q.2. What do we know about the teacher and education system in M. Hamel's school?

Ans.2. M. Hamel is perhaps a representation of teachers and education system of that era. He comes across as a strict teacher not hesitant to use an iron ruler to establish discipline. He dresses up formally for special occasions and teaches through assignments and rote learning. When he does not feel like teaching, he gives holidays to his students or asks them to run small errands such as watering his plants. His is a village school, situated on the ground floor with an apartment for him on the first floor and a garden outside.

Theme – Linguistic chauvinism

Q.3. How is this story a commentary on linguistic chauvinism?

OR

What was on the notice board that had the crowd gathered at town hall? Why was such a notice issued?

Ans.3. Linguistic chauvinism implies overbearing pride in one's language. The Prussians won the war against the French and instead of assimilating with the existing culture and language, the Prussians chose the path of dominance. They issued a notice to all teachers of French to leave the country immediately as only German would be taught in the schools from the next day. This blind pride in German language, disrespecting the native tongue (French) is an apt example of linguistic chauvinism. In real life, we can catch a glimpse of it when certain Indian states insist on putting up

billboards, shop names or bus route descriptions in the native tongue not respecting the multicultural populace or tourists.

Details from the Last Lesson

Q.4. How was school different that day?

Ans. 4. An aura of silence was omnipresent at school that day. Unlike other days, no one was out of their seats nor was the teacher's ruler rapping on the table. M. Hamel wore his best attire – the one he wore on inspection days and spoke kindly to Franz even though the latter was late to class. Moreover, there were older villagers sitting on the last seats in the classroom.

Q.5. Why did Franz regret not being in school more? (only first paragraph) OR

Why did the villagers attend the last lesson? (only second paragraph of the answer)

Ans.4. Sometimes, one does not realize the significance of something till it is on the verge of being lost. The news of the discontinuation of French lessons came as a thunderclap or a shock to Franz. He realized that he didn't even know how to write properly in French and he would never have the opportunity now to learn. His books and even the strict M. Hamel seemed like friends he was about to lose forever.

The villagers were also present for the last lesson because they knew they would never have the opportunity to learn their native language anymore. They wanted to bid adieu to their language and to the teacher who had given forty years of faithful service to the school. Moreover, they wanted to pay tribute to their country which was theirs no more.

Q.6. Whom did M. Hamel blame for the poor state of education in Alsace?

Ans.5. The accountability for education falls on parents and school alike. M. Hamel blamed the parents and himself for the poor state of education in Alsace. The parents sent their children to work on the farm or mill instead of school. He gave the students a holiday or sent them to water his plants when he didn't wish to teach. Thus, both the parents and the teacher were the reason why Franz still struggled with the basics of language.

Q.7. How did M. Hamel reinforce the significance of French during the last lesson?

Ans.6. One's language is an undeniable part of one's cultural identity.

M. Hamel reinforced the above message in his last lesson. He prepared assignments that said France and Alsace. He told the students how French was the 'most beautiful, clearest and most logical' language. Even when the trumpets of the Prussian soldiers outside the school symbolically drowned out the French prayer song or angelus sung by the students, he wrote on the board – 'vive la France', long live France.

Q.8. Why did Franz call M. Hamel a 'poor man'?

Ans.8. At the end, one seems more pitiable than ever before. M. Hamel had taught at that school for forty years. In one fell swoop, he would lose his job and his country. As the students worked on the

assignments, M. Hamel sat looking around the classroom as if committing it to memory before bidding the place adieu. This is the point where Franz felt pity for him and called him a poor man.

Q.9. Why did Franz understand the lesson so well that day?

Ans.9. When one is about to lose something, it rises in significance exponentially. Once the learners realized it was their last lesson in French, they paid undivided attention to the teacher who in turn, remained patient as he taught. With such dedicated, equal effort from both ends, it was no wonder that the concepts were clearly understood by the students.

Q.10. Why did Franz wonder if they would force the pigeons to also coo in German?

Ans.10. For men may come and men may go but 'nature' goes on forever. Prussia may have defeated the French and enforced German as the mode of communication; however, they could not force their will on nature. In his innocence, Franz points out the irony in the fact that not all residents of France can be forced to speak in German thereafter.

This lesson may be linked to Memories of Childhood (Zitkala-Sa's story – loss of cultural identity and forcing a foreign culture on natives), and The Tiger King (those in power do not care for the public)

LOST SPRING (by Anees Jung)

Theme: Spring is comparable to childhood as it is the first season of the year. When children are made to work, they lose the 'spring' of their lives which should ideally be a time of joyful experiences. This is why the tagline for the story is: stories of lost childhood.

Plot Summary –

Saheb's story: Saheb's full name is Saheb-e-Alam which means lord of the universe. Ironically, he lives in abject poverty and works as a ragpicker when the story opens. He is from a family of Bangladeshi refugees who left their home due to floods. They had hoped to find a better way of life in India. Now they lived in Seemapuri, on the outskirts of Delhi along with many other ragpickers.

Saheb wants to study but has no opportunity to do so. Like many other such slum dwellers, he believes the fickle promises made by politicians and sometimes, inadvertently, by people like the author who talks to him about opening a school in Seemapuri. Compare this to the 'greedy dogooders' and 'beneficent beasts of prey' in 'The Roadside Stand'.

The writer says that Seemapuri is right at the border of Delhi so physically quite close to the capital city. However, given the vast difference between the lifestyles of the poor ragpickers and the city dwellers, Seemapuri can be considered metaphorically far away. The concept is quite similar to roadside stand vendors on the highway leading into the city in Frost's poetry 'The Roadside Stand'.

Garbage is gold to the adults of this community as it is a source of their livelihood. Garbage is like gold to the children as well as it sometimes offers them small hidden treasures such as wearable clothes, shoes, or small denomination currency notes. Sometimes, these treasures spark a dream such as the tennis shoes Saheb found made him want to play tennis.

The children have adapted to their lifestyle and run about barefoot carefree. Even if children like Saheb have a dream, such as wanting to play tennis, such dreams die in silence. The possibility of

such joys in their childhood is lost as they move from ragpicking to more steady jobs such as that of a server at a roadside 'dhaba'.

Mukesh's story: Mukesh is happy living in a home which is being renovated despite the location being that of the impoverished, dirty and unhygienic Firozabad. The condition of Firozabad is comparatively better than Seemapuri as the houses have a 'pucca' structure and the income in bangle-making is higher than rag-picking. Nonetheless, poverty limits the choices available to the children of this area.

The children do not go to school and join the family business at the earliest possible. The caste system is strong and keeps them limited to this profession. Anyone who tries to branch out, such as Mukesh's grandfather, who tried being a tailor once, fails and reverts to bangle-making.

Bangle makers who try to improve their financial circumstances often fail due to the sahurars, middlemen, police officers etc. who are corrupt and control the trade flow between the city and the manufacturers.

Girls, such as Savita, grow up with no dreams but to get married and take care of the men in the family. Women will never get enough to eat nor be proud of anything more than being an unpaid cook and cleaner at their home. Even before they know what a dream is, they are taught the family profession. Even before they are old and mature enough to understand the significance in India of bangles, they are forced to wear the red ones of marriage.

Like the tennis shoes found in the garbage had sparked Saheb's dream, seeing cars rush past Firozabad has sparked Mukesh's dream of being a motor mechanic. In such circumstances, Mukesh's dream seems idealistic. Nonetheless, it pleases the heart to see his optimistic determination.

Themes:

- 1) Loss of childhood pleasures due to early incorporation of children into family professions.
- 2) Women being limited to household responsibilities and never even told the possibility of dreaming beyond such a life.
- 3) Dreams born due to accidental exposure or finding of something. How such dreams can often not be sustained due to circumstances. However, it also means that if, with the efforts of the government and the public, these children are given access to more resources, they too can dream of a better life and rise about their challenges.
- 4) Corruption often keeps the underprivileged trapped in their circumstances. Thus, to bring more opportunities their way, the government and the public must be open to share resources, fulfil the promise made by RTE and take strong actions against corrupt officials.

This lesson may be linked to 'The Roadside Stand' (plight of the roadside stand vendors compared to the people in cars and the city) and 'The Rattrap' (plight of the poor – they adapt to their circumstances and think of the others as rats heading into a rattrap + dreams that have no meaning due to the abject poverty)

DEEP WATER (by William Douglas)

Theme – how to conquer one's fear by facing it. The lesson can be linked to Nelson Mandela's A Long Walk to Freedom in terms of overcoming challenges – courage is not the absence of fear but the triumph over it. It can also be linked to 'Indigo' in terms of courage, self-motivation, self-reliance and conquering of fear by facing it.

Deep Water is one lesson where the board chooses to test children based SPECIFIC INCIDENTS which correspond to the key terms in the lesson – such as caution, aversion, phobia, tiny vestiges and residual doubts. Each of these term's associated incident is different and therefore requires a bit of memorization.

KEY TERMS to remember –

1) Justified fear or CAUTION – William's mother warned him against going near the Yakima river by sharing anecdotes of people who had drowned in it

2) AVERSION to water – William's father took him to a beach in California where due to the onslaught of a few waves, William fell near the shore and the water swept over him. It wasn't a major incident so the father laughed it off. However, with his mother's stories still fresh in his mind and this incident where he realized the power of waves closely for the first time, William developed a DISLIKE or AVERSION of water.

3) PHOBIA of water – William was about ten years old and was learning to swim at the YMCA pool. He hadn't yet become a confident swimmer, when one day, a well-built older boy threw him into the deep end of the pool. The pool was about 9 feet deep at that end and William struggled to find purchase. He devised a plan – he would push against the floor of the pool and rise to the surface with that force. Then he would float to the edge and climb out. Unfortunately, despite three attempts, this plan did not work. With each attempt, his body grew tired and eventually, he felt unable to move in the water and passed out. When he regained consciousness, someone was helping to pump water out of his stomach and the bully was claiming it to be 'just a prank'.

Immediately afterwards, William felt weak and trembled. He shook and cried as he lay on his bed. He couldn't eat nor exert himself in the slightest. For days, there was a haunting fear in his heart which made him feel sick and his knees wobbly. This hydrophobia ruined all fishing trips and stopped him from enjoying activities such as canoeing and boating. The moment he was in water, he felt paralyzed and unable to move.

4) SELF MOTIVATED AND COURAGEOUS – Douglas indeed comes across as a courageous young person. Even when he was thrown into the pool, for as long as was possible, he remained calm and tried to plan a way out. Similarly, one October he decided he had enough of his fear and hired an instructor to help him learn to swim. William's courage also lies in the fact that even after the instructor declared him ready, William kept increasing the level of difficulty in terms of the locations where he swam, in order to ensure that he had completely eliminated his phobia. It is no wonder that William Douglas would eventually become one of the youngest, most controversial, and longest serving Supreme Court Justice who was an avid hiker as well.

5) THE MENTOR – A good mentor is second to none.

a) The instructor understood William's fear and helped him regain his abilities as a swimmer, one part of the body at a time ('*bit by bit, he built a swimmer*'). He began by putting a belt around William's waist connected to a rope which in turn went over a pulley. The other end of this rope was held by the instructor. Five days a week, for an hour each day, the instructor made William swim this way.

b) Initially, William felt paralyzed each time the instructor allowed him to put his face under water. It took three months before the fear began to subside a bit. Then he taught Douglas to exhale under water and raise his nose outside the water to inhale.

c) Next, the instructor taught him to kick with his legs while holding him at the side of the pool.

d) After repeating these exercises hundreds of times, William was finally able to swim the length of the pool in the instructor's presence.

6) TINY VESTIGES left (alone in the pool) – When William tried to swim alone in the pool, tiny bits of his fear returned. But Douglas now had the courage to chase that fear away and swim another lap of the pool just as an answer.

7) OUTSIDE THE POOL – William swam all strokes he had learned in natural water bodies next to ensure that his fear was gone. Only once, he felt the fear but he could now laugh in its face.

8) RESIDUAL DOUBTS & THE FINAL CONQUERING OF FEAR – A little doubt still remained in Douglas' mind about whether or not the fear had been completely conquered. He challenged himself to a remote and extreme location – Meade Glacier's Warm Lake. He swam there, alone and shouted with joy because he could not say with confidence, that he had conquered his fear.

THE RATTRAP (Selma Lagerlöf)

Theme - This is the story of what poverty may lead someone to do if not guided onto the right path.

Five key components of the lesson:

- 1) The Rattrap seller's background and worldview
- 2) The baits
- 3) The different types of 'kindness'
- 4) The metamorphosis
- 5) The structure of the story which is like a fairy tale, albeit a modern realistic one.

1.1) The rattrap seller's background

The protagonist of the story is a man who makes his living by selling rattraps he makes by begging for raw material. It's not a profitable business as people do not buy or replace rattraps too often. Driven by poverty, he commits petty thefts and begs for money to make ends meet. He doesn't have a house or even necessities. The world usually does not treat him kindly and so he develops a peculiar view about the world.

1.2) The worldview

One day as the peddler is walking down a road lost in thought, he is suddenly hit with a peculiar idea. He believes that the world is like one of his rattraps. Like bread or cheese used to bait rats, the world places a few baits to trap men.

2) The baits –

He identifies six baits – shelter, food, joys, riches, heat and clothing. These baits tempt men, and they spend their lives chasing these never able to escape from the rattrap or the rat race. The rattrap seller falls prey to each of these baits as well. He seeks '**shelter**' at the crofter's house who offers him porridge – '**food**', and small **joys** – 'a card game and a smoke'. He steals the thirty kronors – the **riches** hung right next to the window as a temptation. Then the rattrap seller seeks warmth '**heat**' when he sleeps next to the furnace at Ramsjö Ironworks and eventually, Edla brings him a fur coat and her father arranges a suit for him – '**clothing**'. It is only after Edla intercedes on his behalf with her father, that he is able to escape this rattrap.

3) The different types of kindness

One may wonder why the rattrap seller is positively influenced by Edla but not by the crofter or the ironmaster although each was kind to him. The crofter offered him kindness because he was lonely and looking for friendly company. The ironmaster was kind only as long as he was under the impression that the ragamuffin was his old acquaintance Nils Olof von Stahle. Only Edla was selfless as well as kind. When she first met him, she felt that either he had stolen something or else escaped from jail. Only she helped him despite knowing from the onset that there was something fishy about the man.

4) The metamorphosis

Metamorphosis means a complete change. The rattrap seller led a difficult life and was treated unfairly by all. Like the jackal who could not reach the grapes called them sour, the peddler who had nothing to his name called the world a rattrap setting baits for ordinary people to trap them. However, when he meets Edla, he finds Christian values of generosity and genuine selflessness in her. She convinced her father not to throw him out or call the cops. She promised him safety that day and on each Christmas thereafter. The peddler who had never known safety, slept peacefully throughout that day – a day of rest was a priceless treasure to such a man. The lights from the Christmas tree could be symbolic of how Edla's goodness opened his eyes and closed them forever against the dark path of crime. He decided to turn over a new leaf and wrote her a letter to that effect signing it as the man he wanted to be – a true captain worthy of her trust. The rattrap he left behind with the tempting thirty kronors was a symbol of his personal escape from the world's rattrap.

5) The structure of the story

To relate this story to the children's version of a fairy tale, let's understand the structure of most fairy tales. Most begin with the words 'Once upon a time' (as does The Rattrap).

Then the central character is introduced as is the peddler of our story.

This character must face some kind of a problem (Cinderella loses her parents and is sent to sleep next to the cinders, Beauty must save her father by staying with the beast, Snow white's stepmother sends her to be killed in the jungle and our rattrap seller steals from the crofter and ends up trapped in the forest).

Through an extraordinary circumstance, the life of the central character finds some positivity. Cinderella meets her fairy Godmother to gives her a chance to dance with the prince, Beauty is helped by magic to dress up for the dinner and dance with the beast, Snow white meets the seven dwarfs who give her a home. Our rattrap seller meets Edla who gives him support, shelter and shows him genuine kindness.

In most fairy tales, another trouble rises at this point. Cinderella loses her shoe, Beauty must return home once, Snow white eats the poisoned apple and our peddler is identified by the ironmaster as an imposter and his crime is exposed to Edla at the church.

As fairy tales end positively, so does our story with the vagabond deciding to turn over a new leaf. The following image may help you remember the details of this structure.

Basic Fairy Tale Structure

- Once upon a time...
- Central character...
- Some trouble will brew...
- Extraordinary circumstance...
- Things turn positive...
- Another trouble arrives...
- Positive ending



INDIGO (by Louis Fischer)

Theme: India's rise to a self-reliant nation and the birth of Gandhiji's civil disobedience

Key Details to Remember –

- 1) The extract is **biographical**
- 2) The **unsung hero of Bihar**, Rajkumar Shukla's initiative and tenacity brought Gandhiji to Champaran
- 3) **Who was a Sharecropper** – a farmer who did not own the land but could grow crops of his choice on land owned by the British landlord. He was allowed to sell the crop in return of paying a heavy revenue to the British landlord.
- 4) **The agreement between the British landlords and the sharecroppers** was that 15% of the land owned by the British landlords will be used to grow indigo plants. The entire harvest had to be submitted to the British landlord so the sharecropper got nothing from this portion.
- 5) The agreement was broken when **Germany invented synthetic indigo** and natural indigo was no longer required nor cost efficient. The landlords told the farmers to pay a compensation to use this remaining 15% of the land for crops of their choice now which they could sell. This compensation was over and above the revenue for this portion of the land.
- 6) **Why was Gandhiji's presence required?** Those farmers who were too poor to pay the compensation such as Rajkumar Shukla OR farmers who came to know about the synthetic indigo and hired lawyers against the paying of the compensation were all beaten up by the landlords.
- 7) **What was Gandhi's modus operandi in Champaran?**

STEP 1: Began by visiting the concerned authority (British Landlord's association and the British Official Commissioner of Tirhut division, Champaran district)

STEP 2: Identified a central point to run further operations – his headquarters – Motihari

STEP 3: Began civil disobedience by refusing a direct order albeit politely

STEP 4: Did not hesitate from appearing in court but ensured that influential friends were present and expectations from him were fulfilled

STEP 5: Did not deviate from the path of civil disobedience even when threatened with jail

STEP 6: Avoided non-violence nor did he inspire his followers to get violent

STEP 7: Inspired lawyers to reduce their fee and become more empathetic

STEP 8: Inspired lawyers onto the path of sacrifice - go to jail if required

STEP 9: Negotiated with the aim of breaking the rival's ego and deadlock, not financial motives

STEP 10: Did not ask for any outside assistance or favour (Charles Freer Andrews could have helped)

VALUES TAUGHT: Courage, confidence, self-reliance, civil disobedience

8) **Which other problems did Gandhiji observe** and what solutions did he propose, if any? Gandhiji recognized the problem of casteism at Dr. Rajendra Prasad's house and it would fuel later efforts by him. After resolving the Champaran issue, Gandhiji stayed for a year to help the poor of Champaran with medicine and education. He asked teachers and doctors to volunteer and arranged basic medicine.

POETS AND PANCAKES (by Asokamitra)

Theme: The world of cinema is a microcosm of the real world governed by politics where underneath the layers of makeup, sits talent recognized and unrecognized

Key Details to Remember –

1) 1940 onwards, **the Gemini Studios of Chennai** (erstwhile Madras) was the most influential film-production house in India. Its founder was **S. S. Vasan** whom everyone referred to as the boss.

2) The extract is **autobiographical**. The writer Asokamitran was entrusted with the clerical task of cutting and pasting newspaper articles. His observations during these initial fourteen years of his career observing Gemini Studios closely led to the book 'My Years with Boss' of which our lesson is an extract.

3) **Poets** - the writers at Gemini Studios who were poets at heart

Pancake - the make up brand used at this film studio. The makeup is a metaphor for the layers that hide true motives such as that of the office boy or Vasan

4) **A satire** – this extract mocks the use of make up by actors, the inviting of celebrities who have little bearing on the lives of common folks, as well as office politics.

5) **Hierarchy at the studios** – the writer mocks the hierarchy and diversity subtly. The Chief Makeup man helped the heroes and heroines whereas his assistant helped the side actors while the office boy put make up on the crowd. According to Asokamitran, the makeup made these people look ugly but perhaps was necessary under the harsh light of the camera.

6) **National integration** – a sarcastic comment identifying the diversity of the workforce at Gemini Studios. The department was once headed by a Bengali followed by a Maharashtrian who had people from across India working with him.

7) Office politics

7.1. Subbu and the office boy – At any workplace, there are a few who get appreciated and many who feel slighted. The office boy thought of himself as a talented star actor, director, screen writer or lyricist. Ironically, he wasn't a boy – rather, a forty years-old man reduced to a menial job which, from his point of view, undervalued his talent. No wonder that this office boy was jealous of Subbu.

Subbu was highly appreciated and considered the right-hand man of the owner Vasana. This was because Subbu was well-loved, an actor yet humble, a poet who wrote poems of a higher order, a novelist and could give myriad suggestions on the spot.

7.2. Always seem busy – The cardinal rule of the workplace is to always seem busy. Since Asokamitran's duties seemed trivial and he was considered quite free most of the time, people burdened him with responsibilities and made him their listening board.

7.3. The story writing department and the lawyer – The studios produced films so obviously, it required a story writing department. These writers considered themselves poets, wore khadi, thought highly of Gandhi and hated communists. There was a lawyer in their department as well – he wore a suit and seemed a misfit there, mostly appointed to save any possible legal hassles.

This is why he recorded a heroine who had a temper tantrum at work and played the recording back to her. He was probably trying to avoid a law suit due to whatever had gone wrong but ended up embarrassing the actress so much that she ended her career there and then.

8) **Vasana's visitors** - As at any workplace, the Gemini Studios also had visitors from time to time invited by their boss Vasana. The visit by the MRA (Moral Rearmament Army) was enjoyed by the poets because of the plays they presented. Vasana had also hoped that the writers at his studio would be inspired by the way the scenes were depicted. Unfortunately, he did not know that they would inspire the writers towards anti-communism instead. The 200 people of the MRA were anti-communist. Vasana also invited Stephen Spender, a writer, and an editor who used to follow communism back then. Stephen's accent was difficult to understand so the visit left the staff at the Gemini Studios perplexed. It was much later that Asokamitran discovered Stephen's link to communism and understood that it must have been that reason which prompted Vasana to invite him as a speaker.

9) **Communism** was back then, a new political order that was spreading throughout the world, especially in Asian countries. Communism preached equality of people and abolition of poverty and class divisions while it discouraged private ownership. Vasana supported it. The poets at Gemini Studios disliked communism because this was the idea spread by Americans at that time. This dislike became stronger with the visit of the MRA. Vasana wanted his writers to appreciate communism positively so he invited Stephen Spender when the man used to follow communism.

10) **In which two ways did Asokamitran meet Stephen Spender?** – First, as a speaker invited to Gemini Studios where the man's accent defeated any attempt at understanding his message. Secondly, Asokamitran wanted to enter a writing contest through 'The Encounter' – a periodical edited by Stephen Spender. While at the library looking for this periodical, Asokamitran saw Stephen's book 'The God that Failed' – a commentary on how Communism had disappointed Stephen Spender. It was because of Stephen's initial support of communism that Vasana had invited Stephen to the studio to speak.

THE INTERVIEW (by Christopher Silvester)

Part 1 – What is an interview and how do the people who are interviewed feel about it

Interviews began in 1859

Contrasting opinions:

A source of truth and an art form

Celebrities consider themselves victims (privacy intruded, reduces their stature and respect)

V.S. Naipaul – cosmopolitan writer, travel books, documentary, Nobel laureate

People can be wounded by interviews and lose a part of themselves

Lewis Carroll – Author of 'Alice in Wonderland'

Had a justified horror of being interviewed and did not agree for interviews

Felt that interviews make celebrities larger than life (lionized)

Used to silence those who tried to interview him or ask for autographs

Rudyard Kipling – Writer (The Jungle Book), poet (If)

Interviews are immoral and a crime which deserves punishment

Interviews are an assault, cowardly and vile (disgusting)

The irony was that Kipling himself interviewed Mark Twain

H.G. Wells – Writer (The Invisible Man)

Interviews are an ordeal

But he gave interviews and even took the interview of Joseph Stalin

Saul Bellow – Playwright and novelist, Nobel Laureate

Agreed for interviews but felt choked (thumbprints on his windpipe)

Denis Brian – An interviewer has unprecedented (never known before) power and influence because almost everything important comes to us because we ask questions

We learn about our contemporaries through interviews.

Author's opinion – There are drawbacks and different opinions about interviews

However, an interview is a supremely serviceable medium of communication

Part 2 – An interview with the writer Umberto Eco

Key Points – a) **Interviewer** is Mukund Padmanabhan from The Hindu

b) **Umberto Eco** – professor at University of Bologna, Italy.

He began to write fiction at the age of 50 and wrote 5 novels. He was already famous for his 40+ writeups on semiotics (study of signs), literary interpretation and medieval aesthetics.

c) **Eco wrote extensively** – fiction, academic texts, essays, children's books, newspaper articles. Sold 10 million copies of his book 'The Name of the Rose'

d) **Values** - Eco believes in non-violence and peace - themes for his work

e) **Interstices** – These are empty spaces in our lives when nothing is being done because one task is in process and the other hasn't begun yet. Eco uses these spaces to write and this is why, he has managed to write a lot

f) **Why does Eco write even non-fiction with a narrative aspect i.e. in a playful, personal and informal way?** One of his professors had appreciated his doctoral dissertation because it told a story and included the errors and trials he faced before getting to the final theory. It wasn't just the final flawless cut. This inspired him to always write non-fiction like a story.

g) **How does Eco see himself?** He thinks of himself as a university professor who writes novels on Sundays. He feels he is an academician first and a novelist later.

h) **Why was Eco's novel 'The Name of the Rose' so successful?** Eco believes that a complex piece of writing finds its niche and is read by those who don't look for easy reads. The book combines metaphysics, theology and medieval history. Eco also attributes the success to unpredictable reasons such as the right timing.

GOING PLACES (by A. R. Barton)

Theme – Hero worship and the impact of an active imagination

1) **Sophie and Jansie** – Sophie is a teenager about to graduate from school. She is ambitious and has an active imagination. She hopes to rise above the financial circumstances of her family to live a more

sophisticated city life as a shop owner, a fashion designer or an actress. She imagines herself to be the best in her field with people applauding her work as if the city is just waiting for her arrival on the scene. Her optimism is endearing yet impractical. Sophie idolizes her older brother Geoff and hopes to build a closer bond with him.

Jansie is the foil for Sophie – both are on polar ends of the spectrum. Jansie is pragmatic and knows that they will eventually be working for the biscuit factory. She also understands that Sophie's father is a working-class man and will not allow Sophie to open a shop. Jansie is also a bit of a gossip according to Sophie.

2) **The family** – Sophie's family includes her parents, her younger brother and her older brother. Her father lacks the sophistication Sophie craves in her life. He does not believe her stories and Sophie's younger brother follows her dad's example. Her mother is the silent character of the story, always shown doing her household chores. Her sigh may indicate the dreams that were never fulfilled and perhaps what will happen is a glimpse of Sophie's life if she does not reach her goals.

Geoff is Sophie's idol. He has been able to secure a mechanic's job in the city and as with many older siblings, he does not share every detail of his life at home. His silence makes Sophie want to know more. She craves a closer relationship with him and thus, imagines him being the medium through which she too can reach the city where of course people will applaud her arrival.

3) **The imagination** – Sophie dreams with open eyes in technicolour. She does not merely fib, her imagination gives details to the scene she describes no matter how false it may be. She knows exactly what Geoff and she will wear as they ride into the city. She knows how Danny Casey the Irish footballer may look like, above and beyond what can be seen by all others during matches or in magazines. Similarly, she knows exactly where she would like to meet him for a date. Unfortunately, this imagination overpowers her rationality, and she genuinely feels disappointment when he does not show up for this date.

4) **Danny Casey** – A young Irish footballer, Danny has a strong fan-following. Sophie's family goes to watch his games and her brother is a huge fan – three of the posters in his room are of Casey. Sophie wants a closer relationship with her brother and so, she builds up a story about meeting Danny Casey. One lie leads to others and she ends up tangled in her own web of lies.

5) **The dismissal and belief** – Sophie told the lie about meeting Casey to Geoff hoping it would bring them closer as the lie would stay between them. When Geoff shares it with her father, she feels that he has betrayed her confidence. Later, she finds out that Geoff has also shared it further with his friend and the rumour eventually reaches Jansie. This disappoints her further. So, she adds another layer to the lie and tells her brother that Danny Casey has asked her to meet again. Once again, the hope is that it would be 'their' secret. The question is whether Geoff believes her. Initially, he is sceptical. Her father dismisses the story outright. However, when Geoff advises her against the date pointing out that celebrities may have a string of girls after them, we see that he does believe her story.

6) **The meetings** – In the description of the first meeting, Sophie gives details such as the colour of Danny Casey's appearance and demeanour. She says he wants to open a shop because it corresponds to her ambition and perhaps subconsciously, she hopes that it will put her ambition positively in front of her brother. She is imaginative but rational enough to know that anyone who meets a celebrity will be asked to show an autograph. She adds to her story that neither of them had the stationery to get an autograph. Moreover, this autograph then becomes the base of the next lie because Danny wants to meet her again to give her an autograph.

7) **The crossover** – Somehow, her imagination overpowers her understanding of reality and the stories turn real for her. **We first notice the crossover when she feels proud of the appreciation Danny receives for his goal.** It shows that she has begun to believe that he shares that moment with her. Sophie then picks the

perfect spot for her first date. She waits there on the day she has claimed Danny will meet her. Her disappointment in his absence is genuine and she feels stood up by him. She is embarrassed and knows everyone, especially her father, will tell her they already knew he would never come to meet someone like her and that she had been lying. She is grateful that her father is not at home as she walks back. Such is the extent of her imagination. But what does she really crave? – In her mind's eye, as the story comes to a close, she imagines the crowd appreciating Danny just as she would want to be appreciated by Geoff, by her family and by the world in general.

Quick Review (Flamingo Poetry)

MY MOTHER AT SIXTY SIX (by Kamala Das)

Vocabulary:

- doze – nap or sleep lightly
- ashen – pale grey like the colour of ash
- corpse – dead body
- put that thought away – ignored the thought
- sprinting – running
- merry – joyful
- spilling – falling out (metaphor for running out and abundance)
- wan – colourless
- ache – pain

Poetic Devices:

- ashen **like** that of a corpse : simile (comparison of colour)
- Young trees **sprinting** : personification (quality of running)
- merry children **spilling** out : metaphor (comparison to a full vessel)
- pale **as** a late winter's moon : simile (comparison of colour)
- smile and smile and smile : repetition (emphasis on how the poetess tried to reassure herself and her mother by hiding her concerns behind the smile)

Summary

The poetess was driving from her parents' home to Cochin airport. Her mother fell asleep in the car and a strange thought struck the poetess. Her mother looked like a corpse! The thought was extremely disturbing. She diverted her thoughts by looking at the youthful energy and abundance evident in the trees rushing past and children running out of their homes to play. But, at the airport, anxiety of separation hit her again. Yet, she did not voice her concerns. She only reassured her mother, and perhaps herself, that they will meet again. She hid her fear and pain beneath her smile. The poetry echoes the lament of most children as we all tend to fear the separation from a parent and as we grow older, the fear of losing them permanently seems inevitable.

KEEPING QUIET (by Pablo Neruda)

"Let silence speak to you about the secrets of the universe."

(Rumi)

In this poem Neruda talks about the necessity of quiet introspection and creating a feeling of mutual understanding among human beings. We must introspect to understand ourselves better and retrospect on the impact our actions have had on the world around us – on man and on nature. After this reflection, Neruda expects us to return to our daily lives, refreshed and aware of reformations required.

Few quirks: The poet counts to twelve instead of traditional counts in multiples of five. In various ways, twelve is indicative of time. It is interesting that even the title of the poem has twelve letters in it.

A master of imagery, the poet is able to create a visual impact on the reader along with an auditory presence of silence and the lack of movement or the significance thereof.

The Earth is the underlying platform for the poem – the silence and noise occur on it, the damage has been done to it, the reform must occur on it and it becomes the teacher who shows humanity the road ahead.

Poetic Devices:

- Anaphora : we will, let's
- Alliteration : stop for one second, sudden strangeness, hurt hands, clean clothes
- Repetition : without rush, without engines
- Pun : arms (literally moving arms, picking up arms for a war, or being restless)
- Personification : face of the Earth, the Earth can teach us
- Synecdoche : twelve, fishermen, whales, brothers
- Metaphor : clean clothes, shade
- Euphemism : no truck with death
- Irony : victory with no survivors
- Enjambment : lines run on from one to the next to complete the sentence without a punctuation mark at the end of the line

Summary:

The poem begins with the poet imploring or appealing to the readers to count to twelve. The word 'we' shows that it is a request and not a command – an urgent request nonetheless.

Remember that he is not asking them to remain silent and introspect for ONLY twelve seconds. The count to twelve is to calm the body and mind and prepare oneself for the task of introspection and retrospection. Be it the months of the year or hours of the day, twelve is the universal symbol for time and the poet wants to emphasize on the fact that time is passing us by. Let us make the necessary changes before it is too late. Also notice that the title of the poem has twelve letters as well so the number has been carefully and thoughtfully chosen.

AFTER COUNTING TO TWELVE, they must observe a few minutes of silence. In this silence, he wants them to recognize the unity of not speaking any language as it creates misunderstandings and language barriers. In this silence, he wants them to recognize the peace and calmness of not moving our arms too much literally or metaphorically, i.e. not being restless or ready to pick up arms. He wants them to note the lack of engine noise or rush to move to the next task or goal or destination. In this silence, he wants them to introspect about their actions and the impact of their actions on the world and their fellow human beings.

What will this silence achieve? Those who take from the Earth's water bodies – be it fish or salt, will realize that they are leaving the sea cold and are harming themselves (hurt hands) in the process. Those who destroy nature (green wars) or wage wars against other human beings using arms (wars with fire) or advanced biowarfare (wars with gas), will understand that their victory is meaningless. Ironically, this so-called victory will not leave any survivors to celebrate it because wars cause destruction and devastation on both sides of the border. He wants these warmongers to stop and reflect on their actions. They will then realize that the people they harm are part of humanity – their brothers and sisters in this large family called mankind. They will don clean clothes (metaphor for a path of peace and elimination of bloodshed). He asks them to do nothing for a while and just understand the impact of their actions.

Neruda further elaborates that 'doing nothing' is not akin to death. Using colloquial language, he states clearly that he wants nothing to do with death. Life must go on. He merely wants people to pause and reflect before returning to their routines with a necessary awareness. We are always so busy moving to the next

goal that we do not understand ourselves and constantly fear death. Our whole lives seem to be the preparation of dying well. This leaves us sad from within and what is worse, is that we do not even recognize this sadness.

Neruda asks us to learn from the Earth. The Earth which seems still and doing nothing during winters rejuvenates itself during the spring season. It returns to the cycle of life but with freshness, vigour and new life. This is what Neruda wants us to do as well.

Now that he has explained the task, its purpose, and the outcome he hopes to achieve, he leaves the reader to introspect and departs.

A THING OF BEAUTY (by John Keats)

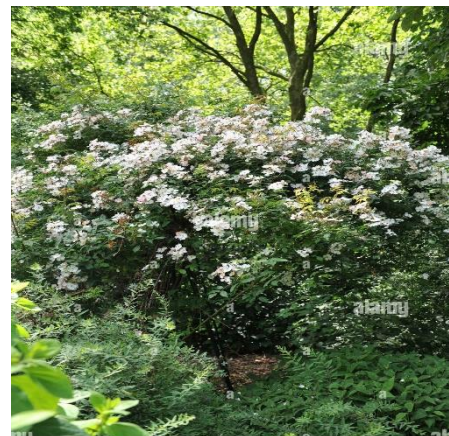
Theme: Inspiration and peace found in the lap of nature or through stories of worthy people

Vocabulary –

Bower	– a place of rest
Morrow	– morning
Wreathing	– creating
Spite	– in spite
Despondence	– sadness, gloom
Death	– lack
O'er darkened	– overly dark
Pall	– shroud, a cloth used to cover the dead body
Sprouting	– giving birth to
Boon	– blessing
Rills	– small streams
Covert	– hidden corner
'gainst	– Against
Brake	– A thick growth of ferns
Rich with	– Full of
Musk-rose blooms	– small flowers
Grandeur	– grandness, splendour, resplendence
Dooms	– death
Mighty dead	– honourable people such as soldiers
Immortal drink	– inspiration
Brink	– edge



Yellow daffodils in a green field



Musk rose blooms amidst a brake

Poetic Devices –

Hyperbole – a joy forever, o'er darkened ways, grandeur of dooms, an endless fountain, pouring from heaven's brink, mighty dead (also considered as oxymoron as the dead cannot be mighty anymore)

Metaphor – bower (the lap of nature is like a place of rest), green world (fields)

Alliteration – noble natures, cooling covert, band to bind

Allusion – referring to another text or character which is not actually a part of this poem

Biblical Allusion – simple sheep (in the Bible, Jesus is the shepherd and human beings are the simple sheep under his guidance)

There is also an allusion to Wordsworth's poem Daffodils (such are daffodils with the green world they live in)

Transferred epithet – gloomy days, unhealthy and o'er darkened ways

Background and theme –

With the onset of industrial revolution in England, people began to lose their jobs to machines. They began to question their faith in the face of scientific discoveries such as the theory of evolution. The aristocracy was losing their influence and the middle class (bourgeois) were rising. The beautiful English landscape was becoming tainted with smoke from industries. In such a world, the poets saw it as their duty to bring people back to nature and recognize its healing powers, its beauty and its inspiration. These poets were known as the Romantics.

John Keats was a Romantic poet as was William Wordsworth. Wordsworth once came across a field full of daffodil flowers dancing in the wind. It was a sight he never forgot and whenever he felt pensive (gloomy), he would remember that beautiful sight and feel better. This same inspiration is what Keats finds in nature and in inspirational stories.

Summary –

Once someone sees something truly beautiful, it turns into an everlasting memory. For the poet, such is the beauty of nature. Each time he recalls a memory spent in the lap of nature, he finds it more beautiful (lovelier) than before. Such a memory never fades (never passes into nothingness).

Such a memory brings us calmness and peace. Thinking of it before we go to bed will bring us sweet dreams, good health and quite breathing. This is why, every morning, man should be creating a closer bond with the Earth (a flowery band to bind us to the Earth). However, the use of words is important here – the poet says ‘are we wreathing....’ almost as if asking a question. Thus, he is trying to say that we should be trying to be close to our Earth, but we end up focusing on materialistic things instead.

Despite the sadness (despondence) due to the inhuman lack of noble people or the several wrong paths open before us, if one focuses on the inspirational beauty of nature, the darkness will be lifted from our spirit. The poet then shows us how the myriad elements of nature inspire us. The sun and the moon bring brightness. Trees, regardless of their age, always keep a shaded place for sheep to rest just as God’s blessing – this nature – is like a bower for human beings to find peace. One can find such inspiration in daffodils living in their green fields (reference to the impact of the Daffodils on Wordsworth). He wants the reader to think of small streams which find a way to make cool corners in spite of the hot season – similarly, we must learn to remain calm against challenges. Amidst the forest’s thick ferns, one may find beauty in the many musk rose flowers that grow there.

Thus, the poet finds inspiration, joy and peace in nature. He finds similar inspiration when he hears of the stories of soldiers and other honourable men who have now passed away. In the final stanza of our extract, the poet asks the reader to think of the heavenly glory we have imagined after death (grandeur of dooms) for men who lived worthy lives (mighty dead). Their stories (lovely tales) which we have all heard or read are an endless source of inspiration (an endless fountain of immortal drink). The men have passed on and are in heaven’s keeping now. But as if from the edge of heaven, their stories continue to live on and inspire.

The last reference (stories that last forever and inspire) may be linked to Aunt Jennifer’s art living on after her or Shakespeare’s sonnet 55 where he says that neither marble nor gilded monuments will survive, but his words will last forever.

AUNT JENNIFER’S TIGERS (by Adrienne Rich)

Adrienne Rich was a strong feminist advocating for the rights of women. In this poem, she addresses the pain of being bound to someone who is dominating and considers himself the master of his wife. As was the norm of that era, the woman could not escape such a relationship even through death and often, could only express their hopes, pain and fear through artistic work such as embroidering, sketching, or writing.

Vocabulary –

Prance	– jump (tactile image)
Screen	– tapestry screen (cloth stretched across a wooden panel for embroidery)
Topaz	– a yellow gemstone (metaphor, visual imagery –tigers are as yellow as topaz)
World of green	– metaphorical image of a forest (metaphor, visual imagery)
Men beneath the tree	– hunters (metaphor for the husband, visual imagery)
Pace	– walk at a speed
Sleek	– elegant
Chivalric	– with manners, elegant
Certainty	– confidence
Fluttering	– trembling, shivering
Wool	– thread for embroidery
Massive	– huge
Ordeals	– challenges

Poetic Devices –

Imagery – Visual image of topaz to depict the tigers, the green forest, hunters standing under trees waiting to shoot, ivory needle, massive wedding ring, ring on Aunt's finger

Tactile image to depict the tigers as jumping, the elegant walk of the tigers, the action of pulling the wool through the cloth by trembling fingers

Metaphor – topaz denizens (*yellow inhabitants – colour of the tigers is similar to a topaz stone*), world of green (*forest*), men beneath the tree (*hunters – represent men like her husband*), tigers (aunt's repressed desires), wedding band (*symbol of marriage*)

Personification – the tigers have been called chivalric
Alliteration – finger fluttering, weight... wedding band, proud... prancing
Hyperbole – massive weight
Pun – ringed (wedding ring, surrounded)
Terrified hands – terrified is an epithet or adjective for the Aunt transferred to her hands
Synecdoche – the hands represent Aunt Jennifer (a part of something representing the whole)

Summary –

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

The poetess introduces a woman – her aunt Jennifer – who is sitting and embroidering tigers onto a cloth panel. The task suits a woman of that era however, what she is embroidering is not. She is creating prancing or jumping tigers who are fearless unlike her, who have an elegance she has lost and who have a confidence, she is unable to find. Thus, her creativity, her art is a way to express her repressed desires. She too would like to be like the tigers and not afraid of the men in her life (the men beneath the tree – the hunters and in her case, her husband). The word used is 'fear' – so this is not just about household responsibilities. The irony is that a meek and submissive woman is embroidering fearless and elegant tigers.



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

Her fear is so overwhelming that her fingers shiver and even the light, ivory needle, is difficult to draw through the cloth. The wedding band on her finger feels like a massive burden. It weighs her down and makes her tremble. Once again, note the use of the word, fluttering, difficulty to draw the needle – this is not about household chores but a terrifying husband and wife relationship where she is dominated by her husband. The relationship is that of a master and a slave – not of partners sharing responsibilities of the house.

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

Notice the switch from Aunt Jennifer to Aunt in the last stanza. From talking of one woman i.e., Jennifer, the poetess is now sharing the plight of any woman in a difficult marriage. A woman is unable to escape such a marriage even by death as she must still wear her wedding band – the 'ring' due to which she was ringed (surrounded) with challenges (ordeals). The way both meanings of 'ring' fit in this context makes it a pun. This ring gave almost a legal sanction to the uncle to dominate over the aunt. The irony is that even though the aunt is dead, her art lives on. Art is everlasting and thus, the tigers she could never become, will forever share the story of what she might have been.

THE ROADSIDE STAND (by Robert Frost)

CENTRAL IDEA: Through this poem, Robert Frost shows us the great contrast between the comfortable life of city dwellers and the harshness faced by the impoverished rural people.

POETIC STRUCTURE: The poem has an inconsistent rhyme scheme indicating that at certain points, thoughts and ideas take over the technicality of maintaining a rhyme.

VOCABULARY STANZA 1:

Shed	– A simple extension of a roof to shade items or animals
Sped	– Past tense of speed when used as a verb
Pled	– Past tense of plead or request; requested
Dole	– Share

*The **little** old house was out with a **little** new shed* - repetition
In front at the edge of the road where the traffic sped, - imagery (visual, tactile)
*A roadside stand that too **pathetically pled**,* - personification & alliteration
It would not be fair to say for a dole of bread,
But for some of the money, the cash, whose flow supports
***The flower of cities** from sinking and withering faint.* - metaphor (city life)

The little house has built a new shed in the front. The shed faces the road where the passage of traffic takes place. It seems like the roadside stand pleads in a pitiful manner, not for some bread or charity, but for the passers-by to purchase something. This will bring some of the money city-dwellers have to their poor home. This money supports the city life which never seems to sink or faint.

VOCABULARY STANZA 2:

Polished	– Sophisticated
Mind ahead	– Focused on the destination
Out of sorts	– Annoyed, disturbed, disappointed
Marred	– Ruined, defaced, blemished
Artless	– Unappealing
N, S	– North, South
Quarts	– Containers
Crossly	– Angrily
Pitiful	– Pathetic

*The **polished traffic** passed **with a mind ahead**,
Or if ever aside a moment, **then out of sorts**
At having the landscape marred with the artless paint
Of signs that with **N turned wrong and S turned wrong**
Offered for sale wild berries in wooden quarts,
Or crook-necked golden squash with silver warts,
Or beauty rest in a beautiful mountain scene,
You have the money, but if you want to be mean,
Why keep your money (this crossly) and go along.*

- transferred epithet, personification
- transferred epithet – describes people
- repetition
- alliteration
- anaphora, imagery - visual
- alliteration (beauty... beautiful)



Unfortunately, vehicles driven by polished people goes past ignoring the shack. The people only focus on their destination. If by chance a vehicle does stop, the people would be upset. They are very disturbed to see the poor unattractive signboards which have inaccurately painted or faded direction letters (N, S, E, W). They claim that the shed spoils the beauty of the landscape. There is an offer of wild berries for sale in a wooden quart (in a container) or on golden squash with silverish lumps on the skin. The location is beautiful – it offers a peaceful natural stay for those who can afford it so the shed seems out of place to the passers-by. The poet becomes angry at this attitude of the ‘polished traffic’ and tells them that they may have money but if they are going to be mean, they can keep the money and move ahead.

VOCABULARY STANZA 3:

Pitiful	– Pathetic
Being	– Existence, self, spirit
Moving-pictures	– Movies
Party in power	– Ruling party

*The **hurt to the scenery** wouldn't be my complaint
So much as the **trusting sorrow** of what is unsaid:
Here far **from the city** we make our roadside stand
And ask **for some city** money to feel in hand*

- personification
- metaphor
- repetition & internal rhyme

*To try if it will not make our being expand,
And give us the life of the moving-pictures' promise
That the **party in power** is said to be keeping from us.* - alliteration

The poet says that to him, it doesn't matter that the shed creates a blemish on the pretty landscape. He is more concerned about the sadness of the shed-owners. It is a sadness that rises from the trust they placed on the political leaders. The roadside stand owners made their shed far from the city and just want to have some of the money city dwellers enjoy. They want to see if the money will improve their situation. The poet believes that these people have a longing to handle some city money and reduce their suffering as one often sees in movies. They have seen movies which promises a better life with money. They want that life – a life which they are told, is being kept away from them, by the political party in power.

VOCABULARY STANZA 4:

Pitiful – pathetic, sorry, abject
Kin – family, relatives
Mercifully – Kindly
Good-doers – Those who do (or pretend to do) good
Beneficent – Kind
Beasts of prey – Predators
Swarm – Cloud, crowd
Soothe – Pacify

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

The poet makes mention of the news which points out the relocation of the poor villagers who are like us, part of the human family (kin). Apparently, their shop and land will be bought, and they will be given space to live in the vicinity of shops and theatres. The political parties made big promises to ensure good care for them so much so that they would not have to think about their problems anymore. However, the government authorities became negligent of these promises. Furthermore, the poet is angry at this behaviour and calls them “greedy good-doers”. He calls them “beasts of prey” who indulge in the exploitation of the poor villagers. They are worse than animals who feed upon other animals. The irony is evident in ‘enforcing benefits’ – if they are beneficial, the benefits should be wanted and not required to be enforced. They fill their lives with promises of benefits, a better life and good sleep. But the real outcome is that the politicians get to sleep all day. They in fact destroy the sleep of the poor just as they have been doing since ancient times.

VOCABULARY STANZA 5:

Longing – Wish
Lurks – Hides
Plow up – Pull out, turn over (a different spelling of plough)
Bound – Headed (in this context)
Gallon – A unit of measurement roughly 4.555 litres; a large volume of gas

Sometimes I feel myself I can hardly bear
 The thought of so much childish longing in vain,
 The sadness that lurks near the open window there,
 That waits all day in almost open prayer
 For the **squeal** of brakes, the **sound of a stopping** car,
 Of all the **thousand selfish cars** that pass,
 Just one to inquire what a farmer's prices are.
 And one did stop, but only to plow up grass
 In using the yard to back and turn around;
And another to ask the way to where it was bound;
And another to ask could they sell it a gallon of gas
 They couldn't (this crossly); they had none, **didn't it see?**

Onomatopoeia (*squeal*), alliteration
 Hyperbole, transferred epithet

Tactile imagery
 Tactile imagery
 Anaphora

Personification

Filled with empathy, the poet is unable to bear the plight of the unassuming and innocent rural people. The poet expresses his distress while explaining the endless wait of shed owners for buyers. There is a childish longing in the poor for money and unfortunately, it's all in vain (all useless). There is a pervasive, ubiquitous sadness in the way they stand by their open window all day as if praying for the squeal of brakes as a customer stops. However, the people in the cars are selfish. They pray for just one car to stop and the passenger to enquire about the farmer's price. If one does stop, it is just to root up the grass and make use of the backyard to reverse their car as they turn. One of the cars stops for a gallon of gas. This demonstrates the sense of alienation between urban and rural life. It is ridiculous to think that the poor people running this shed would be able to afford gas even as a product for sale. This leaves the poet cross or angry.

VOCABULARY STANZA 6:

Country – village

Owning – admitting

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

- repetition

- personification

- alliteration

The poet regrets that money is not abundant in the countryside. In the little money they have, based on what little profit they earn, their spirits are never lifted. The villagers have a tendency to express their grievances which seems like a constant complaint. The poet becomes very emotional as he contemplates their pain. He feels as if ending their lives at one stroke would ease them out of their pain and bring great relief. Then he wonders how he would feel if someone would offer the same to him to relieve him gently out of his own pain. Perhaps his true wish is to change their lives in one go but understands that this will be a futile act.

MORAL: The economic well-being of a country depends on a balanced development of the villages and the cities. Empathy towards the underprivileged is necessary in today's circumstances. They are not asking for charity; merely, for people to purchase their goods directly.

Quick Review (Vistas Prose)

THE THIRD LEVEL (by Jack Finney)

In literature, Alice can fall through a giant hole and reach a wonderland, Harry Potter can board a train to Hogwarts, Griffin can turn invisible and time travel may be possible.

For this story too, as a reader, you will have to suspend your disbelief. The story is a work of science fiction and therefore, it is considered TRUE in the context of the story that the protagonist Charley indeed visited the third level and his friend Sam actually travelled to Galesburg, Illinois. The proof is in the note Sam sent as well as the fact, that the front page of the newspaper 'The World' which Charley picked up at the third level existed in real life. The title is 'The Third Level' because of the platform Charley visited AND because the story takes you to another level of existence.

DO NOT make the mistake of saying that the psychiatrist as well as everything else was only in Charley's imagination.

Key Points –

1) Basic Plot - The narrator, Charley, stumbled upon a passage which led him to the third level of the Grand Central Railway Station. It is a known fact that the station has many passages but only two levels (or floors). This level was a gateway to the past. Charley misses the opportunity to travel back in time and can never find the third level again because opportunity knocks only once.

2) How did Charley see it?

Charley noticed spittoons on the floor and fewer ticket windows on the third level. Instead of electrical fittings, the station was lit with gas lamps – the lack of electricity makes sense because in Sam's note later, he mentions women fanning themselves with hand fans – so there is a structural unity in the descriptions.

The women's mutton leg sleeves and men's handlebar moustaches coupled with their suits with short lables and bowler hats were all consistent with the fashion of the 1890s. The Currier and Ives train was no longer used but it stood ready for passengers at the third level. He found a copy of the newspaper called 'The World' which had long been discontinued. He realized that somehow, he had reached June 11, 1894.

Charley realized that he had a chance to travel back in time to a more peaceful world. The world his grandfather used to describe – one that was far removed from the world wars. Unfortunately, the currency used at the third level was the one in 1890s and so Charley could not purchase tickets for Louisa and him.

3) How did the others see it?

Charley's wife and friends initially did not believe him. They thought it was a result of Charley's admiration of the past as was evident in his hobby of stamp collection (philately). Among his friends was his psychiatrist Sam. As Charley began taking sessions with Sam. Sam diagnosed the issue as 'Waking Dream Wish Fulfilment' – that Charley wanted to escape his present life so much that he had dreamed with open eyes of a path to take Charley to the past. Louisa felt offended because she felt that perhaps Charley's disappointment with the present was being blamed on her, but Sam convinced her that it was the usual stress of life as the world began adjusting to life post the second World War. We, as readers, also know that Charley wanted to buy a ticket to Illinois for Louisa as well so he may have wanted to escape from the present, but not from his wife.

As the psychiatric sessions proceeded, Sam became more and more convinced about the third level. Eventually, it was Sam who went prepared with old currency), found the third level and reached Galesburg, Illinois of 1894 to live a simpler life.

4) The Grand Central Station as a means of escape – Charley had often thought of the many tunnels and passages of the station as a tree's ever-expanding roots. To him, the station took him away from home to work and back and thus, was always a way to escape. He never mentioned this to Sam perhaps fearing that Sam will be convinced of the theory of waking dream wish fulfilment and never actually believe that Charley saw the third level.

5) Did Sam really cross over?

Yes. Sam crossed over to the past via the third level.

As the psychiatric sessions proceeded, Sam became more and more convinced about the third level. Charley had not been able to take advantage of being at the third level because he did not have old style currency at that time. Sam withdrew all his savings and converted them to old currency before he went looking for the third level. Opportunity favoured him just as it had favoured Charley and Sam used it well. He ended up living and running a shop in Galesburg of 1894.

But how could Sam reaffirm Charley's belief that the third level existed? Sam in the past found only one way to connect with Charley of the future. Charley's grandfather had a stamp collection. This collection included first day covers.

A first day cover is an envelope with a blank sheet of paper inside. When the post office releases a new stamp, stamp collectors paste it on such an envelope and mail it to themselves. This way, the envelope gets stamped with that day's date – the first day of the release of the stamp. This is a collector's item.

The note to Charley did not arrive immediately after Sam crossed over. He had to wait for a new stamp to be released. Then Sam bought one such stamp and pasted it on an envelope on the first day the stamp was released. Instead of a blank paper inside, he wrote a note informing Charley about the truth of the third level and that life in Galesburg was indeed as peaceful as Charley's grandfather used to describe.

6) The evidence –

Charley went to the library and found the copy of the newspaper 'The World' dated June 11, 1894. It was indeed the same cover story as the one he saw on the third level, so Charley knew it existed. Others would not easily believe this evidence because they had not seen it or visited the third level. They only had Charley's word for it.

But when Charley and Louisa read Sam's note, they were convinced. Both now began looking for the third level. Unfortunately, opportunity knocks just once. We must be ready for it lest the moment be lost forever.

THE TIGER KING (by Kalki)

The story is a satire on people in power who abuse their resources to fulfil their whims and fancies which they prioritize over their duties. It is also a commentary on the mindless harm human beings cause to the environment.

1) The narrative style – the first-person narrative is playful, humorous, and informal, establishing an immediate rapport with the reader. The instances of humour are spread out throughout the story – for example, how the tiger king's declaration to allow tiger hunting only by him was a moment of celebration for the tigers OR the use of situational irony where the tiger escapes the king's shot and rolls its eyes OR the dramatic irony evident in the words – 'The operation was successful. The king is dead.'

2) The Tiger King – despite an elaborate name as was the custom for princes back then, the protagonist became known as the tiger king because of his actions and the legacy he left behind. He was an intelligent

and courageous man which was evident right from the onset. In a gathering where great astrologers, his own parents and their ministers were present, only the ten-day old prince challenged the Chief Astrologer and asked the correct questions. Moreover, he was not afraid of the prediction rather turned the challenge to the tigers instead. Over the years, he hunted tigers often through hand to hand combat. Thus, there is no doubt about his courage.

3) The Environment Angle – The tiger king single-handedly wiped out the population of tigers from Pratibandhapuram as well as his father-in-law's kingdom. It is poetic justice that with such mindless killing, the end of the tiger king was through a toy tiger – after all, no live tigers were around anymore.

4) The minions – For an effective government, ministers must advise the king well. The Tiger King's dewan only helped fulfil the king's whims be it the unfair taxes or firing of officers or marrying for the sake of hunting more tigers. Moreover, the dewan only thought of himself which is evident in the fact that he kept one last tiger as a reserve in case the king ever needed one or threatened the dewan.

5) Abuse of power – Not only did the Tiger King neglect his duties towards his subjects, he raised taxes when he was frustrated and forgave them when happy. He took the risk of upsetting a British officer by refusing permission to hunt tigers in Pratibandhpuram and even ended up spending 3 lakhs to appease the British official's wife. He fired officers when they failed to find him a tiger and would have killed the dewan had the last tiger not appeared.

6) Irony – Irony can be used in different ways in literature. Situation irony is when something **happens** which is very different to what was expected such as the tiger escaping a shot made from close quarters.

Verbal irony is when something is **said** but signifies the opposite such as saying 'thanks a lot' sarcastically when the listener has actually caused you a problem. We may refer to the dewan's conversation with the king here – the Dewan says that one tiger king is quite enough, and a tiger queen was not required. He meant 'enough' in terms of being overbearing and not adequate.

Dramatic irony is when the audience or reader knows something other characters don't such as the message behind the doctors' comment – *The operation was successful. The king is dead.* The doctors meant that they had gotten rid of an unjust and self-absorbed king. However, readers know that since the death was caused by the wooden tiger – technically the hundredth tiger – the operation proved the astrologer's prediction accurate.

JOURNEY TO THE END OF THE EARTH (by Tishani Doshi)

Theme – the need for environmental preservation and thus, the lesson may be linked to Keeping Quiet, A Thing of Beauty, and The Tiger King

Key Details –

1) The Program: The program 'Students on Ice' was initiated by Geoff Green to make a positive change for the environment. At first, he used to bring celebrities to Antarctica and in return, they donated money for environmental initiatives. He realized that they could only help in 'one' way. If he really wanted a change in the people's mindset, he would have to change the way the next generation thought. He began bringing a select group of high school students for this trip. The aim was to show them the wonderful landscape of Antarctica and highlight how the actions of mankind far away were affecting the beauty of this land. The writer of this extract, Tishani Doshi was escorting one such group of high school students.

2) The Past: Antarctica helps remember the past of the world. Once upon a time, all continents were part of one massive supercontinent called Gondwanaland. Eventually, with time, the continent split and other

landmasses moved away from Antarctica which stayed in the southernmost part of the world. Even today, under the icy top layers and under the water surrounding Antarctica are numerous fossil records and unusual creatures that have survived due to the absence of human population here. No one can stay in Antarctica for over six months and even Tishani had to travel for over 100 hours, cross nine time zones, and many ecospheres to reach there.

3) The Present: Anyone who steps onto Antarctic land for the first time will notice how contrasting the landscape is to any other place in the world. One will be hit by the sheer vastness, whiteness, remote location, and lack of human markers such as billboards or markets or buildings. Tishani was also filled with this sense of wonder when she reached. Unfortunately, human actions elsewhere in the world are affecting the global environment today because of which the beautiful glaciers and icebergs of Antarctica are melting.

4) The Future: Going to Antarctica was full of epiphanies for Tishani Doshi. She realized how everything is interconnected. The smallest green organisms in the water called phytoplankton are necessary to sustain the entire marine food chain. This is why even our smallest actions in our homes can affect the Antarctic landscape. Once upon a time, the Sahara Desert was covered with ice. It is now mostly barren and arid. One wonders if this will happen to Antarctica as well because we are not able to understand the import of our actions on the global environment. It is time to act now and do our best to preserve this pristine location on our precious planet and in doing so, we would be saving this world for all residents, flora and fauna, everyone else as well.

THE ENEMY (by Pearl S. Buck)

Theme – Universal brotherhood so the lesson may be linked to The Last Lesson, Indigo, Keeping Quiet, No Men are Foreign (poem by James Kirkup studied in Grade 9, CBSE)

1) The opening scene – What was the need to place the opening scene as part of the story? Sadao's father believed that 'those islands yonder' (the uninhabited islands over there) will be the stepping-stones to the future of Japan. He had meant that one day, the islands near Japan which were disputed – the ownership was claimed by both Korea and Japan – one day, the mills on that island will run again and employ people improving the Japanese economy. However, in our story, Tom, the Prisoner of War, escapes to that island and from there, presumably, goes back home. The island was thus a symbol of humanity and kindness which could spell a positive future for Japan and their relationship with America. So in a way, the father's words came true.

2) Sadao Hoki – Sadao grew up in Japan and looked up to his father – an orthodox man who believed in Japanese traditions, used only Japanese furniture, and hoped for the better future of his country. He was not openly affectionate by nature but gave Sadao the best of education and necessities. Sadao was sent to America to study medicine. He returned to Japan and became the best surgeon and scientist. His father felt content and eventually passed away. Sadao was researching on a way to make wounds clean and infection free which would be a boon for soldiers. He was also the personal physician of General Takima.

3) General Takima – This General was known to be courageous of the battlefield. There were also rumours about him committing physical abuse of his wife and torture on prisoners of war. From the story, one can also glean that General Takima was quite self-absorbed and prioritized his personal cares above his duty. This is evident in three ways. Takima suffered from gall bladder stones and so, he did not send Sadao to the border in case a surgery was necessary. Much later in the story, when Sadao informed him about Tom, the General promised to send assassins to kill the prisoner of war but forgot all about it because of poor health. Lastly, when Sadao hinted that the prisoner had escaped and the General realized Sadao may have helped, Takima did not arrest Sadao hoping to keep his own dereliction of duty a secret.

3) Hana – Sadao met Hana at an American professor's house. He liked her but did not allow himself to call his feelings love or to propose marriage till he knew that she came from a pure Japanese bloodline. Even so, she could be married only with Sadao's father's approval. However, Hana never minded any of it as she was traditional as well. Sadao and she had two children and a comfortable home.

We see her courage and humanity in many ways. She finds herself unable to throw the prisoner of war back into the ocean. She is the one who suggests taking him home for initial care. When the governess Yumi refuses to help, Hana washes the prisoner despite her aversion to blood. She pukes as the operation reveals more blood but returns nonetheless to help Sadao. She takes care of the prisoner while he stays with them. She does not break down or give up when the helpers move out and she has to take on all household chores.

4) Tom – A young soldier with glorified dreams of serving his nation, Tom finds himself a prisoner of war. The wound in his back shows that he must have tried to escape and was shot from the back. He covers up the wound somehow but is again injured when escaping via the ocean. He wakes up in a Japanese home with his 'enemies' or Japanese folk all around him. The initial days must have been full of fear because he could not move and these people could have handed him over to the authorities any day. As he begins to trust them, he finds them aloof to him and they refuse to make any kind of personal contact. He is full of gratitude to the doctor and his wife not only for saving his life when he was first found but for helping him eventually escape from Japan.

5) The helpers – There are three Japanese helpers at Sadao's home and all have worked there for years. The oldest perhaps is the gardener who pinches flower buds and uses blood to fertilize the soil. The cook has no trouble cutting off the head of a chicken and letting the blood flow into the plants. The governess is relatively new as she must have been hired only when the children were born. All of them use the necessary cruelty their profession demands and strongly believe that Tom should not be saved. Their reasoning is based not only on the fact that Tom was an American, but he had been wounded by a bullet as well as rocks. It seemed against the will of nature and God to save him. They stay in the house till they believe the master will hand over the man to the authorities. However, when this does not happen, they leave the house to avoid being traitorous, but they remain loyal and do not spill the beans to the authorities.

6) Sadao's decisions – What prompted Sadao to save Tom initially, help him escape and even keep checking if Tom required anything post the escape? In one word, humanity. A sense of bonding with every other human being on the planet is an inherent part of every person; however, due to political, racial or other prejudices, one sometimes ignores our basic identity as a human being.

Sadao was patriotic and grew up idolizing his orthodox father. Nonetheless, as a doctor, he could not go back on his oath so easily. He decided to help Tom convincing himself that once the bullet was out, he would hand Tom over to the authorities.

During the operation, he forgot all prejudices and treated Tom like any other patient – ironically, even calling him a 'friend'. Once the man was safe, Sadao decided to let the man recover a bit before getting him arrested. Nonetheless, even after this, he could not complete the letter he had begun to write to the authorities. Once the helpers left the house and an officer came to call him on behalf of the General, he observed Hana's distress and came clean with the General informing the latter about Tom.

Although it was stress and anxiety over the arrival of the assassins that prompted him to let Tom escape, it does not explain why Sadao continued to watch for the flashlight signals. It does not explain why Sadao asked Tom to signal if he ran out of supplies – meaning that Sadao would help him further.

The only explanation is that deep down, Sadao is a human being and a doctor first, a Japanese later. He was helped in myriad ways by Americans while he studied there. His professor and the man's wife organized a get-together for him and others like him. It was there that he met Hana. When he was unwell, his landlady cared for him. He owed his expertise to his American professor of Anatomy. Yet, he felt that the Japanese man (like him) was superior to any American. Yet, perhaps, the kindness of those Americans was somewhere in the back of his mind when he helped Tom. His prejudice lost the battle against his duty as a doctor and a fellow human being.

ON THE FACE OF IT (by Susan Hill)

Theme – The need for acceptance when differently abled. A good mentor's role in one's life. The lesson can be linked to Going Places or Memories of Childhood in terms of acceptance and with Indigo in terms of the difference a good mentor can make. In terms of the buzzing of bees example, one may link it to Robert Lynd's humorous essay – 'The Hum of Insects'

Key Details –

1) Derry – Fourteen years old, withdrawn and defiant by nature. However, this attitude is just a façade. He wants to be accepted and loved as he is and is hurt by the comments he often overhears. His injury has made him push people away and he believes that everyone is afraid of his looks now.

2) Mr. Lamb – Injured in the war, he lost his leg and went through a phase where people rudely nicknamed him 'Lamey Lamb'. Instead of pushing the world away, Mr. Lamb opened his garden, the curtains of his house and his heart to the world. He welcomed anyone who cared to visit and established a rapport with them regardless of whether his friendship was returned. He spent his time making jams and jellies, reading and gardening.

3) The examples – Mr. Lamb saw beauty where others couldn't. He had a separate spot in his garden to give space to the usually unwanted plants. He heard music in the buzzing of bees. He helped Derry see that the world had enough beauty to be admired in each element.

4) The mentorship – Mr. Lamb did not sympathize with Derry or pity him. He did not ask any question about the acid attack till Derry prompted him. Even on listening to the story, he did not keep the focus on the story itself. Rather, Mr. Lamb shared examples of beauty in other forms such as the weeds or the bees in his garden.

Derry could not overcome his defiant nature easily. The acid's impact on his face could not be covered up unlike Mr. Lamb's leg. Similarly, the example of Beauty and the Beast made him annoyed because there was no magic spell or kiss that could reverse his condition. However, Derry learned to laugh with the example of the man who shut himself in his room to avoid the world and yet, met his end. He learned to appreciate the garden. He learned that the curtainless house allowed the brightness of the sun to enter. In short, he learned to welcome the world again regardless of the reciprocation.

Once inspired, he argued with his mother and returned to Mr. Lamb.

5) The controversial end – The ending leaves the reader upset. We learn that the children who visit the garden never come back – as Mr. Lamb confesses to his bees. We also see Mr. Lamb plummet to his death. The positive aspect could be that even so close to the end of his life, Mr. Lamb was able to inspire Derry to live again.

MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD (by Zitkala-Sa and Bama)

In a world torn apart by racial segregation, these two stories take on even more significance.

The cutting of my long hair –

Missionaries came to an American Indian tribe when Zitkala-Sa was eight and took her with them on the train to an English school in Indiana. Indiana grows a lot of apples, so Zitkala-Sa says her school was based in the land of apples. Coming from a quiet and peaceful tribal life where she wore loose clothes and moccasins, the bells, other noises, and the uniform of the school seemed harsh to her ears. She was embarrassed and unable to understand the rules about praying and eating at the dining hall. She could not

understand English at this time and her only friend there, Judewin scared her saying that the English women at the school, possibly the missionary nuns, meant to cut their hair to match those of the other girl students. In her tribe, warriors used to cut their enemy's hair to claim victory over them and thus, only the defeated cowards were seen with singled hair. Wanting to escape this cutting of her long hair, Zitkala-Sa tried to hide in the infirmary. However, it was all in vain because she was found, bound to a chair and her hair were cut. It was akin to her losing her cultural identity so far away from her home.

Thus, in her story, formal education was a way to homogenize cultures rather than respecting cultural differences. She eventually became a writer and used the pen-name Zitkala-Sa to criticize the Carlisle Indian school.

We too are human beings

Bama was a Tamil Dalit child from a catholic family. Around the same age as Zitkala-Sa, studying in Grade III, Bama had not yet been exposed to casteism. She usually enjoyed her walk home from school as it took her through the market where there were myriad interesting activities going on. One day, she observed an elder of her community bring fried snacks to the landlord. The elder held the packet away from his body throughout and bowed and offered it to the landlord with extreme humility. She also saw other people from her community working for the landlord. She went home and related the incident to her older brother who explained the concept of 'untouchability' to her. He further helped her understand how education could bridge the gap between castes. Thus inspired, she began to study hard and eventually made lots of friends at school because she was a good student.

As opposed to Zitkala-Sa's experiences, Bama found an instrument of positive change in education. She was able to use this instrument to carve out her niche among the students of her school and eventually became a writer of merit.

Thus, Mandela was correct when he claimed that education is the most powerful weapon which we can use to change the world but it also depends, in whose hands rests this power and what is their mission.