**Summary of Poets and Pancakes**

Poets and Pancakes, written by Tamil writer Asokamitran, is an account of his days in service at Gemini Studios in Chennai. Set up in 1940, it was one of the most influential film-producing organisations in India at that time. The job of the writer was to cut out newspaper clippings on a wide range of topics and save those in files. Although his job was considered quite insignificant, he was well-informed about everything and everyone at Gemini Studios. Poets and Pancakes gives the reader a comprehensive description of various characters at the studios. It talks about people’s dreams, aspirations, failures, virtues and vices – making it a perfect study of human behaviour and characters in the midst of the film-producing world of India, in the twentieth century. He also talks about his struggle as a writer during his tenure at Gemini Studios. Poets and Pancakes Summary gives us an insight into the author’s perspective of the world and society around him in the 1900s. People’s actions and reactions at Gemini Studios indicate the presence of a simple mindset and blissful ignorance of deep political matters at that time. Students can read the following summary for a good grasp of the chapter. They can also visit [CBSE Notes](https://byjus.com/cbse-notes/) and CBSE Summary for more information and study material on the Class 12 CBSE English syllabus.

**CBSE Class 12 English Poets and Pancakes Summary**

The narrator talks about a popular make-up brand that was used in the Gemini Studios – Pancake. The narrator reckons that this particular brand of make-up might have been used by prominent cinema actresses in India and abroad. The make-up department of Gemini Studios was situated upstairs in a building that was supposedly one of Robert Clive’s stables.

The make-up room looked like a hair-cutting salon with lights at all angles on half a dozen mirrors. The lights were incandescent, and the poet comments on the degree of heat the people who sat for make-up were subjected to. The narrator then talks about the ownership of the make-up department chronologically. It was initially headed by a Bengali who was succeeded by a Maharashtrian, a Dharwar Kannadiga, an Andhra, a Madras Indian Christian, an Anglo-Burmese and then by the local Tamils. The narrator lauds the early conception of national integration at the make-up department of Gemini Studios, which was later a prominent feature of the programmes broadcasted by A.I.R. and Doordarshan.

The objective of the people who did make-up was to create a distinguished appearance of the actor with an ample amount of make-up, which the narrator found to be like the creation of a ‘hideous crimson hued monster’. Those early days were mostly about indoor shooting, and the make-up had to be made ‘ugly’ to make the characters more presentable in the movies, owing to the presence of numerous studio lights.

The make-up department followed a strict hierarchy. The chief make-up man tended to the principal actor or actress. His senior assistant tended to the ‘second hero’ and so on. The make-up department even had an office boy who was the last in the chain of hierarchy. This office boy used to put make-up on the less significant actors – the ones who used to be part of a large group of people in a crowd shooting. The narrator mentions that the office boy of the make-up department was often not actually a boy, but a forty-year-old man who had entered the studios hoping to become a star actor or a top screenwriter, director or lyrics writer. The office boy was a bit of a poet, in fact.

The narrator was always intercepted by others owing to his nature of work. Since he was mostly tearing newspaper clippings, people thought that his work was of minimal importance and would drop into his cubicle randomly to talk to him about their worries and opinions. The office boy of the make-up department frequently felt the necessity to enlighten the narrator on how his literary talent was being wasted at a place fit for only ‘barbers and perverts’. He also considered Subbu, the number 2 at Gemini Studios, to be the driving force of misery for his condition at the workplace.

According to the narrator, Subbu was a person who did not get exposure to firmly established film producing companies or studios at the beginning of his career. The narrator also reckons that Subbu might not have had exposure to formal education – at least not to the levels of the office boy of the make-up department. But he was able to get a lead over Subbu by virtue of his caste – a Brahmin. He might have had more exposure to affluent situations and people. He was always cheerful and frequently assigned work to everyone. The narrator calls Subbu perfectly suited for films and admires his spontaneity of thinking. He could come up with a variety of solutions to any cinematic problem presented to him. Subbu was also a poet and novelist, but his literary achievements were overshadowed by his success in the film world. He was also an amazing actor. He never aspired to be a lead actor but really brought life to whatever secondary roles he played. He genuinely cared for people, and his house was a permanent residence for many relatives and acquaintances. Yet, Subbu had enemies. It could be because of his seemingly close relationship with The Boss or because of his nature as a sycophant. But he never meant for good things to happen to the office boy.

Subbu was often seen with the boss in the attendance rolls, but he was grouped under the Story Department, which had a lawyer and an assembly of writers and poets. The lawyer was there as a legal advisor, but many saw him as otherwise. The narrator talks about an instance where the lawyer ended one actress’s career. The lawyer often dressed differently from others. He wore pants and ties and sometimes a coat. He looked alone and helpless – like a man of logic lost in a world of dreamers. One day The Boss closed down the Story Department, and the lawyer lost his job.

Gemini Studios was a favourite place for poets. It had an excellent mess that served good coffee throughout the day. It was a period during the Congress rule, and most of the people at the studios wore khadi and worshipped Gandhiji. They did not have much inclination towards politics but went with the flow. They were also against Communism – following the norms of the contemporary political mindset of the majority. These thoughts were vaguely prevalent only in the khadi-clad poets of Gemini Studios. It was proved during the visit by Frank Buchman’s Moral Re-Armament army. Two hundred strong men presented two plays in a professional manner. The messages of these plays were simple in nature but left a very strong impression on the Tamil plays. For some years, all Tamil plays had a scene of sunrise and sunset following one of the plays presented by this army. The narrator learned after a few years that it was a kind of counter-movement to international Communism.

After some months, another guest arrived at Gemini Studios – an English editor from London. The people at the studios figured out that he was not the editor of any prominent English newspaper like ‘*The Manchester Guardian*’ or ‘*The London Times*.’ He gave a long speech at the studios that was baffling to most and contained words like ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’, here and there.

The narrator confesses that prose writing cannot be the true pursuit of a genius. It is for those who are patient and persistent and have faced rejection so many times that nothing else can shatter their hearts. The narrator found the announcement for a story contest organised by a British periodical called the Encounter in *The Hindu*. The narrator wanted to know about this periodical before sending his manuscript. He found out that its editor was Stephen Spender – the same editor who had come to Gemini Studios. He felt an instant connection to Spender and was excited to send his manuscript.

Years later, when the narrator was out of Gemini Studios and did not have much money, he realised that anything that had a reduced price attracted his attention. Once he found a pile of low-priced books for students at fifty paise each in connection with the 50th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. He bought one book. It was named ‘The God That Failed’ and authored by six eminent men of letters who talked about their journey into Communism and their disillusioned return. As he read the names of the authors, he found the name of Stephen Spender – the poet who had visited Gemini Studios. The narrator realised the cause of that baffling reaction to Spender’s speech at Gemini Studios. The boss of Gemini Studios did not have much to do with Spender’s poems as he had to do with his views on Communism.

**Conclusion of Poets and Pancakes**

Poets and Pancakes Summary shows us the world of film-making in earlier times in India. It talks about the presence of an inclusive workforce that brought people together at Gemini Studios from all over the country. The hierarchy and relation between the colleagues portrayed are not different from the present-day workplace dynamics of any place. It shows a constant universal human psychology involved in work environments. The thoughts and behaviours exhibited by employees in a workplace are easily relatable to the ones shown in the chapter. The political ignorance exhibited by the employees at Gemini Studios is still a dominating feature of any country. The next relatable thing is the writer’s struggle for fame and recognition as a writer. The creative artist always has to struggle before he gets to taste his success, and every small connection to some renowned element of the field feels like a happy jolt. The author was excited to find out that he had seen Stephen Spender in real life – the editor and writer of two literary works he had known about.