**Summary of The Interview**

The Interview by Christopher Silvester talks about the importance of interviews and the role they play in communicating the affairs of the contemporary world to us. Christopher worked as a reporter for the Private Eye for 10 years. The Interview is an excerpt from his *Penguin Book of Interviews, An Anthology from 1859 to the Present Day*. The first part of the chapter talks about how interviews are perceived by various people. He cites famous personalities to exhibit different notions of interviews. He also advocates the importance of interviews in the field of journalism, and how they constitute important mediums of communication between the public and contemporary events and people of significance. The second part is an interview between famous writer and academician Umberto Eco and reporter from *The Hindu*, Mukund Padmanabhan. The Interview Summary gives us insights into Umberto’s opinion on his writing career and the reasons behind the success of his book – *The Name of the Rose*. Students can find the summaries for other chapters on BYJU’S CBSE Summary. They can also visit [CBSE Notes](https://byjus.com/cbse-notes/) for other information study materials on the Class 12 CBSE English syllabus.

**CBSE Class 12 English The Interview Summary**

**Part I**

The author calls the long-found ‘interview’ a commonplace for journalism. Every literate person has read an interview at some point in their lives. Several celebrities have been interviewed in the past, and it is no surprise that different people have different opinions about interviews. Some see interviews as a source of truth while people like celebrities consider themselves as victims of these interviews. They look at interviews as an unwarranted intrusion in their lives. The author compares their opinions on interviews to superstitious beliefs. The author gives an example where people used to believe in the earlier days that capturing a photograph meant stealing people’s souls.

The author gives examples of famous personalities to exhibit the differences in opinions about interviews. V.S. Naipul’s opinion was that some people are wounded by interviews and lose a part of themselves. Lewis Caroll, writer of the famous ‘Alice in Wonderland’ feared being lionised by interviews and did not consent to give any. He felt satisfied and amused at silencing all the interviewers. Rudyard Kipling regarded interviews as immoral and considered them demeaning for a respectable person. H.G. Wells, who considered interviewing an unpleasant experience, was a frequent interviewee and had also interviewed Joseph Stalin in the later years of his life. Saul Bellow had once described interviews as thumbprints on his windpipe.

The author, however, advocates the cause of interviews. He calls an interview a ‘supremely serviceable medium of communication’. He quotes Denis Brian to support his point. Denis had claimed that interviews were the most vivid impressions of contemporary people. Everything happening in the present moment is conveyed to us through one man asking questions to another. As a result of this, the interviewer holds unprecedented power and influence.

**Part II**

This part is an excerpt from an interview between Umberto Eco and Mukund Padmanabhan. Umberto Eco is a well-known professor of semiotics from the University of Bologna in Italy. The interviewer Mukund Padmanabhan worked for *The Hindu*. Umberto’s works were limited to academic pursuits till he started writing fiction. He achieved stardom in 1980 when his book *The Name of The Rose* was published. The book sold more than 10 million copies.

Mukund starts the interview by quoting English novelist David Lodge who had remarked that Umberto Eco was one man capable of doing all things. Umberto replies that it is true that he gives the impression that he is doing a lot of things but is always convinced at the end that he is doing the same thing. He elaborates that all his works ultimately represent his philosophy of peace and non-violence. They are just a bunch of ethical philosophical interests. Umberto also goes ahead to reveal his secret that he works in the empty spaces of lives which he calls interstices.

Next, Mukund comments on Umberto’s style of fiction writing. He points out that Umberto’s style of writing fiction is quite informal and playful in nature as compared to his serious and dry style of academic writing. Umberto reminisces about the presentation of his first Doctoral Dissertation in Italy. One of the professors had commented on the unique presentation by Umberto Eco. Instead of talking about his hypotheses, and drawing conclusions by correcting them, Umberto told the story of his research along with the trials and errors involved in them. Umberto then discovered that it was more functional to write scholarly books in the form of narratives. This finally led him to start writing narratives at the age of fifty. He talks about how his friend Roland Barthes had always wanted to engage in creative writing but could never do so. Umberto reveals that he never felt this kind of frustration in life. He had started writing narratives accidentally, and they satisfied his taste for narration.

Interestingly, Umberto has written over forty academic articles as compared to the minimal number of five fictional novels. Mukun wanted to know if it bothered Umberto when the majority recognised him as a novelist rather than an academician. Umberto admitted that it did bother him because he considered himself a university professor who writes novels on Sundays. However, he acknowledges the fact that he cannot hope to reach a big audience of 1 million readers by just writing academic articles on semiotics. The next question is on Umberto’s successful work – *The Name of the Rose*. Mukund finds it a wonder that the book which was on metaphysics, theology and mediaeval history enjoyed such a huge mass audience. Umberto explains that only journalists and publishers are puzzled about this. They assume that people do not like difficult reading experiences. If *The Name of the Rose* sold between 10 and 15 million copies in a world of 6 billion people, it meant that this particular number of people did not like easy reading experiences.

As to the question about Umberto’s book being a success because it dealt with a period of mediaeval history, the writer calls the reason behind this a mystery. Umberto’s American publisher loved the book but did not expect the book to sell more than 3000 copies in a country like the U.S. where nobody had seen a cathedral or studied Latin. However, the book sold two or three million copies in the U.S.

**Conclusion of The Interview**

The interview Summary demonstrates that the public can connect to its significant contemporary counterparts through interviews conducted by journalists. Interviews not only help us understand the interviewee’s point of view but also give us new information and perspectives to think about. These facts and perspectives can act as eye-openers for us and offer us new food for thought. Umberto Eco reveals his secret of working in empty spaces is a fresh outlook of looking at things. He also proposes that not all people succumb to works of easy reading, some enjoy a difficult reading experience too.

A detailed understanding of the chapter can help students critically analyse and appreciate it. Students can refer to our website for further information and content related to the Class 12 English subject for better understanding and preparation for [CBSE](https://byjus.com/cbse/) board exams. They can also access topics like grammar and writing in English.