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

blew over: give a long, angry speech of criticism or accusation  
was struck dumb: render speechless, as by surprise or shock  
catapulted into: to shoot forth or launch  
a coat of mail: an armoured coat made of chain mail, interlinked rings, or overlapping metal plates  
played into their hands: to act or behave so as to give an advantage to (an opponent).  
the favourite haunt: a frequently visited place  
heard a bell ringing: stirring an often indistinct memory

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Think As you Read

1. What does the writer mean by 'the fiery misery' of those subjected to make-up'?

Answer: The heat produced by the lights in the make-up room brought about a lot of discomfort to the actors in the make-up room. Hence the writer refers to this pain and trouble as 'fiery misery'.

2. What is the example of national integration that the author refers to?

Answer: The make-up division of the Gemini Studios was an example of national integration. According to the author, this is so because people from different regions and religious groups worked together in the same department. The department was headed by a Bengali who was succeeded by a Maharashtrian. The other helpers included a Dharwar Kannadiga, an Andhra, a Madras Indian Christian, an Anglo-Burmese and the local Tamils.

3. What work did the 'office boy' do in the Gemini Studios? Why did he join the studios? Why was he disappointed?

Answer: The office boy applies make-up on the players who played the crowd. On the days of crowd shooting, he would mix his paint in a big vessel and apply it quickly and noisily on the faces of the players. He had joined the studios with the hope of becoming a star actor or a screen writer, director or lyrics writer. He was disappointed because he failed and remained only a 'boy'.

4. Why did the author appear to be doing nothing at the studios?

Answer: The author's duty was to cut out newspaper clippings on a wide variety of subjects and store them in files. Many of these had to be written out in hand. The onlookers noticed him merely tearing up newspapers. Hence to them he seemed to be doing next to nothing.

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