* *The English Teacher* R. K. Narayan
* **A sense of lack**
* **Beginning: incompleteness/estrangement**
* “What was wrong with me? I couldn’t say, some sort of vague disaffection, a self-rebellion I might call it. The feeling again and again came upon me that as I was nearing thirty I should cease to live like a cow, eating, working in a manner of speaking, walking, talking, etc.—all done to perfection, I was sure, but always leaving behind a sense of something missing.” (5)
* **Monotony of his daily life**
* I took stock of my daily life. I got up at eight every day, read for the fiftieth time Milton, Carlyle and Shakespeare, looked through compositions, swallowed a meal, dressed and rushed out of the hostel just when the second bell sounded at college; four hours later I returned to my room; my duty in the interval had been admonishing, cajoling and browbeating a few hundred boys of Albert Mission College so that they might mug up Shakespeare and Milton and secure high marks and save me adverse remarks from my chiefs at the end of the year. (5)
* **Sarcasm/his poetic sensibility**
* For this pain the authorities kindly paid me a hundred rupees on the first of every month and clubbed me a lecturer. One ought, of course, to be thankful and rest content. But such repose was not in my nature, perhaps because I was a poet, and I was constantly nagged by the feeling that I was doing the wrong work. This was responsible for a perpetual self-criticism and all kinds of things aggravated it. For instance what my good chief Brown had said to us that day might be very reasonable, but it irritated and upset me. (5)
* **Mild irreverence for authority figures**
* Gajapathy; “He looked so heavily concerned that I felt like pricking him so that he might vanish like a bubble leaving no trace behind. But I checked myself. It would be unwise: he was my senior in office, and he might give me an hour of extra work every day, or compel me to teach the history of language, of which I knew nothing.” (6)
* **Mentally unstable at times**
* Later when I went for a walk I still continued the debate. But suddenly I saw illumination and checked myself. It showed a weak, uncontrolled mind, this incapacity to switch off. I now subjected myself to a remorseless self-analysis. Why had I become incapable of controlling my thoughts? I brooded over it. Needless to say it took me nowhere. It left me more exhausted and miserable at the end of the day.
* **He finds a solution**
* All this trouble was due to lack of exercise and irregular habits: so forthwith I resolved to be up very early next day, go out along the river on a long walk, run a few yards, bathe in the river and regulate my life thus. (7)
* **Nature as a redeemer**
* The eastern skyline was reddening, and I felt triumphant. I could not understand how people could remain in bed when there was such a glory awaiting them outside.
* I walked on at an even pace, filling my lungs with morning air, and taking great strides. (9-10)
* Nature, nature, all our poets repeat till they are hoarse. There are subtle, invisible emanations in nature’s surroundings: with them the deepest in us merges and harmonizes. I think it is the higher form of joy and peace we can ever comprehend. I decided to rush back to my table and write a poem on nature. (10)
* **Monotony—lack of commitment—inefficiency—boredom**
* I had four hours of teaching to do that day. Four periods of continuous work and I hadn’t prepared even a page of lecture.
* I went 5 minutes late to the class, and I could dawdle over the attendance for a quarter of an hour. I picked out the attendance register and called out the first name.. . Two boys in the front bench got up and suggested “Sir, take the attendance at the end of the period.”
* “Sit down please, can’t be done. I can’t encroach into the next hour’s work . . ..” (12)
* **Death of his wife—**  
  freezes his senses
* The sun is beating down mercilessly, but I don’t feel it. I feel nothing, and see nothing. All sensations are blurred and vague.
* I am unable to do anything, but quietly watch in numbness. . . . I’m an imbecile, incapable of doing anything or answering any questions. (96)
* **Illusion or Reality?**
* As we cross Nallappa’s Grove once again, I cannot resist the impulse to turn and look back. Flames appear over the wall. . . . It leaves a curiously dull pain at heart. There are no more surprises or shocks in life, so that I watch the flame without agitation. For me the greatest reality is this and nothing else. . . . Nothing else will worry or interest me in life hereafter. (96)
* The days had acquired a peculiar blankness and emptiness. (97)
* **The child gives him a new goal**
* My one aim in life now was to see that she did not feel the absence of her mother. To this end I concentrated my whole being. From morning till night this kept me busy. I had to keep her cheerful and keep myself cheerful too lest she should feel unhappy. (97)
* **Believes in a divine plan**
* Refuses to marry another woman
* “You are unpractical and stubborn,” my mother persisted. “How are you going to look after her?”
* “As if it were a big feat! I replied with bravado. “God intends me to learn these things and do them efficiently. I can’t shirk it. . . .
* **Living without illusions**
* Living without illusions seemed to be the greatest task for me in life now.
* The twists and turns of fate would cease to shock if we knew, and expected nothing more than, the barest truths and facts of life. (98)
* **Time as the great healer**
* Even sad and harrowing memories were cherished by me; for in the contemplation of those sad scenes and hapless hours, I seemed to acquire a new peace, a new outlook; a view of life with a place for everything. (100)
* **One day in retrospect the years of struggle will strike you as the most beautiful.**

**~ Sigmund Freud**

* **Change after interaction with wife**
* Nowadays I went about my work with a light heart. I felt as if a dead load had been lifted. The day seemed full of possibilities of surprise and joy. At home I devoted myself to my studies more energetically. The sense of futility was leaving me. I attended to my work earnestly. All the morning I sat preparing my day’s lectures. My little daughter watched me curiously. “Father is reading!” she exclaimed.
* **Children as sensitive souls**
* “Children are keener sighted by nature. She sees me (Susila), and perhaps takes it naturally, since children spontaneously see only the souls of persons. Children see spirit forms so often that it is natural to their condition and state of mind.” (120)
* **Children as source of joy**
* “Wonderful creatures! It is wonderful how much they can see and do! I tell you, sir, live in their midst and you will want nothing else in life.”
* “These are classrooms,” he said. “Not for them. For us elders to learn. Just watch them for a while.” (124)
* They were digging into the sand, running up the ladder, swinging, sliding down slopes—all so happy. “This is the meaning of the word joy—in its purest sense. We can learn a great deal watching them and playing with them. When we are qualified we can enter their life . . .”
* “When I watch them, I get a glimpse of some purpose in existence and creation.” (125)
* **The Head master in good faith**
* “Some twenty years ago when I passed my B.A. at the university, they wanted me to take law; and then wanted to rush me into an office chair, but I resisted. I loved children and wanted to start the school. How can anyone prevent me from what I want? I was hustled into a marriage which did not interest me, and I was not going to be hustled into a profession I did not care for.” (146)
* **Syllabus versus System**
* “What fool could be insensible to Shakespeare’s sonnets . . .?” I reflected. “But what about the examinations and critical notes? Didn’t these largely take the place of literature? What about our own roots?” I thought over it deeply and felt very puzzled. I added: “I am up against the system, the whole method and approach of system of education which makes us morons, cultural morons, but efficient clerks for all your business and administrative offices. You must not think that I am opposed to my particular studies of authors. . . .” (178-179)
* Krishna to Mr. Brown: “I am beginning a new experiment in education, with another friend.”
* “Sir, what I am doing in the college hardly seems to me work. I mug up and repeat and they mug up and repeat in examinations. . . . It is a fraud I am practising for a consideration of a hundred rupees a month. . . . It doesn’t please my innermost self. . . .”
* **Innermost aspirations**
* “Of all the persons on earth, I can afford to do what seems to me work, something which satisfies my innermost aspiration. I will write poetry and live and work with children and watch their minds unfold . . .” (180)