ENGLISH
Reading & Literature
Class XI

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Thimphu

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Foreword

Following the advent of modern education in the country, the English language has been given an important place along with Dzongkha, the national language. English has, in fact, been the language of instruction for many school subjects, and it has served our purpose well even outside the curriculum.

The emphasis of the English curriculum is on the improvement of language skills of students, on literature studies written in the contemporary English language, the inclusion of non-fiction writing and changes in the approach to the assessment of students' performance. The curriculum also demands a change in the way in which students are taught, specifically a movement away from the teacher-centred classroom to a gender-sensitive, student-centred learning environment. This means that the teacher is responsible for designing activities that promote active learning while the students play a greater role in their own learning. The teacher will act as a facilitator to allow students to explore and create knowledge.

The selection of texts represents a conscious and rigorous effort to bring to our classrooms an assortment of rich and varied literary experiences presented through different genres which celebrate the dignity of content and the beauty of language.

The plans put forward in the curriculum offer a balanced programme with adequate instructional time to develop the skills in each strand of Reading & Literature, Writing, Listening and Speaking and Language. The goal is to provide adequate time to learn these skills so that students are able to communicate with eloquence and receive the communication of others with respect and clarity.

The Ministry of Education and Skills Development hopes that the English Curriculum will open the doors to new opportunities for our students to improve their English language skills. The learning programmes in the curriculum will ensure that they will acquire the knowledge to continue higher studies and the skills they require to become competent communicators – in reading, writing, listening and speaking as required in the workplace and society.

The Ministry wishes to acknowledge the valuable contributions of the teachers and teacher-educators to the development of the curriculum.

Tashi Delek.

Karma Galay
Director General

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Foreword to Reading & Literature

"I am part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravl'd world, whose margin
Fades for ever and for ever when I move."
- *"Ulysses", Alfred Lord Tennyson*

Like Ulysses, when we read, we become travellers through worlds whose horizons beckon and entice us farther and farther into realms beyond our own daily experiences. We travel from our own world to different places and times, go to a universe beyond our own, a universe in which we meet people who hold ideas and beliefs which confirm, challenge, and elaborate what we know, understand and believe.

Reading is the key to unlocking the vault of the wisdom of the race. To read well is to be in contact with those who have gone before us, who have discovered what it is to be human and the best ways to organise themselves to achieve happiness.

We do not always read for such exalted reasons. Reading is also something we use to do everyday things at work or at home: things like shopping, reading mail, getting information on topics of interest and getting instructions on how to do things or put things together. We also read to learn the ideas of others on more abstract issues like political thought or religious beliefs. We read for pleasure and to pass the time. Sometimes we read our favourite authors simply because we like to read their works. Whatever the reasons we have for reading, it is making meaning with text in an interactive process that engages the reader, the writer, and the text in a dialogue about the subject of the piece.

Engaging in the dialogue begins when the reader tries to be clear about what the writer or her characters are saying and doing. Frequently, once that has been achieved and is clear, the reader does not want to go further. The knowledge of what has been read is enough. But just as frequently, readers want to move beyond the simple knowledge of a book to levels of dialogue, which engage them, the writer, and the text in negotiations about the significance of what has been said or enacted in the piece. It is in this kind of dialogue that the focus shifts from the surface knowledge of the text to attempts to comprehend what has been read at more profound levels, to delight in possible interpretations, to analyse how the writer achieves the cogency of the piece, and ultimately, the evaluation of the beauty and the validity of what has been said.

Whatever the level of the dialogue, the readers bring to the table not only their knowledge of the text under study, but also their experiences with other texts, the experiences they have had in real life or have imagined, and quite likely, sets of beliefs that challenge the point of view of the writer. Students need to be taught the strategies to read in these ways. And they need time to participate in activities, which are planned by the teachers to allow them to practise the strategies.

The literature in the syllabus provides the material to teach students how to read, while at the same time permitting them to read some of the best literature available in English. Students have to learn how to make meaning by themselves and to appreciate what it means to have met some of the best writers and their works in the course of their studies. If we can build classroom communities where that can be arranged, then, like Ulysses, our readers will be drawn to travel through new worlds of experience whose horizons keep expanding.

Standards for Reading & Literature for Key Stage V

Read and comprehend complex text types independently and proficiently.

1. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
2. Analyse a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature drawing on a wide range of world literature.
3. Identify and analyze the steps in their own reading process to broaden their critical understanding and metacognition.
4. Analyse how an author's choices of text structure create effects such as mystery, tension, and surprise.
5. Study different genres of literature independently and reflect on the different ways in which people discover meaning in their lives; different expressions of fundamental values like Truth, Goodness, and Beauty; the possibilities of human achievement; and find directions and models for one's own aspirations.

Learning Objectives for Reading & Literature

Sl No	Learning Objectives	Core Concepts/Topics	Essential Skills
1	Use appropriate reading strategies and skills developed in earlier classes to achieve various reading goals.	Building on to prior knowledge, concepts, and skills	Language and literacy skills: • Justify points of view with relevant supporting points • Use the knowledge of the features of different kinds of texts to enhance comprehension and analysis • Analyse structures and presentation styles to evaluate the efficacy to match the purpose • Analyse non-fiction and non-continuous texts to gather information Social, behavioural, and affective skills. • Internalise and practice ethics and values encountered in reading. • Appreciate the beauty of language achieved using various literary devices • Value and practice one's own cultural beliefs and practices while acknowledging and appreciating diversity • Demonstrate understanding of the concepts of love, spirituality, tolerance, and patriotism • Appreciate the beauty created by literature Note: Teachers should identify additional appropriate skills based on the lesson plans and learning activities.
2	Read fiction and non-fiction texts with fluency and confidence using the features and purposes of different kinds of texts as a strategy for making meaning.	Different genres of literature have different features	
3	Apply close and critical reading and viewing to a variety of texts to enhance their understanding of how lexical and grammatical items are used in context.	Critical reading strategies	
4	Analyse how authors achieve their effects using linguistic, structural, and presentational devices – points of view, figurative language, flashback, parallel argument, symbols, and image patterns - and use this information to help make meaning with the text.	Linguistic features and rhetorical devices to achieve desired effects on the audience	
5	Analyse author's purpose and evaluate the style of writing to persuade an intended audience.	Persuasive techniques	
6	Select and analyse information from a variety of texts to support their points of view.	Analyse information	
7	Evaluate the effect of the use of relevant literary devices in a text.	Literal and figurative language	
8	Assess their own values in the light of what they encounter in the literature they study to enrich their personal, cultural, and national beliefs.	Diversity in cultural values, beliefs, and practices	
9	Compare and contrast different cultural values, traditions, and beliefs, using situations encountered in the literature they are reading.	Make text-to-life connections for personal growth.	
10	Distinguish the best pieces of literature and make choices for their personal collection.	Differentiate the quality of literary texts.	
11	Come to a new understanding of the human condition through their readings – the notions of spirituality, love, understanding, impermanence, tolerance, and patriotism.	Internalizing values for emotional maturity.	
12	Read to develop language skills and understand literature for an appreciation of both national and universal culture.	Universal values and good practices	
13	Talk about Bhutanese writers as well as major classical and modern writers and their works.	National and international literary status	
14	Demonstrate a sense of beauty and harmony through reading literature.	Heightened aesthetic sense.	
15	Build vocabulary through reading.	Vocabulary	
16	Engage in sustained reading and viewing for pleasure, personal development, and learning.	Reading for pleasure and life-long learning.	
17	Distinguish American and British English.	Differences in the British and American English	
18	Read at least 40 pieces of fiction and non-fiction texts.	Sustained reading	

SHORT STORIES

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1. Jamaican Fragment - *A.L. Hendricks*

EVERY day I walk a half-mile from my home to the tramcar lines in the morning, and from the lines to my home in the evening. The walk is pleasant. The road on either side is flanked by red- and green-roofed bungalows, green lawns and gardens. The exercise is good for me and now and then I learn something from a little incident.

One morning, about half-way between my front gate and the tram track, I noticed two little boys playing in the garden of one of the more modest cottages. They were both very little boys, one was four years old perhaps, the other five. The bigger of the two was a sturdy youngster, very dark, with a mat of coarse hair on his head and coal-black eyes. He was definitely a little Jamaican-a strong little Jamaican. The other little fellow was smaller, but also sturdy-he was white, with hazel eyes and light-brown hair. Both were dressed in blue shirts and khaki pants: they wore no shoes and their feet were muddy. They were not conscious of my standing there watching them; they played on. The game, if it could be called a game, was not elaborate. The little white boy strode imperiously up and down and every now and then shouted imperiously at his bigger playmate. The little brown boy shuffled along quietly behind him and did what he was told.

"Pick up that stick!" The dark boy picked it up.
"Jump into the flowers!" The dark boy jumped.
"Get me some water!" The dark boy ran inside. The white boy sat down on the lawn.

I was amazed. Here before my eyes, a white baby, for they were little more than babies, was imposing his will upon a little black boy. And the little black boy submitted. I puzzled within myself as I went down the road. Could it be that the little dark boy was the son of a servant in the home and therefore had to do the white boy's bidding? No. They were obviously dressed alike, the little dark boy was of equal class with his playmate. No. They were playmates, the little dark boy was a neighbour's child. I was sure of that. Then how was it that he obeyed so faithfully the white boy's orders? Was it that even at his early age he sensed that in his own country he would be at the white man's beck and call? Could he in such youth divine a difference between himself and the white boy? And did the little white youngster so young, such a baby, realize that he would grow to dominate the black man? Was there an indefinable quality in the white man that enabled his baby, smaller and younger than his playmate, to make him his slave? Was there really some difference between a white man and black man? Something that made the white superior? I could find no answer. I could not bring myself to believe such a thing, and yet, with my own eyes I had seen a little dark boy take orders from a little white boy - a little white boy obviously his social equal, and younger and smaller. Were

we as a race really inferior? So inferior that even in our infancy we realized our deficiencies, and accepted a position as the white man's servant?

For a whole day I puzzled over this problem. For a whole day my faith in my people was shaken. When I passed that afternoon the little boys were not there. That evening I thought deeply on the subject.

The next morning the boys were there again, and a man was standing at the gate watching them. I stopped and looked, just to see what the white boy was making his little servant do. To my utter astonishment the little dark boy was striding imperiously up and down the lawn, while the white youngster walked abjectly behind him.

"Get me a banana!" The little white boy ran into the house and reappeared shortly with a banana. "Peel it for me!" The little white boy skinned the banana and handed it to his dark master.

I saw it now. This was indeed a game, a game I had played as a child. Each boy took it in turn every alternate day to be the boss, the other the slave. It had been great fun to me as a youngster. I smiled as I remembered. I looked at the man standing by the gate. He was a white man. I remembered what I had thought yesterday. He, no doubt, I thought to myself, was wondering if the black race is superior to the white. I laughed gently to myself. How silly grown-ups are, how clever we are, how wonderfully able we are to impute deep motives to childish actions! How suspicious we are when we have been warped by prejudice! This man, I said to myself, will puzzle all day on whether the blacks will eventually arise and rule the world because he thinks he sees a little black boy realizing at a tender age his superiority over the white. I will save him his puzzle. I will explain it to him. I went across to him.

"I know what you're thinking," I said. "You're thinking that maybe the black race is superior to the white, because you just saw the little dark youngster on the lawn ordering the little white boy around. Don't think that, it's a game they play. Alternate days one is boss, the other the servant. It's a grand game. I used to play it and maybe so did you. Yesterday I saw the little white boy bossing the dark one and I worried all day over the dark boy's realization of his inferiority so young in life! We are silly, we grown-ups, aren't we?"

The man was surprised at my outburst. He looked at me smiling.

"I know all about the game," he said. "The boys are brothers - my sons." He pointed to a handsome brown woman on the veranda who had just come out to call in the children. "That's my wife," he said.

I smiled. My spirit laughed within me. This is Jamaica, I said in my heart, this is my country - my people. I looked at the white man. He smiled at me. "We'll miss the tram if we don't hurry," he said.

About The Author

A.L. Hendricks (1922) was born in Kingston, Jamaica and was educated there and in London. He now lives in England. In his younger years Hendricks was considered a good actor. He has also worked as a journalist and broadcaster. He is best known, however, for his poetry. Hendricks has contributed to anthologies and has published several books of poetry, including ***On This Mountain*** *(1965).*

Make Connections

1. What lesson(s) do you think does the narrator learn at the end of the story?
2. Explore some prejudices or stereotypical views or notions that people in our society have.
3. How does the narrator create suspense in the story?
4. What are your own assumptions about 'black' and 'white' people?

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2. Too Bad - *Isaac Asimov*

THE THREE LAWS OF ROBOTICS

- A robot may not injure a human being or through inaction, allow a human being to come
- to harm.
- A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where that would conflict
- with the First Law.
- A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with
- the First or Second Law.

Gregory Arnfeld was not actually dying, but certainly there was a sharp limit to how long he might live. He had inoperable cancer and he had refused, strenuously, all suggestions of chemical treatment or of radiation therapy.

He smiled at his wife as he lay propped up against the pillows and said, "I'm the perfect case. Tertia and Mike will handle it"

Tertia did not smile. She looked dreadfully concerned "There are so many things that can be done, Gregory. Surely Mike is a last resort. You may not need it."

"No, no. By the time they're done drenching me with chemicals and dowsing me with radiation, I would be so far gone that it wouldn't be a reasonable test.... And please don't call Mike 'it'."

"This is the twenty-second century, Greg. There are so many ways of handling cancer."
"Yes but Mike is one of them, and I think the best. This is the twenty-second century, and we know what robots can do. Certainly, I know. I had more to do with Mike than anyone else. You know that."

"But you can't want to use him just out of pride of design. Besides, how certain are you of miniaturization? That's an even newer technique than robotics."
Arnfeld nodded. "Granted, Tertia. But the miniaturization boys seem confident. They can reduce or restore Planck's constant in what they say is a reasonably foolproof manner, and the controls that make that possible are built into Mike. He can make himself smaller or larger at will without affecting his surroundings."

"Reasonably foolproof," said Tertia with soft bitterness.

"That's all anyone can ask for, surely. Think of it, Tertia. I am privileged to be part of the experiment. I'll go down in history as the principal designer of Mike, but that will be

secondary.
My greatest feat will be, that of having been successfully treated by a mini robot by my own choice, by my own initiative."

"You know it's dangerous."

"There's danger to everything. Chemicals and radiation have their side effects. They can slow without stopping. They can allow me to live a wearying sort of half-life. And doing nothing will certainly kill me. If Mike does his job properly, I shall be completely healthy, and if it recurs" - Arnfeld smiled joyously - "Mike can recur as well."

He put out his hand to grasp hers. "Tertia, we've known this was coming, you and I. Let's make something out of this a glorious experiment. Even if it fails and it won't fail-it will be a glorious experiment,"

Louis Secundo, of the miniaturization group, said, "No, Mrs Arnfeld. We can't guarantee success. Miniaturization is intimately involved with quantum mechanics, and there is a strong element of the unpredictable there. As MIK-27 reduces his size, there is always the chance that a sudden unplanned re-expansion will take place, naturally killing the the patient The greater the reduction in size, the tinier the robot becomes, the greater the chance of re-expansion. And once he starts expanding again, the chance of a sudden accelerated burst is even higher. The re-expansion is the really dangerous part."

Tertia shook her head. "Do you think it will happen?"

"The chances are it won't, Mrs Arnfeld. But the chance is never zero. You must understand that."

"Does Dr Arnfeld understand that"

"Certainly. We have discussed this in detail. He feels that the circumstances warrant the risk." He hesitated. "So do we. I know that you'll see we're not all running the risk but a few of us will be, and we nevertheless feel the experiment to be worthwhile. More important, Dr Arnfeld does."

"What if Mike makes a mistake or reduces himself too far because of a glitch in the mechanism? Then re-expansion would be certain, wouldn't it?"

"It never becomes quite certain. It remains statistical. The chances improve if he gets too small. But then the smaller he gets, the less massive he is, and at some critical point, mass will

become so insignificant that the least effort on his part will send him flying off at nearly the speed of light."

"Well, won't that kill the doctor?"

"No. By that time, Mike would be so small he would slip between the atoms of the doctor's body without affecting them."

"But how likely would it be that he would re-expand when he's that small?"

"When MIK-27 approaches neutrino size, so to speak, his half-life would be in the neighbourhood of seconds. That is the chances are fifty-fifty that he would re-expand within seconds but by the time he re-expanded, he would be a hundred thousand miles away in outer space and the explosion that resulted would merely produce a small burst of gamma rays for the
astronomers to puzzle over. Still, none of that will happen. MIK-27 will have his instructions and he will reduce himself to no smaller than he will need to be to carry out his mission."

Mrs Arnfeld knew she would have to face the press one way or another. She had adamantly refused to appear on holovision, and the right-to-privacy provision of the World Charter protected her. On the other hand, she could not refuse to answer questions on a voice-over basis. The right-to-know provision would not allow a blanket blackout.

She sat stiffly, while the young woman facing her said, "Aside from all that, Mrs Arnfeld, isn't it a rather weird coincidence that your husband, chief designer of Mike the Microbot, should also be its first patient?"

"Not at all, Miss Roth," said Mrs Arnfeld wearily. "The doctor's condition is the result of a predisposition. There have been others in his family who have had it. He told me of it when we married, so I was in no way deceived in the matter, and it was for that reason that we have had no children. It is also for that reason that my husband chose his lifework and laboured so assiduously to produce a robot capable of miniaturization. He always felt he would be its patient eventually, you see."

Mrs Arnfeld insisted on interviewing Mike and, under the circumstances that could not be denied. Ben Johannes, who had worked with her husband for five years and whom she knew well enough to be on first-name terms with, brought her into the robot's quarters.
Mrs Arnfeld had seen Mike soon after his construction, when he was being put through his primary test, and he remembered her. He said, in his curiously neutral voice, too smoothly average to be quite human, "I am pleased to see you, Mrs Arnfeld."

He was not a well-shaped robot. He looked pinheaded and very bottom heavy. He was almost conical, point upward.

Mrs Arnfeld knew that was because his miniaturization mechanism was bulky and abdominal and because his brain had to be abdominal as well in order to increase the speed of response. It was an unnecessary anthropomorphism to insist on a brain behind a tall cranium, her husband had explained. Yet it made Mike seem ridiculous, almost moronic. There were psychological advantages to anthropomorphism, Mrs Arnfeld thought, uneasily.

"Are you sure you understand your task, Mike?" said Mrs Arnfeld.

"Completely, Mrs Arnfeld," said Mike. "I will see to it that every vestige of cancer is removed."

Johannes said, "I'm not sure if Gregory explained it, but Mike can easily recognize a cancer cell when he is at the proper size. The difference is unmistakable, and he can quickly destroy the nucleus of any cell that is not normal."

"I am laser equipped, Mrs Arnfeld," said Mike, with an odd air of unexpressed pride.

"Yes, but there are millions of cancer cells all over. It would take how long to get them, one by one?"

"Not quite necessarily one by one, Tertia," said Johannes. "Even though the cancer is widespread, it exists in clumps. Mike is equipped to burn off and close capillaries leading to the clump, and a million cells could die at a stroke in that fashion. He will only occasionally have to deal with cells on an individual basis."

"Still, how long would it take?"

Johannes's youngish face went into a grimace as though it were difficult to decide what to say. "It could take hours, Tertia, if we're to do a thorough job. I admit that."

"And every moment of those hours will increase the chance of re-expansion."
Mike said, "Mrs Arnfeld, I will labour to prevent re-expansion."

Mrs Arnfeld turned to the robot and said earnestly, "Can you, Mike? I mean, is it possible for you to prevent it?"

"Not entirely, Mrs Arnfeld. By monitoring my size and making an effort to keep it constant, I can minimize the random changes that might lead to a re-expansion. Naturally, it is almost impossible to do this when I am actually re-expanding under controlled conditions."

"Yes, I know. My husband has told me that re-expansion is the most dangerous time. But you will try, Mike? Please?"

"The laws of robotics ensure that I will, Mrs Arnfeld," said Mike solemnly.

As they left, Johannes said in what Mrs Arnfeld understood to be an attempt at reassurance, "Really, Tertia, we have a holo-sonogram and a detailed cat scan of the area. Mike knows the precise location of every significant cancerous lesion. Most of his time-will be spent searching for small lesions undetectable by instruments, but that can't be helped. We must get them all, if we can, you see, and that takes time. Mike is strictly instructed, however, as to how small to get, and he will get no smaller, you can be sure. A robot must obey orders."

"And the re-expansion, Ben?"

"There, Tertia, we're in the lap of the quanta. There is no way of predicting, but there is a more than reasonable chance, that he will get out without trouble. Naturally, we will have him re-expand within Gregory's body as little as possible just enough to make us reasonably certain we can find and extract him. He will then be rushed to the safe room where the rest of the re-expansion will take place. Please, Tertia, even ordinary medical, procedures have their risks."

Mrs Arnfeld was in the observation room as the miniaturisation of Mike took place. So were the holovision cameras and selected media representatives. The importance of the medical experiment made it impossible to prevent that, but Mrs Arnfeld was in a niche with only Johannes for company, and it was understood that she was not to be approached for comment, particularly if anything untoward occurred.

Untoward! A full and sudden re-expansion would blow up the entire operating room and kill every person in it. It was not for nothing the observation room was underground and half a mile away from the viewing room.

It gave Mrs Arnfeld a somewhat grisly sense of assurance that the three miniaturists who were working on the procedure (so calmly, it would seem so calmly) were condemned to death as firmly as her husband was in case of anything untoward. Surely, she could rely on them protecting their own lives to the extreme; they would not, therefore, be cavalier in the protection of her husband.

Eventually, of course, if the procedure were successful, ways would be worked out to perform it in automated fashion, and only the patient would be at risk. Then, perhaps, the patient might be more easily sacrificed through carelessness but not now, not now. Mrs Arnfeld keenly watched the three, working under imminent sentence of death, for any sign of discomposure.

She watched the miniaturization procedure (she had seen it before) and saw Mike grow smaller and disappear. She watched the elaborate procedure that injected him into the proper place in her husband's body. (It had been explained to her that it would have been prohibitively expensive to inject human beings in a submarine device instead. Mike, at least, needed no life-support system.)

Then matters shifted to the screen, in which the appropriate section of the body was shown in holosonogram. It was a three-dimensional representation, cloudy and unfocused, made imprecise through a combination of the finite size of the sound waves and the effects of Brownian motion. It showed Mike dimly and noiselessly making his way through Gregory Arnfeld's tissues by the way of his bloodstream. It was almost impossible to tell what he was doing, but Johannes described the events to her in a low, satisfied manner, until she could listen to him no more and asked to be led away.

She had been mildly sedated, and she had slept until evening, when Johannes came to see her. She had not been long awake and it took her a moment to gather her faculties. Then she said, in sudden and overwhelming fear, "What has happened?"

Johannes said, hastily, "Success, Tertia. Complete success. Your husband is cured. We can't stop the cancer from recurring, but for now he is cured."

She fell back in relief. "Oh, wonderful."

"Just the same, something unexpected has happened and this will have to be explained to Gregory. We felt that it would be best if you did the explaining."

"I?" Then, in a renewed access of fear, "What has happened?" Johannes told her.

It was two days before she could see her husband for more than a moment or two. He was sitting up in bed, looking a little pale, but smiling at her.

"A new lease of life, Tertia,"he said buoyantly.

"Indeed, Greg, I was quite wrong. The experiment succeeded and they tell me they can't find a trace of cancer in you."

"Well, we can't be too confident about that. There maybe a cancerous cell here and there, but perhaps my immune system will handle it, especially with the proper medication and if it ever builds up again, which might well take years we'll call on Mike again.

At this point, he frowned and said, "You know, I haven't seen Mike."
Mrs Arnfeld maintained a discreet silence.
Arnfeld said, "They've been putting me off."

"You've been weak, dear, and sedated. Mike was poking through your tissues and doing a little necessary destructive work here and there. Even with a successful operation you need time for recovery."

"If I've recovered enough to see you, surely I've recovered enough to see Mike, at least long enough to thank him."

"A robot doesn't need to receive thanks."

"Of course not, but I need to give it. Do me a favour, Tertia. Go out there and tell them, I want Mike right away."

Mrs Arnfeld hesitated, then came to a decision. Waiting would make the task harder for everyone. She said carefully, "Actually, dear, Mike is not available."

"Not available! Why not?"

"He had to make a choice, you see. He had cleaned up your tissues marvelously well; he had done a magnificent job, everyone agrees; and then he had to undergo re-expansion. That was the risky part."

"Yes, but here I am. Why are you making a long story out of it?"
"Mike decided to minimize the risk."
"Naturally. What did he do?"
"Well, dear, he decided to make himself smaller."
"What! He couldn't. He was ordered not to."
"That was Second Law, Greg. First Law took precedence. He wanted to make certain your life would be saved. He was equipped to control his own size, so he made himself smaller as rapidly as he could, and when he was far less massive than an electron he used his laser beam, which was by then too tiny to hurt anything in your body, and the recoil sent him flying away at nearly the speed of light. He exploded in outer space. The gamma rays were detected."

Arnfeld stared at her. "You can't mean it Are you serious? Mike is dead?"

"That's what happened. Mike could not refuse to take an action that might keep you from harm."

"But I didn't want that. I wanted him safe for further work. He wouldn't have re-expanded uncontrollably. He would have gotten out safely."

"He couldn't be sure. He couldn't risk your life, so he sacrificed his own."
"But my life was less important than his."

"Not to me, dear. Not to those who work with you. Not to anyone. Not even to Mike."
She put out her hand to him. "Come, Greg, you're alive. You're well. That's all that counts."

But he pushed her hand aside impatiently. "That's not all that counts. You don't understand. Oh, too bad. Too bad!"

About the Author

Asimov was born on January 2, 1920 in Russia. Asimov was exposed to Science Fiction as a young boy and he started his writing career by penning fan letters and critiques of science fiction stories to the pulp magazines of the 1930s. In 1987 he won the Grand Master Award for Lifetime's Achievement in Science Fiction.

3. Leaving - *M.G. Vassanji*

"... you will lose your son."

Kichwele Street was now Uhuru Street. My two sisters had completed school and got married and Mother missed them sometimes. Mehroon, after a succession of wooers, had settled for a former opening batsman of our school team and was in town. Razia was a wealthy housewife in Tanga, the coastal town north of Dar.[1] Firoz dropped out in his last year at school, and everyone said that it was a wonder he had reached that far. He was assistant bookkeeper at Oriental Emporium, and brought home stationery sometimes.

Mother had placed her hopes on the youngest two of us, Aloo and me, and she didn't want us distracted by the chores that always needed doing around the store. One evening she secured for the last time the half a dozen assorted padlocks on the sturdy panelled doors

and sold the store. This was exactly one week after the wedding party had driven off with a tearful Razia, leaving behind a distraught mother in the stirred-up dust of Uhuru Street.

We moved to the residential area of Upanga. After the bustle of Uhuru Street, our new neighbourhood seemed quiet. Instead of the racket of buses, bicycles and cars on the road, we now heard the croaking of frogs and the chirping of insects. Nights were haunting, lonely and desolate and took some getting used to. Upanga Road emptied after seven in the evening and the sidestreets became pitch dark, with no illumination. Much of the area was as yet uninhabited and behind the housing developments there were overgrown bushes, large, scary baobab trees, and mango and coconut groves.

Sometimes in the evenings, when Mother felt sad, Aloo and I would play two-three-five with her, a variation of whist for three people. I had entered the University by then and came back at weekends. Aloo was in his last year at school. He had turned out to be exceptionally bright in his studies more so than we realised.

That year Mr Datoo, a former teacher from our school who was also a former student, returned from America for a visit. Mr Datoo had been a favourite with the boys. When he came he received a tumultuous welcome. For the next few days he toured the town like the Pied Piper followed by a horde of adulating students, one of whom was Aloo.

The exciting event inspired in Aloo the hope that not only might he be admitted to an American university, but he could also win a scholarship to go there. Throughout the rest of the year, therefore, he wrote to numerous universities, culling their names from books at the USIS, often simply at random or even only by the sounds of their names.

Mother's response to all these efforts was to humour him. She would smile. "Your uncles in America will pay thousands of shillings just to send you to college," she would say. Evidently

she felt he was wasting his time, but he would never be able to say that he did not have all the support she could give him.

Responses to his enquiries started coming within weeks and a handful of them were guardedly encouraging. Gradually Aloo found out which were the better places, and which among them the truly famous. Soon a few catalogues arrived, all looking impressive. It seemed that the more involved he became with the application process, the more tantalising was the prospect of going to an American university. Even the famous places did not discourage him. He learnt of subjects he had never heard of before: genetics, cosmology, artificial intelligence: a whole universe was out there waiting for him if only he could reach it. He was not sure if he could, if he was good enough. He suffered periods of intense hope and hopeless despair.

Of course, Aloo was entitled to a place at the local university. At the end of the year, when the selections were announced in the papers, his name was on the list. But some bureaucratic hand, probably also corrupt, dealt out a future prospect for him that came as a shock. He had applied to study medicine; he was given a place in agriculture. An agricultural officer in a rural district somewhere was not what he wanted to become however patriotic he felt. He had never left the city except to go to the national parks once on a school trip.

When Aloo received a letter from the California Institute of Technology offering him a place with a scholarship, he was stupefied at first. He read and reread the letter, not believing what it seemed to be saying, afraid that he might be reading something into it. He asked me to read it for him. When he was convinced there was no possibility of a mistake he became elated.

"The hell I'll do agriculture!" he grinned.

But first he had to contend with Mother.

Mother was incredulous. "Go, go," she said, "don't you eat my head, don't tease me!"

"But it's true!" he protested. "They're giving me a scholarship!"

We were at the table the three of us and had just poured tea from the thermos. Mother sitting across from me stared at her saucer for a while then she looked up.

"Is it true?" she asked me.

"Yes, it's true," I said. "All he needs is to take 400 dollars pocket money with him."

"How many shillings would that make?" she asked.

"About three thousand."

"And how are we going to raise this three thousand shillings? Have you bought a lottery? And what about the ticket? Are they going to send you a ticket too?"

As she said this Aloo's prospects seemed to get dimmer. She was right, it was not a little money that he needed.

"Can't we raise a loan?" he asked. "I'll work there. Yes, I'll work as a waiter. A waiter! I know you can do it, I'll send the money back!"

"You may have uncles in America who would help you," Mother told him, "but no one here will."

Aloo's shoulders sagged and he sat there toying with his cup, close to tears. Mother sat drinking from her saucer and frowning. The evening light came in from the window behind me and gave a glint to her spectacles. Finally she set her saucer down. She was angry.

"And why do you want to go away, so far from us? Is this what I raised you for so you could leave me to go away to a foreign place? Won't you miss us, where you want to go? Do we mean so little to you? If something happens ..."

Aloo was crying. A tear fell into his cup, his nose was running. "So many kids go and return, and nothing happens to them ... Why did you mislead me, then? Why did you let me apply if you didn't want me to go ... why did you raise my hopes if only to dash them?" He raised his voice to her, the first time I saw him do it, and he was shaking.

He did not bring up the question again and he prepared himself for the agricultural college, waiting for the term to begin. At home he would slump on the sofa putting away a novel a day.

If the unknown bureaucrat at the Ministry of Education had been less arbitrary, Aloo would not have been so broken and Mother would not have felt compelled to try and do something for him.

A few days later, on a Sunday morning, she looked up from her sewing machine and said to the two of us: "Let's go and show this letter to Mr Velji. He is experienced in these matters. Let's take his advice."

Mr Velji was a former administrator of our school. He had a large egg-shaped head and a small compact body. With his large forehead and big black spectacles he looked the caricature of the archetypal wise man. He also had the bearing of one. The three of us were settled in his sitting-room chairs staring about us and waiting expectantly when he walked in stiffly, like a toy soldier, to welcome us.

"How are you, sister?" he said. "What can I do for you?"

Aloo and I stood up respectfully as he sat down.

"We have come to you for advice ..." Mother began.

"Speak, then," he said jovially and sat back, joining his hands behind his head.

She began by giving him her history. She told him which family she was born in, which she had married into, how she had raised her kids when our father died. Common relations were discovered between our families. "Now this one here," she pointed at me, "goes to university here, and that one wants to go to America. Show him the documents," she commanded Aloo.

As if with an effort, Aloo pushed himself out of the sofa and slowly made his way to place the documents in Mr Velji's hands. Before he looked at them Mr Velji asked Aloo his result in the final exam.

At Aloo's answer, his eyes widened. "Henh?" he said, "All A's?"

"Yes," replied Aloo, a little too meekly.

Mr Velji flipped the papers one by one, cursorily at first. Then he went over them more carefully. He looked at the long visa form with the carbon copies neatly bound behind the original; he read over the friendly letter from the Foreign Student Adviser; he was charmed by the letters of invitation from the fraternities. Finally he looked up, a little humbled.

"The boy is right," he said. "The university is good, and they are giving him a bursary. I congratulate you."

"But what should I do?" asked Mother anxiously. "What is your advice? Tell us what we should do."

"Well," said Mr Velji, "it would be good for his education." He raised his hand to clear his throat. Then he said, a little slowly: "But if you send him, you will lose your son.

"It's a far place, America," he concluded, wiping his hands briskly at the finished business. "Now what will you have tea? Orange squash?"

His wife appeared magically to take orders.

"All the rich kids go every year and they are not lost," muttered Aloo bitterly as we walked back home. Mother was silent.

That night she was at the sewing machine and Aloo was on the couch, reading. The radio was turned low and through the open front door a gentle breeze blew in to cool the sitting room. I was standing at the door. The banana tree and its offspring rustled outside, a car zoomed on the road, throwing shadows on neighbouring houses. A couple out for a stroll, murmuring, came into sight over the uneven hedge; groups of boys or girls chattered before dispersing for the night. The intermittent buzz of an electric motor escaped from Mother's sewing machine. It was a little darker where she sat at the other end of the room from us.

Presently she looked up and said a little nonchalantly, "At least show me what this university looks like bring that book, will you?"

Mother had never seen the catalogue. She had always dismissed it, had never shown the least bit of curiosity about the place Aloo wanted so badly to visit. Now the three of us crowded around the glossy pages, pausing at pictures of the neoclassic facades and domes, columns towering over humans, students rushing about in a dither of activity, classes held on lush lawns in ample shade. It all looked so awesome and yet inviting.

"It's something, isn't it?" whispered Aloo, hardly able to hold back his excitement. "They teach hundreds of courses there," he said. "They send rockets into space ... to other worlds ... to the moon- "

"If you go away to the moon, my son, what will become of me?" she said humorously, her eyes gleaming as she looked up at us.

Aloo went back to his book and Mother to her sewing.

A little later I looked up and saw Mother deep in thought, brooding, and as she often did at such times she was picking her chin absent-mindedly. It was, I think, the first time I saw her as a person and not only as our mother. I thought of what she must be going through in her mind, what she had gone through in bringing us up. She had been thirty-three when Father died, and she had refused several offers of marriage because they would all have entailed one thing: sending us all to the "boarding" the orphanage. Pictures of her before his death showed her smiling and in full bloom: plump but not excessively fat, hair puffed fashionably, wearing high heels and make-up. There was one picture, posed at a studio, which Father had had touched up and enhanced, which now hung beside his. In it she stood against a black background, holding a book stylishly, the nylon pachedi painted a light green, the folds falling gracefully down, the borders decorated with sequins. I had never seen her like that. All I had seen of her was the stern face getting sterner with time as the lines set permanently and the hair thinned, the body turned squat, the voice thickened.

I recalled how Aloo and I would take turns sleeping with her at night on her big bed; how she would squeeze me in her chubby arms, drawing me up closer to her breast until I could hardly breathe and I would control myself and hope she would soon release me and let me breathe.

She looked at me looking at her and said, not to me, "Promise me ... promise me that if I let you go, you will not marry a white woman."

"Oh Mother, you know I won't!" said Aloo.

"And promise me that you will not smoke or drink."

"You know I promise!" He was close to tears.

Aloo's first letter came a week after he left, from London where he'd stopped over to see a former classmate. It flowed over with excitement. "How can I describe it," he wrote, "the

sight from the plane ...mile upon mile of carefully tilled fields, the earth divided into neat green squares... even the mountains are clean and civilised. And London ... Oh London! It seemed that it would never end ... blocks and blocks of houses, squares, parks, monuments ... could any city be larger? How many of our Dar es Salaams would fit here, in this one gorgeous city ...?"

A bird flapping its wings: Mr Velji nodding wisely in his chair, Mother staring into the distance.

About The Author

M.G. Vassanji was born in Nairobi in 1950 and was raised in Tanzania. He won a scholarship to MIT where he studied Physics. He completed his PhD at the University of Philadelphia. After graduation Vassanji moved to Canada to work in the atomic power industry. In 1980 he moved to Toronto, where he now lives and writes.

Make connections

1. Is the narrator Aloo's brother or sister? How do you know that?
2. Does the gender of the narrator matter? Is there a bias in his/her narration?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using this point of view?
4. What are the conflicts in the story?
5. What is Mr. Velji thinking at the end of the story? How do you think he is feeling?
6. What is Mother thinking? Is she in a different frame of mind than Mr.Velji?
7. What do you think Aloo will eventually do?
8. What is the symbolism of "A bird flapping its wings…" in relation to the story?

4. Too Dear - *Leo Tolstoy*

Rationale

"Too Dear" has been chosen because it is a humorous satirical story written by Count Leo Tolstoy, a famous Russian writer, master of realistic fiction and one of the world's greatest novelists. Recounted in the third person point of view in an unemotional tone but with an undercurrent of sarcasm, the story deals with a variety of themes such as governance, morality and negotiation. Additionally, the realistic fiction highlights the use of satire and irony in a language that is contemporary. It ridicules the ways of punishing criminals and dispensing justice in modern states. Tolstoy also points out a profound social satire on the bureaucratic system during his time, and is relevant even today.

Too Dear

(This story is Tolstoy's adaptation of a story by Guy De Maupassant.)

Near the borders of France and Italy, on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, lies a tiny little kingdom called Monaco. Many a small country town can boast more inhabitants than this kingdom, for there are only about seven thousand of them all told, and if all the land in the kingdom were divided there would not be an acre for each inhabitant. But in this toy kingdom there is a real kinglet; and he has a palace, and courtiers, and ministers, and a bishop, and generals, and an army.

It is not a large army, only sixty men in all, but still it is an army. There were also taxes in this kingdom, as elsewhere: a tax on tobacco, and on wine and spirits, and a poll-tax. But though the people there drink and smoke as people do in other countries, there are so few of them that the King would have been hard put to it to feed his courtiers and officials and to keep himself, if he had not found a new and special source of revenue. This special revenue comes from a gaming house, where people play roulette. People play, and whether they win or lose the keeper always gets a percentage on the turnover; and out of his profits he pays a large sum to the King. The reason he pays so much is that it is the only such gambling establishment left in Europe. Some of the little German Sovereigns used to keep gaming houses of the same kind, but some years ago they were forbidden to do so. The reason they were stopped was because these gaming houses did so much harm. A man would come and try his luck, then he would risk all he had and lose it, then he would even risk money that did not belong to him and lose that too, and then, in despair, he would drown or shoot himself. So the Germans forbade their rulers to make money in this way; but there was no one to stop the King of Monaco, and he remained with a monopoly of the business.

So now everyone who wants to gamble goes to Monaco. Whether they win or lose, the King gains by it. 'You can't earn stone palaces by honest labor,' as the proverb says; and the Kinglet of Monaco knows it is a dirty business, but what is he to do? He has to live; and to draw

a revenue from drink and from tobacco is also not a nice thing. So he lives and reigns, and rakes in the money, and holds his court with all the ceremony of a real king.

He has his coronation, his levées; he rewards, sentences, and pardons, and he also has his reviews, councils, laws, and courts of justice: just like other kings, only all on a smaller scale.

Now it happened a few years ago that a murder was committed in this toy King's domains. The people of that kingdom are peaceable, and such a thing had not happened before. The judges assembled with much ceremony and tried the case in the most judicial manner. There were judges, and prosecutors, and jurymen, and barristers. They argued and judged, and at last they condemned the criminal to have his head cut off as the law directs. So far so good. Next they submitted the sentence to the King. The King read the sentence and confirmed it. 'If the fellow must be executed, execute him.'

There was only one hitch in the matter; and that was that they had neither a guillotine for cutting heads off, nor an executioner. The Ministers considered the matter, and decided to address an inquiry to the French Government, asking whether the French could not lend them a machine and an expert to cut off the criminal's head; and if so, would the French kindly inform them what the cost would be. The letter was sent. A week later the reply came: a machine and an expert could be supplied, and the cost would be 16,000 francs. This was laid before the King. He thought it over. Sixteen thousand francs! 'The wretch is not worth the money,' said he. 'Can't it be done, somehow, cheaper? Why 16,000 francs is more than two francs a head on the whole population. The people won't stand it, and it may cause a riot!'

So a Council was called to consider what could be done; and it was decided to send a similar inquiry to the King of Italy. The French Government is republican, and has no proper respect for kings; but the King of Italy was a brother monarch, and might be induced to do the thing cheaper. So the letter was written, and a prompt reply was received.

The Italian Government wrote that they would have pleasure in supplying both a machine and an expert; and the whole cost would be 12,000 francs, including traveling expenses. This was cheaper, but still it seemed too much. The rascal was really not worth the money. It would still mean nearly two francs more per head on the taxes. Another Council was called. They discussed and considered how it could be done with less expense. Could not one of the soldiers perhaps be got to do it in a rough and homely fashion? The General was called and was asked: 'Can't you find us a soldier who would cut the man's head off? In war they don't mind killing people. In fact, that is what they are trained for.' So the General talked it over with the soldiers to see whether one of them would not undertake the job. But none of the soldiers would do it. 'No,' they said, 'we don't know how to do it; it is not a thing we have been taught.'

What was to be done? Again the Ministers considered and reconsidered. They assembled a Commission, and a Committee, and a Sub-Committee, and at last they decided that the best thing would be to alter the death sentence to one of imprisonment for life. This would enable the King to show his mercy, and it would come cheaper.

The King agreed to this, and so the matter was arranged. The only hitch now was that there was no suitable prison for a man sentenced for life. There was a small lock-up where people were sometimes kept temporarily, but there was no strong prison fit for permanent use. However, they managed to find a place that would do, and they put the young fellow there and placed a guard over him. The guard had to watch the criminal, and had also to fetch his food from the palace kitchen.

The prisoner remained there month after month till a year had passed. But when a year had passed, the Kinglet, looking over the account of his income and expenditure one day, noticed a new item of expenditure. This was for the keep of the criminal; nor was it a small item either. There was a special guard, and there was also the man's food. It came to more than 600 francs a year. And the worst of it was that the fellow was still young and healthy, and might live for fifty years. When one came to reckon it up, the matter was serious. It would never do. So the King summoned his Ministers and said to them:

'You must find some cheaper way of dealing with this rascal. The present plan is too expensive.' And the Ministers met and considered and reconsidered, till one of them said: 'Gentlemen, in my opinion we must dismiss the guard.' 'But then,' rejoined another Minister, 'the fellow will run away.' 'Well,' said the first speaker, 'let him run away, and be hanged to him!' So they reported the result of their deliberations to the Kinglet, and he agreed with them. The guard was dismissed, and they waited to see what would happen. All that happened was that at dinner-time the criminal came out, and, not finding his guard, he went to the King's kitchen to fetch his own dinner. He took what was given him, returned to the prison, shut the door on himself, and stayed inside. Next day the same thing occurred. He went for his food at the proper time; but as for running away, he did not show the least sign of it! What was to be done? They considered the matter again.

'We shall have to tell him straight out,' said they, 'that we do not want to keep him.' So the Minister of Justice had him brought before him.

'Why do you not run away?' said the Minister. 'There is no guard to keep you. You can go where you like, and the King will not mind.'

'I daresay the King would not mind,' replied the man, 'but I have nowhere to go. What can I do? You have ruined my character by your sentence, and people will turn their backs on me. Besides, I have got out of the way of working. You have treated me badly. It is not fair. In the first place, when once you sentenced me to death you ought to have executed me; but you did not do it. That is one thing. I did not complain about that. Then you sentenced me

to imprisonment for life and put a guard to bring me my food; but after a time you took him away again and I had to fetch my own food. Again I did not complain. But now you actually want me to go away! I can't agree to that. You may do as you like, but I won't go away!'

What was to be done? Once more the Council was summoned. What course could they adopt? The man would not go. They reflected and considered. The only way to get rid of him was to offer him a pension. And so they reported to the King. 'There is nothing else for it,' said they; 'we must get rid of him somehow.' The sum fixed was 600 francs, and this was announced to the prisoner.

'Well,' said he, 'I don't mind, so long as you undertake to pay it regularly. On that condition I am willing to go.'

So the matter was settled. He received one-third of his annuity in advance, and left the King's dominions. It was only a quarter of an hour by rail; and he emigrated, and settled just across the frontier, where he bought a bit of land, started market-gardening, and now lives comfortably. He always goes at the proper time to draw his pension. Having received it, he goes to the gaming tables, stakes two or three francs, sometimes wins and sometimes loses, and then returns home. He lives peaceably and well.

It is a good thing that he did not commit his crime in a country where they do not grudge expense to cut a man's head off, or to keeping him in prison for life.

About the Author

Born in 1828, Russian author Leo Tolstoy is considered a master of realistic fiction and one of the world's greatest novelists. He is best known for his two longest works, War and Peace (1865–69) and Anna Karenina (1875–77), which are commonly regarded as among the finest novels ever written. Tolstoy died in 1910.

Making Connections

1. What are the key elements of short story used by the author and how do they work together to create a cohesive narrative?
2. What point of view has been employed in this story? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using this point of view?
3. What is the theme of the story? How is this conveyed through the characters, plot and setting to shape the overall message of the story?
4. Would you agree to the Ministers' suggestions if you were the king? Why?
5. Analyse, with examples, the role of humour in the story.
6. Find out the meanings of parody and satire. How is the story a parody or a satire on the government and leadership of a country? Explain citing examples from the story.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Reprint 2024

1. The Eyes Have It - *Ruskin Bond*

I had the compartment to myself up to Rohana, and then a girl got in. The couple who saw her off were probably her parents; they seemed very anxious about her comfort, and the woman gave the girl detailed instructions as to where to keep her things, not to lean out of windows, and how to avoid speaking to strangers. They said their goodbyes; the train pulled out of the station.

As I was totally blind at the time, my eyes sensitive only to light and darkness, I was unable to tell what the girl looked like; but I knew she wore slippers from the way they slapped against her heels. It would take me some time to discover something about her looks, and perhaps I never would. I liked the sound of her voice and even the sound of her slippers.

"Are you going all the way to Dehra?" I asked.

I must have been sitting in a dark corner because my voice startled her. She gave a little exclamation and said, "I didn't know anyone else was here."

Well, it often happens that people with good eyesight fail to see what is right in front of them. They have too much to take in, I suppose, whereas people who cannot see (or see very little) have to take in only the essentials, whatever registers most tellingly in their remaining senses.

"I didn't see you, either," I said. "But I heard you come in."

I wondered if I would be able to prevent her from discovering that I was blind. I thought to myself,

Provided I keep to my seat, it shouldn't be too difficult.

The girl said, "I'm getting down at Saharanpur. My aunt is meeting me there."

"Then I had better not get too familiar," I said. "Aunts are usually formidable creatures."

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"To Dehra, and then to Mussoorie."

"Oh, how lucky you are, I wish I were going to Mussoorie. I love the hills. Especially in October."

Reprint 2024

"Yes, this is the best time," I said, calling on my memories. "The hills are covered with wild dahlias, the sun is delicious, and at night you can sit in front of a log-fire and drink a little brandy. Most of the tourists have gone, and the roads are quiet and almost deserted. Yes, October is the best time."

She was silent, and I wondered if my words had touched her, or whether she thought me a romantic fool. Then I made a mistake.

"What is it like?" I asked.

She seemed to find nothing strange in the question. Had she noticed already that I could not see? But her next question removed my doubts.

"Why don't you look out the window?" she asked.

I moved easily along the berth and felt for the window-ledge. The window was open and I faced it, pretending to be studying the landscape. I heard the panting of the engine, the rumble of the wheels, and in my mind's eye, I could see the telegraph-posts flashing by.

"Have you noticed," I ventured, "that the trees seem to be moving while we seem to be standing still?"

"That always happens," she said. "Do you see any animals?" Hardly any animals left in the forests near Dehra.

I turned from the window and faced the girl, and for a while we sat in silence.

"You have an interesting face," I remarked. I was becoming quite daring, but it was a safe remark. Few girls can resist flattery.

She laughed pleasantly, a clear ringing laugh.

"It's nice to be told I have an interesting face. I am tired of people telling me I have a pretty face."

Oh, so you do have a pretty face, I thought. Aloud, I said, "Well, an interesting face can also be pretty."

"You are a very gallant young man," she said, "but why are you so serious?"

I thought then, that I would try to laugh for her, but the thought of laughter only made me feel troubled and lonely.

"We'll soon be at your station," I said.

"Thank goodness it's a short journey. I can't bear to sit in a train for more than two or three hours."

Yet, I was prepared to sit there for almost any length of time, just to listen to her talking. Her voice had the sparkle of a mountain stream. As soon as she left the train, I knew, she would forget our brief encounter; but it would stay with me for the rest of the journey and for some time after.

The engine's whistle shrieked, the carriage wheels changed their sound and rhythm. The girl got up and began to collect her things. I wondered if she wore her hair in a bun, or if it was braided, or if it hung loose over her shoulders, or if it was cut very short.

The train drew slowly into the station. Outside, there was the shouting of porters and vendors and a high-pitched female voice near the carriage door, which must have belonged to the girl's aunt.

"Good-bye," said the girl.

She was standing very close to me, so close that the perfume from her hair was tantalizing. I wanted to raise my hand and touch her hair, but she moved away, and only the perfume still lingered where she had stood.

'You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will, but the scent of the roses will linger there still…"

There was some confusion in the doorway. A man, getting into the compartment, stammered an apology. Then the door banged shut, and the world was shut out again. I returned to my berth. The guard blew his whistle and we moved off. Once again, I had a game to play with a new fellow traveler.

The train gathered speed, the wheels took up their song, the carriage groaned and shook. I found the window and sat in front of it, staring into the daylight that was darkness for me. So many things were happening outside the window. It could be a fascinating game, guessing what went on out there.

The man who had entered the compartment broke into my reverie.

"You must be disappointed," he said. "I'm not as attractive a traveling companion as the one who just left."

"She was an interesting girl," I said. "Can you tell me – did she keep her hair long or short?"

"I don't remember," he said, sounding puzzled. "It was her eyes I noticed, not her hair. She had beautiful eyes – but they were of no use to her. She was completely blind; didn't you notice?"

Reprint 2024

2. August 2026: There Will Come Soft Rains – *Ray Bradbury*

In the living room the voice-clock sang, *Tick-tock, seven o'clock, time to get up, time to get up, seven o'clock!* as if it were afraid that nobody would. The morning house lay empty. The clock ticked on, repeating and repeating its sounds into the emptiness. *Seven-nine, breakfast time, seven-nine!*

In the kitchen the breakfast stove gave a hissing sigh and ejected from its warm interior eight pieces of perfectly browned toast, eight eggs sunnyside up, sixteen slices of bacon, two coffees, and two cool glasses of milk.

"Today is August 4, 2026," said a second voice from the kitchen ceiling, "in the city of Allendale, California." It repeated the date three times for memory's sake. "Today is Mr.

Featherstone's birthday. Today is the anniversary of Tilita's marriage. Insurance is payable, as are the water, gas, and light bills."

Somewhere in the walls, relays clicked, memory tapes glided under electric eyes.

Eight-one, tick-tock, eight-one o'clock, off to school, off to work, run, run, eight-one! But no doors slammed, no carpets took the soft tread of rubber heels. It was raining outside. The weather box on the front door sang quietly: "Rain, rain, go away; rubbers, raincoats for today…" And the rain tapped on the empty house, echoing.

Outside, the garage chimed and lifted its door to reveal the waiting car. After a long wait the door swung down again.

At eight-thirty the eggs were shriveled and the toast was like stone. An aluminum wedge scraped them into the sink, where hot water whirled them down a metal throat which digested and flushed them away to the distant sea. The dirty dishes were dropped into a hot washer and emerged twinkling dry.

Nine-fifteen, sang the clock, *time to clean.*

Out of warrens in the wall, tiny robot mice darted. The rooms were acrawl with the small cleaning animals, all rubber and metal. They thudded against chairs, whirling their mustached runners, kneading the rug nap, sucking gently at hidden dust. Then, like mysterious invaders, they popped into their burrows. Their pink electric eyes faded. The house was clean.

Ten o'clock. The sun came out from behind the rain. The house stood alone in a city of rubble and ashes. This was the one house left standing. At night the ruined city gave off a radioactive glow which could be seen for miles.

Ten-fifteen. The garden sprinklers whirled up in golden founts, filling the soft morning air with scatterings of brightness. The water pelted windowpanes, running down the charred west side where the house had been burned evenly free of its white paint. The entire west face

of the house was black, save for five places. Here the silhouette in paint of a man mowing a lawn. Here, as in a photograph, a woman bent to pick flowers. Still farther over, their images burned on wood in one titanic instant, a small boy, hands flung into the air; higher up, the image of a thrown ball, and opposite him a girl, hands raised to catch a ball which never came down.

The five spots of paint—the man, the woman, the children, the ball—remained. The rest was a thin charcoaled layer.

The gentle sprinkler rain filled the garden with falling light.

Until this day, how well the house had kept its peace. How carefully it had inquired, "Who goes there? What's the password?" and, getting no answer from lonely foxes and whining cats, it had shut up its windows and drawn shades in an old maidenly preoccupation with self-protection which bordered on a mechanical paranoia.

It quivered at each sound, the house did. If a sparrow brushed a window, the shade snapped up. The bird, startled, flew off! No, not even a bird must touch the house!

The house was an altar with ten thousand attendants, big, small, servicing, attending, in choirs. But the gods had gone away, and the ritual of the religion continued senselessly, uselessly.

Twelve noon.

A dog whined, shivering, on the front porch.

The front door recognized the dog voice and opened. The dog, once huge and fleshy, but now gone to bone and covered with sores, moved in and through the house, tracking mud. Behind it whirred angry mice, angry at having to pick up mud, angry at inconvenience.

For not a leaf fragment blew under the door but what the wall panels flipped open and the copper scrap rats flashed swiftly out. The offending dust, hair, or paper, seized in miniature steel jaws, was raced back to the burrows. There, down tubes which fed into the cellar, it was dropped into the sighing vent of an incinerator which sat like evil Baal in a dark corner.

The dog ran upstairs, hysterically yelping to each door, at last realizing, as the house realized, that only silence was here.

It sniffed the air and scratched the kitchen door. Behind the door, the stove was making pancakes which filled the house with a rich baked odor and the scent of maple syrup.

The dog frothed at the mouth, lying at the door, sniffing, its eyes turned to fire. It ran wildly in circles, biting at its tail, spun in a frenzy, and died. It lay in the parlor for an hour.

Two o'clock, sang a voice.

Delicately sensing decay at last, the regiments of mice hummed out as softly as blown gray leaves in an electrical wind.

Two-fifteen.

The dog was gone.

In the cellar, the incinerator glowed suddenly and a whirl of sparks leaped up the chimney.

Two thirty-five.

Bridge tables sprouted from patio walls. Playing cards fluttered onto pads in a shower of pips. Martinis manifested on an oaken bench with egg-salad sandwiches. Music played.

But the tables were silent and the cards untouched.

At four o'clock the tables folded like great butterflies back through the paneled walls.

Four-thirty.

The nursery walls glowed.

Animals took shape: yellow giraffes, blue lions, pink antelopes, lilac panthers cavorting in crystal substance. The walls were glass. They looked out upon color and fantasy. Hidden films docked through well-oiled sprockets, and the walls lived. The nursery floor was woven to resemble a crisp, cereal meadow. Over this ran aluminum roaches and iron crickets, and in the hot still air butterflies of delicate red tissue wavered among the sharp aroma of animal spoors! There was the sound like a great matted yellow hive of bees within a dark bellows, the lazy bumble of a purring lion. And there was the patter of okapi feet and the murmur of a fresh jungle rain, like other hoofs, falling upon the summer-starched grass. Now the walls dissolved into distances of parched weed, mile on mile, and warm endless sky. The animals drew away into thorn brakes and water holes.

It was the children's hour.

Five o'clock. The bath filled with clear hot water.

Six, seven, eight o'clock. The dinner dishes manipulated like magic tricks, and in the study a click. In the metal stand opposite the hearth where a fire now blazed up warmly, a cigar popped out, half an inch of soft gray ash on it, smoking, waiting.

Nine o'clock. The beds warmed their hidden circuits, for nights were cool here.

Nine-five. A voice spoke from the study ceiling:

"Mrs. McClellan, which poem would you like this evening?" The house was silent.

The voice said at last, "Since you express no preference, I shall select a poem at random."

Quiet music rose to back the voice. "Sara Teasdale. As I recall, your favorite….

> "There will come soft rains and the smell of the ground, And swallows circling with their shimmering sound; And frogs in the pools singing at night,
>
> And wild plum trees in tremulous white; Robins will wear their feathery fire, Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire; And not one will know of the war, not one Will care at last when it is done.
>
> Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree, if mankind perished utterly;
>
> And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn Would scarcely know that we were gone."

The fire burned on the stone hearth and the cigar fell away into a mound of quiet ash on its tray. The empty chairs faced each other between the silent walls, and the music played.

At ten o'clock the house began to die.

The wind blew. A failing tree bough crashed through the kitchen window. Cleaning solvent, bottled, shattered over the stove. The room was ablaze in an instant!

"Fire!" screamed a voice. The house lights flashed, water pumps shot water from the ceilings. But the solvent spread on the linoleum, licking, eating, under the kitchen door, while the voices took it up in chorus: "Fire, fire, fire!"

The house tried to save itself. Doors sprang tightly shut, but the windows were broken by the heat and the wind blew and sucked upon the fire.

The house gave ground as the fire in ten billion angry sparks moved with flaming ease from room to room and then up the stairs. While scurrying water rats squeaked from the walls, pistoled their water, and ran for more. And the wall sprays let down showers of mechanical rain.

But too late. Somewhere, sighing, a pump shrugged to a stop. The quenching rain ceased. The reserve water supply which had filled baths and washed dishes for many quiet days was gone.

The fire crackled up the stairs. It fed upon Picassos and Matisses in the upper halls, like delicacies, baking off the oily flesh, tenderly crisping the canvases into black shavings.

Now the fire lay in beds, stood in windows, changed the colors of drapes!

And then, reinforcements.

From attic trapdoors, blind robot faces peered down with faucet mouths gushing green chemical.

The fire backed off, as even an elephant must at the sight of a dead snake. Now there were twenty snakes whipping over the floor, killing the fire with a clear cold venom of green froth.

But the fire was clever. It had sent flames outside the house, up through the attic to the pumps there. An explosion! The attic brain which directed the pumps was shattered into bronze shrapnel on the beams.

The fire rushed back into every closet and felt of the clothes hung there.

The house shuddered, oak bone on bone, its bared skeleton cringing from the heat, its wire, its nerves revealed as if a surgeon had torn the skin off to let the red veins and capillaries quiver in the scalded air. Help, help! Fire! Run, run! Heat snapped mirrors like the brittle winter ice. And the voices wailed Fire, fire, run, run, like a tragic nursery rhyme, a dozen voices, high, low, like children dying in a forest, alone, alone. And the voices fading as the wires popped their sheathings like hot chestnuts. One, two, three, four, five voices died.

In the nursery the jungle burned. Blue lions roared, purple giraffes bounded off. The panthers ran in circles, changing color, and ten million animals, running before the fire, vanished off toward a distant steaming river....

Ten more voices died. In the last instant under the fire avalanche, other choruses, oblivious, could be heard announcing the time, playing music, cutting the lawn by remote-control mower, or setting an umbrella frantically out and in the slamming and opening front door, a thousand things happening, like a clock shop when each clock strikes the hour insanely before or after the other, a scene of maniac confusion, yet unity; singing, screaming, a few last cleaning mice darting bravely out to carry the horrid ashes away! And one voice, with sublime disregard for the situation, read poetry aloud in the fiery study, until all the film spools burned, until all the wires withered and the circuits cracked.

The fire burst the house and let it slam flat down, puffing out skirts of spark and smoke.

In the kitchen, an instant before the rain of fire and timber, the stove could be seen making breakfasts at a psychopathic rate, ten dozen eggs, six loaves of toast, twenty dozen bacon strips, which, eaten by fire, started the stove working again, hysterically hissing!

The crash. The attic smashing into kitchen and parlor. The parlor into cellar, cellar into sub-cellar. Deep freeze, armchair, film tapes, circuits, beds, and all like skeletons thrown in a cluttered mound deep under.

Smoke and silence. A great quantity of smoke.

Dawn showed faintly in the east. Among the ruins, one wall stood alone. Within the wall, a last voice said, over and over again and again, even as the sun rose to shine upon the heaped rubble and steam:

"Today is August 5, 2026, today is August 5, 2026, today is…"

3. The Open Window - *Saki*

'MY AUNT WILL BE DOWN PRESENTLY, Mr Nuttel,' said a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen; 'in the meantime you must try and put up with me.'

Framton Nuttel endeavoured to say the correct something which would duly flatter both the niece of the moment and without unduly unaccounting the aunt that was to come. Privately he doubted more than ever whether these formal visits on a succession of total strangers would do much towards helping the nerve cure which he was to be undergoing.

'I know how it will be,' his sister had said when he was preparing to migrate to this rural retreat; 'you will bury yourself down there and not speak to a living soul and your nerves will be worse than ever from moping. I shall just give you letters of introduction to all the people I know there. Some of them, as far as I can remember, were quite nice.'

Framton wondered whether Mrs Sappleton, the lady to whom he was presenting one of the letters of introduction, came into the nice division.

'Do you know many of the people round here?' asked the niece when she judged that they had had sufficient silent communication.

'Hardly a soul', said Framton. 'My sister was staying here with the rectory, you know, some four years ago, and she gave me letters of introduction to some of the people here.'

He made the last statement in a tone of distinct regret.

'Then you know practically nothing about my aunt?' pursued the self-possessed young lady.

'Only her name and address,' admitted the caller'. He was wondering whether Mrs Sappleton was in the married or widowed state. An unindefinable something about the room seemed to suggest masculine habitation.

'Her great tragedy happened just three years ago,' said the child. 'That would be since your sister's times.'

'You may wonder why we keep that window wide open on an October afternoon,' asked the niece, indicating a large French window that opened onto a lawn.

'It is quite warm for the time of the year,' said Framton; 'but has that window got anything to do with the tragedy?'

'Out through that window, three years ago to a day, her husband and her two young brothers went off for their day's shooting. They never came back. In crossing the moor to their favourite snipe-shooting ground they were all three engulfed in a treacherous piece of

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bog. It had been that dreadful wet summer, you know, and places that were safe in other years gave away suddenly without warning. Their bodies were never recovered. That was the dreadful part of it.'

Here the child's voice lost its self-possessed note and became falteringly human. 'Poor aunt always thinks that they will come back someday, they and the little brown spaniel that was lost with them, and walk in at that window just as they used to do. That is why the window is kept open every evening till it is quite dusk. Poor dear aunt, she has often told me how they went out, her husband with his white waterproof coat over his arm. And Ronnie the youngest brother, singing.' "Bertie, why do you bound?" as he always did to tease her, because she said it got on her nerves. Do you know, sometimes on still, quiet evening like this, I almost get a creepy feeling that they will all walk in through that window-'

She broke off with a little shudder. It was a relief to Framton when the aunt bustled into the room with a whirl of apologies for being late in making her appearance.

'I hope Vera has been amusing you?' she said.

'She has been very interesting,' said Framton.

'I hope you don't mind the open window,' said Mrs Sappleton briskly,' my husband and brothers will be home directly from shooting, and they always come in this way. They've been out for snipe in the marshes today, so they'll make a fine mess over my poor carpets. So like you men-folk, isn't it?'

She rattled on cheerfully about the shooting and the scarcity of birds, and the prospects for duck in the winter. To Framton, it was all purely horrible he made a desperate but only partially successful effort to turn the talk onto a less ghastly topic; he was conscious that his hostess was giving him only a fragment of her attention, and her eyes were constantly straying passed him to the open window and the lawn beyond. It was certainly an unfortunate incidence that he should have paid his visit on this tragic anniversary.

'The doctors agree in ordering me complete rest, an absence of mental excitement, and avoidance of anything in the nature of violent physical exercise,' announced Framton, who laboured under the tolerably wide-spread delusion that total strangers and chance acquaintances are hungry for the least detail of one's ailments and infirmities, their cause and cure. 'On the matter of diet they are not so much in agreement,' he continued.

'No?' said Mrs Sappleton, in a voice which only replaced a yawn at the last moment. Then she suddenly brightened into alert attention - but not to what Framton was saying.

'Here they are at last!' she cried. 'Just in time for tea, and don't they look as if they were muddy up to the eyes!'

Framton shivered slightly and turned towards the niece with a look intended to convey sympathetic comprehension. The child was staring out through the open window with dazed horror in her eyes. In a chill shock of nameless fear Framton swung round in his seat and looked in the same direction.

In the deepening twilight three figures were walking across the lawn towards the window; they all carried guns under their arms, and one of them was additionally burdened with a white coat hung over his shoulders. A tired brown spaniel kept close at their heels. Noiselessly they neared the house, and then a hoarse young voice chanted out of the dusk: 'I said, Bertie, why do you bound?'

Framton grabbed wildly at his stick and hat; the hall-door, the gravel-drive, and the front gate were dimly noted stages in his headlong retreat. A cyclist coming along the road had to run into the hedge to avoid imminent collision.

'Here we are, my dear', said the bearer of the white mackintosh, coming in through the window; 'fairly muddy, but most of it's dry. Who was that who bolted out as we came up?'

'A most extraordinary man, a Mr Nuttel,' said Mrs Sappleton; 'could only talk about his illnesses, and dashed off without a word of good-bye or apology when you arrived. One would think he had seen a ghost.'

'I expect it was the spaniel,' said the niece calmly; 'he told me he had a horror of dogs. He was once hunted into a cemetery somewhere on the backs of the Ganges by a pack of pariah dogs, and had to spend the night in a newly dug grave with the creatures snarling and grinning and foaming just above him. Enough to make any one lose their nerve.'

Romance at short notice was her specialty.

About the author

Hector Hugh Munro (1870-1916), was from British aristocracy and wrote under the pen-name of Saki. As a writer he is better known for his short stories than for his plays and novels. His writing style is witty, and his fiction sometimes borders on the outrageous. He is best known for his darkly humorous satires.

POETRY

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1. To a Skylark – *By Percy Bysshe Shelley*

Rationale

Among the several themes the poem carries are nature, happiness, joy, beauty and human nature. The poem conveys these through exquisite poetic language that is spontaneous and sensuous.

The poem is selected for several reasons, chief among them is that Percy Bysshe Shelley is a major classical writer. By studying this poem, students will get an opportunity to learn the features of an ode and how to use them to make meaning as they read this and other odes.

To a Skylark

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of Heaven,
In the broad day-light
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

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All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflow'd.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a Poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace-tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aëreal hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embower'd
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflower'd,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged thieves:

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awaken'd flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,
Match'd with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest: but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

About the Author

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) is a prominent English poet, playwright and essayist of the late 18th century and early 19th century. He is considered one of the major figures of the Romantic Movement and is known for his powerful and evocative works that reflect on nature, love and politics. His writing style is characterized by his vivid imagery, emotional intensity, and free-flowing verse. Some of his famous works include "Ode to the West Wind," "To a Skylark," "Adonais," "Prometheus Unbound," and "The Masque of Anarchy." He is also known for his radical political views, which led him to be exiled from England for a time. Shelley died in a shipwreck in 1822, at the age of 29, during a voyage across the Mediterranean.

Making Connections

1. The poem contains several imageries, identify at least two that you found are more powerful than others and explain why?
2. How does the speaker's apostrophic address to the skylark contribute to the overall tone and meaning of the poem?
3. How is the flight of the bird captured through the rhythm of the poem?
4. What is the main theme of the poem and how does the poet convey this theme throughout the poem?
5. How does a poet's use of language contribute to the overall tone and mood of the poem?
6. Do you think it is possible for us to be moved to such emotions and derive inspiration from a bird's song? Think of possible situations and share with others.

2. The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter

- Ezra Pound (Translated by Rihaku (Li T'ai Po)

While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.
You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
And we went on living in the village of Chokan:
Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.

At fourteen I married My Lord you.
I never laughed, being bashful.
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
Forever and forever and forever.
Why should I climb the look out?

At sixteen you departed,
You went into far Ku-to-en, by the river of swirling eddies,
And you have been gone five months.
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.

You dragged your feet when you went out.
By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,
Too deep to clear them away!
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
Over the grass in the West garden;
They hurt me. I grow older.

If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang,
Please let me know beforehand,
And I will come out to meet you
As far as Cho-fu-Sa.

About the Poet

EZRA POUND (1885-1972): Born in the American Northwest, Pound left for Europe at age twenty-two as a crusader on behalf of poetry. He soon became involved with the leading moderns, including W.B. Yeats and T.S. Eliot. During the Second World War he broadcast on behalf of the Italian fascists, but was later ruled mentally unfit to stand trial for treason. Much of his poetry betrays his wide-ranging and often erratic intellect.

3. "Oh, oh, you will be sorry for that word!" - *By Edna St. Vincent Millay*

Rationale

Millay's poem engages with the themes of women's rights and independence. This poem highlights the complexities and power dynamics in a relationship. Millay wrote around the time in a male-dominated world, using a form primarily used by men and highlights oppressive marital relationships during her time.

"Oh, oh, you will be sorry for that word!" is a fourteen-line poem that takes the form of Shakespearean sonnet, written using iambic pentameter. The use of rhyme scheme creates a sense of formality and structure which contrasts with the speaker's feeling of resentment and frustration. This poem is written in the second person. The use of pronoun "you" creates a sense immediacy and connection with the reader thus enhances the meaning of the poem.

Readers can relate to the poem's theme in relation to the status of women in contemporary society and the general perception about gender roles.

"Oh, oh, you will be sorry for that word!"

Oh, oh, you will be sorry for that word!
Give back my book and take my kiss instead.
Was it my enemy or my friend I heard,
"What a big book for such a little head!"
Come, I will show you now my newest hat,
And you may watch me purse my mouth and prink!
Oh, I shall love you still, and all of that.
I never again shall tell you what I think.
I shall be sweet and crafty, soft and sly;
You will not catch me reading any more:
I shall be called a wife to pattern by;
And some day when you knock and push the door,
Some sane day, not too bright and not too stormy,
I shall be gone, and you may whistle for me.

About the Author

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950) is a successful and respected American poet and playwright of the 20th century. She is a renowned social figure and noted feminist and wrote much of her work under the pseudonym Nancy Boyd. She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1923 for her poem "Ballad of the Harp-Weaver." Her collection of poems, A Few Figs from Thistles (1921) and Second April (1921) explored female sexuality, nature and death.

Making Connections

1. Who is the speaker in the poem? What is your impression of the speaker?
2. What is the tone of the speaker? To whom is the poem addressed?
3. What do you think prompted the speaker to speak?
4. Identify some examples of figurative language used in the poem.
5. The poet is written in the second person. What impact does it create on the readers?
6. How does the rhyme scheme of the poem contributes to it's over all structure?
7. Think of any woman you know, either in your community or a historical figure, who is similar to the speaker in some way. Write down how the two are similar.

4. My Last Duchess *Robert Browning*

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
'Fra Pandolf' by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek; perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat:' such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart how shall I say? too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech.
Or blush, at least. She thanked men. good! but thanked
Somehow I know not how as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-year-old-name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech (which I have not) to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say 'Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,

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Or there exceed the mark', and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your Master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

About the Poet

Robert Browning (1812-1889)was born in Camber well, south London, as the son of Robert Browning. He is an English poet, noted for his mastery of dramatic monologue.

Browning received scant formal education. However, his father encouraged him to read and he had access to his large (6,000 volumes) library. The book collection filled most of the third storey at the family's house at New Cross. In his teens, Browning discovered Shelley, adopting the author's confessionals in poetry. His first poems Browning wrote under the influence of Shelley, who also inspired him to adopt atheist principles for a time. At the age of 16, he began to study at newly established London University, returning home after a brief period. At home his parents showed understanding of his decision to withdraw and support him morally and financially.

In 1833 Browning published anonymously PAULINE: A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION. It has been said, that it was inspired by Eliza Flower, a performer and composer of religious music. From 1837 to 1846 Browning attempted to write verse drama for the stage. During these years he met Carlyle, Dickens, and Tennyson, and formed several important friendships.

Between 1841 and 1846 Browning works appeared under the title BELLS AND POMEGRANATES. It contained several of his best-known lyrics, such as How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix, and PIPPA PASSES (1841), a dramatic poem depicting a silk winder and his wandering in Italy. Among his earlier works was SORDELLO (1840), set against the background of restless southern Europe of the 13th century. It influenced Ezra Pound in his conception of the Cantos.

In 1846 Browning married the poet Elizabeth Barrett (1806-1861), and settled with her in Florence. When Elizabeth Browning died in 1861, he moved to London. There he wrote his greatest work, THE RING AND THE BOOK (1869), based on the proceedings in a murder trial in Rome in 1698. It consisted of 10 verse narratives, all dealing with the same crime, each from a distinct viewpoint. Browning made poetry compete with prose, and used idioms of ordinary speech in his text. A typical Browning poem tells of a key moment in the life of a prince, priest or painter of the Italian Renaissance. He often crammed his meaning into so few words that many readers could not grasp what he meant.

Robert Browning died on December 12, 1889 in Venice in his son's house. Browning's narrative poem, 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came', has inspired Stephen King's Dark Tower series, which started in 1982 with The Gunslinger.

Make Connections

1. From what the Duke says, what kind of a woman must have been the Duchess?
2. What kind of a man is the Duke? Quote evidence from the poem.
3. What do you think the Duke did to his wife? How can you tell?
4. What do you think will the envoy will tell his/her master, the Count?

Reprint 2024

SUPPLEMENTARY

Reprint 2024

1. Southbound On The Freeway- *May Swenson*

A tourist came in from Orbitville,
parked in the air, and said:

The creatures of this star
are made of metal and glass.

Through the transparent parts
you can see their guts.

Their feet are round and roll
on diagrams of long

measuring tapes, dark
with white lines.

They have four eyes.
The two in back are red.

Sometimes you can see a five-eyed
one, with a red eye turning

on the top of his head.
He must be special--

the others respect him
and go slow

when he passes, winding
among them from behind.

They all hiss as they glide,
like inches, down the marked

tapes. Those soft shapes,
shadowy inside

the hard bodies--are they
their guts or their brains?

2. Tithonus – *Alfred Tennyson*

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me only cruel immortality
Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,
Here at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream
The ever-silent spaces of the East,
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man—
So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd
To his great heart none other than a God!
I ask'd thee, 'Give me immortality.'
Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,
Like wealthy men, who care not how they give.
But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,
And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
Immortal age beside immortal youth,
And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,
Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,
Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears
To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:
Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes
A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.
Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,

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Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,
And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful
In silence, then before thine answer given
Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,
In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?
'The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.'

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East:
How can my nature longer mix with thine?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground;
Thou seëst all things, thou wilt see my grave:
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

3. Where The Mind Is Without Fear – *Rabindranath Tagore*

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Reprint 2024

ESSAY

Reprint 2024

1. The Skier - *Nancy Dorey*

Under the fetal warmth of a heavy quilt, muscles stretch and groan, sore from yesterday's turns and spills. The room is dark; outside it's snowing. Sweaty ski clothes are waiting to be put on again. An early morning breakfast is eaten in haste. Stiff boots must once again encase sore feet before you can venture out into the astounding silence of falling snow. You wade through it, shin deep, boots crunching, skis on shoulder; the whole world is white.

The lift is silent and snow covered. You are early. And so, with cold feet and impatience, you share the falling snow with a few others, all waiting while stomping their feet to keep warm.

The lift operator arrives and is soon sweeping snow off the lift with an over-worked broom. White fluff scatters in clouds to reveal dark, greasy metal. A cough, a hum, gears clank, and the chairs lurch into motion, beginning their daily, repetitive journey. The operator nods and you slide into place; the chair comes and you glide upward into the still descending snow.
The silent spruce are black against the sombre sky. Suddenly, there's a hint of blue and the falling snow is thinner now. You watch as a single crystal fairy dances down from the sky; another taps you on the nose.

The sky is blue now, the distant peaks etched silver against it. Three more towers and you are in the sun. The ramp arrives and your skis cut through the ridges as you slide off the chair, down into two feet of sparkling virgin snow. You struggle through the drift, then begin working your skis through the wind - packed snow toward the mountain's lip. Looking down, you see the quick, easy runs below, and above, the more remote slopes still lost in the tattered patch of a cloud that remains in the lee of the mountain. You start creeping upward. The track is long gone; you must guess a line and begin the long journey to the top.

Morning creaks, groans, and grunts abound. The sky is a dazzling blue; the snow sparkles. You go slowly, picking up one ski at a time, stomping down a place for it, then shifting upward one step. Progress is slow, and in place it seems non-existent.

Struggling still; the lower slopes are distant now; the top still hides. Sweat, sunglare, and aching muscles - what a way to start the day- but on you go, thrashing upward.

The top draws near - edging slowly, so slowly, closer. Sweat has collected around your waist; clothing half on, half off, goggles up one minute and down the next, eyes squinting into the glare and distance. The final few feet take forever: finally you collapse, panting, exhausted, in the snow.

On the ridge the wind is cutting and stray snow sandpapers your face. Beneath your feet the

mountain drops away. Amid the silver minarets of the Canadian Rockies you whisper a chant and contemplate your first turn: that first soft sifting of snow, mind, and body. On the very edge you hesitate, lost in the mountains, snow, and sky. Finally goggles come down; bindings are checked. No words are spoken.

Softly you are away. You turn gently, slowly, then turn again. Turns, more turns, each one like a waltz. You watch the slow arc of arm and pole, feel the flex, turn, and twist of muscles and tendons as you come down the mountain. Your skies are free, arcing around and down into the snow again, creating a fine wave that washes up and over you.

One final steep pitch and you land in an explosion of snow. This time the snow is very deep and you are seconds emerging from it. The surface of the snow is fluid. Whiteness surrounds you again - where is up? Where is the mountaintop? Where is down? Where are you going? Will you survive?

Down and down, through the last few remaining turns to the bottom. The last turn, you carve it wide and slow, coming around to look back up the mountain.

Soon others arrive and walk across the flat ground and into the crowd. There in the middle of the mechanical madness of a bigtime ski resort you stop, skis on your shoulder, and lose yourself in the wonder of skiing.

2. I Want a Wife - *Judy Brady*

Rationale

In most of the societies, stereotypical views often portray wives as submissive, dependent, and inferior to their husbands. These notions about wives often have negative impact on women and the society as a whole.

"I Want a Wife," written from a woman's point of view is a powerful critique of the societal expectations placed on women. This essay presents a new perspective on the duties of men and women in the society. "I Want a Wife" is a powerful persuasive essay that effectively uses satire and sarcasm to challenge traditional gender roles and highlights the inequalities faced by women in most parts of the world.

I Want a Wife

I belong to that classification of people known as wives. I am A Wife. And, not altogether incidentally, I am a mother.

Not too long ago a male friend of mine appeared on the scene fresh from a recent divorce. He had one child, who is, of course, with his ex-wife. He is looking for another wife. As I thought about him while I was ironing one evening, it suddenly occurred to me that I, too, would like to have a wife. Why do I want a wife?

I would like to go back to school so that I can become economically independent, support myself, and, if need be, support those dependent upon me. I want a wife who will work and send me to school. And while I am going to school I want a wife to take care of my children. I want a wife to keep track of the children's doctor and dentist appointments. And to keep track of mine, too. I want a wife to make sure my children eat properly and are kept clean. I want a wife who will wash the children's clothes and keep them mended. I want a wife who is a good nurturant attendant to my children, who arranges for their schooling, makes sure that they have an adequate social life with their peers, takes them to the park, the zoo, etc. I want a wife who takes care of the children when they are sick, a wife who arranges to be around when the children need special care, because, of course, I cannot miss classes at school. My wife must arrange to lose time at work and not lose the job. It may mean a small cut in my wife's income from time to time, but I guess I can tolerate that. Needless to say, my wife will arrange and pay for the care of the children while my wife is working.

I want a wife who will take care of my physical needs. I want a wife who will keep my house clean. A wife who will pick up after my children, a wife who will pick up after me. I want a wife who will keep my clothes clean, ironed, mended, replaced when need be, and who will see to it that my personal things are kept in their proper place so that I can find what I need the

minute I need it. I want awife who cooks the meals, a wife who is a good cook. I want a wife who will plan the menus, do the necessary grocery shopping, prepare the meals, serve them pleasantly, and then do the cleaning up while I do my studying. I want a wife who will care for me when I am sick and sympathize with my pain and loss of time from school. I want a wife to go along when our family takes a vacation so that someone can continue to care for me and my children when I need a rest and change of scene.

I want a wife who will not bother me with rambling complaints about a wife's duties. But I want a wife who will listen to me when I feel the need to ex-plain a rather difficult point I have come across in my course of studies. And I want a wife who will type my papers for me when I have written them.

I want a wife who will take care of the details of my social life. When my wife and I are invited out by my friends, I want a wife who will take care of the babysitting arrangements. When I meet people at school that I like and want to entertain, I want a wife who will have the house clean, will prepare a special meal, serve it to me and my friends, and not interrupt when I talk about things that interest me and my friends. I want a wife who will have arranged that the children are fed and ready for bed before my guests arrive so that the children do not bother us. I want a wife who takes care of the needs of my guests so that they feel comfortable, who makes sure that they have an ashtray, that they are passed the hors d'oeuvres, that they are offered a second helping of the food, that their wine glasses are replenished when necessary, that their coffee is served to them as they like it. And I want a wife who knows that sometimes I need a night out by myself.

If, by chance, I find another person more suitable as a wife than the wife I already have, I want the liberty to replace my present wife with another one. Naturally, I will expect a fresh new life; my wife will take the children and be solely responsible for them so that I am left free.

When I am through with school and have a job, I want my wife to quit working and remain at home so that my wife can more fully and completely take care of a wife's duties. My God, who wouldn't want a wife?

About the Author

Judy Brady was born in 1937 in San Francisco, California. In 1962 she graduated from the University of Iowa and earned a bachelor degree in painting. She is known as a feminist author writing about such issues as gender roles, cancer, and environment protection. She is best known for her 1971 essay "I Want a Wife." Brady is also a former editor of feminist magazine Mother Jones, and her work has been published in several other publications.

Making Connections

1. What is the main argument that the author makes in the essay?
2. Identify satire and irony used in the essay and explain how effective they are in conveying the message?
3. How does the essay relate to contemporary issues and debates around gender roles and equality in our society?
4. Are there any or some points to which you would not agree with the author? Explain why?
5. To what extent has the author been able to persuade you to support his/her views? Elaborate.

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3. What I Have Lived For - *Bertrand Russell*

"Three passions, like great winds, have blown me hither and thither, on a wayward course…"

Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. These passions, like great winds, have blown me hither and thither, on a wayward course, over a deep ocean of anguish, reaching to the very verge of despair.

I have sought love, first, because it brings ecstasy - ecstasy so sweet that I would often have sacrificed all the rest of life for a few hours of this joy. I have sought it, next, because it relieves loneliness - that terrible loneliness in which one shivering consciousness looks over the rim of the world into the cold unfathomable lifeless abyss. I have sought it, finally, because in the union of love I have seen, in a mystic miniature, the prefiguring vision of the heaven that saints and poets have imagined. This is what I sought, and though it might seem too good for human life, this is what - at last - I have found.

With equal passion I have sought knowledge. I have wished to understand the hearts of men. I have wished to know why the stars shine. And I have tried to apprehend the Pythagorean power by which number holds sway above the flux. A little of this, but not much, I have achieved.

Love and knowledge, so far as they were possible, led upward toward the heavens. But always pity brought me back to earth. Echoes of cries of pain reverberate in my heart. Children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors, helpless old people a hated burden to their sons, and the whole world of loneliness, poverty, and pain makes a mockery of what human life should be. I long to alleviate the evil, but I cannot, and I too suffer.

This has been my life. I have found it worth living, and would gladly live it again if the chance were offered me.

About the Author:

Betrand Russell was born in 1872 in Trelleck, England. He is best known for ***Principia Mathematics*** *(1910) and* ***A History of Western Philosophy*** *(1942). Among the many honours that Lord Russell received in addition to the Nobel Prize in 1950, are the much esteemed Order of Merit, bestowed upon him by King George VI in 1949, and the Sonning prize for his contribution to European culture by the University of Copenhagen in 1960. He died in 1970 in Penrhyndeudraeth, Wales. Perhaps Lord Russell's greatest gift to humankind was his unfaltering courage and the fearless stand he took in his campaign to preserve humanity. In a way, he summed up all his beliefs when he said: "Remember your humanity and forget the rest".*

SUPPLEMENTARY

Reprint 2024

1. National Day - *Editorial (Kuensel, December 20, 2003)*

National Day is one of the most significant days of the year for Bhutan. This year the significance assumes greater proportions as we reflect on the true meaning as well as the challenges of nationhood.

People from all sections of the population in Thimphu and other parts of the country were deeply conscious that, even as we gathered to celebrate National Day, His Majesty the King was compelled to lead the Bhutanese armed forces in a military operation to protect the security of the nation. We were disturbed by the risks that this entailed.

Military planners estimate that it takes up to 10 soldiers against each militant when facing guerrilla fighters in the forests. We were painfully aware of the perils of facing more than 3,000 armed militants with a fledging army. We wondered whether, in the absence of experience, numbers, and heavy-duty fire power, we had the extraordinary courage, the skill, and the commitment that would be required.

By the end of the week, this question was answered. Our troops are more than fulfilling our hopes and living up to the expectations of a leadership that we have never doubted for a moment. Our spirits and thoughts are with His Majesty the King and with every man and woman who is placing his or her life in the service of the nation.

We have no doubts at all about the morality of the action against the militants who had illegally occupied our soil and disrupted our lives. Nor are there any questions about the legitimacy of a small country protecting its security. And we have no misgivings over the need to protect the interests of a friend and neighbour, even at risk to ourselves.

The achievements that we have seen so far leave us, not gloating, but in contemplation. We know the extreme strain and pressure of trying to avoid violence. We know the reluctance with which His Majesty took to arms. We regret the fact that blood was shed, even the blood of armed aggressors. His Majesty the King has instilled in this difficult process a strong sense of compassion.

For this generation of Bhutanese people, this was our first encounter with violence of this scale. As common sense and all logic dictate, we truly hope that it will be our last.

The world generally sympathises with the fact that this is not Bhutan's problem. We were victims of the fact that the militants had camped in Bhutan and attacked targets in India, a friendly neighbour. The militants must have known that, under the circumstances, what is

happening today was inevitable.
For the past decade, Bhutan has suffered seriously from the presence of the militants. Every Bhutanese citizen was directly or indirectly affected. The lives of more than 66,000 people in more than 300 villages were completely disrupted. Trade and economic activities and agriculture in a large part of the country were affected. Bhutanese travelling through Assam, a friendly state, have been harassed and even killed in cold blood.

Security concerns hampered the development process and, more important, the presence of the militants threatened the security and sovereignty of the country.

The problem has nothing to do with the people in Assam and West Bengal with whom we are closely interlinked socially and economically. Throughout the week, even as Bhutanese troops were flushing out the militants, the government made it very clear that it sought the continued understanding and support of the government and the people of India, particularly in the bordering states of Assam and West Bengal.

This week, for example, people on both sides of the border were affected. Small settlements all along the border and rapidly growing towns like Jaigaon, Bogaigaon, Mela Bazaar are dependant on the Bhutanese market. And nearly all of Bhutan's imports come from India. Peace and stability in the region must be quickly restored because nobody wants a disturbed situation.

Today, the Bhutanese people are sorry that the government had to resort to a military option to solve this problem. We regret that our people, no matter how few, had to sacrifice their lives. But it was a Bhutanese resolve that it had to be done.

A nation has priorities. Life has to go on in Bhutan, a peace-loving nation where the priority is the happiness of the people.

Visitors see a pristine country and a strongly visible culture. Looking at the festivals, the markets, and the countryside, they see a happy people. They see what many of them lost and seem to leave with pangs of nostalgia of a world that is largely changed.

What they see is true to a great extent. In most parts of the world it is not common these days to see busy markets and local festivals where people are at home, enjoying themselves. Markets are serious impersonal public spaces and festivals are highly commercialised.

A well-travelled British visitor recently remarked that the weekend markets in Bhutan were the only places where people laughed as they conducted business.

Many countries are, in fact, trying hard to revive the human element in the lives of the people

because their daily interactions have become too impersonal. Some Asian governments are even trying to enforce social and family values, offering cash incentives and other subsidies like housing for extended families.

But we might ask ourselves how much of this positive impression is true, and for how long? It is so tempting to believe the optimists that we sometimes start blocking out reality.

We realise that visitors see just the surface. They don't necessarily see the problems that we are grappling with and the issues of concern that are cropping up every day. Bhutan is changing, and not all of the change is for the better. Sometimes we don't notice the changes that we ourselves are going through.

As we change from a rural to an urban setting some of the core values that formed the essence of the traditional society are changing even breaking down. This includes family cohesion and, in extension, traditional social systems. While there is some economic connection, mainly in the form of family dependence, the social interaction through the annual CHOKU and other local festivals and ceremonies is starting to disappear. Recent politics have shown us that there is a rift between the urban and rural communities.

A "system of wants", built through exposure to the material world, is taking its toll. We see new imageries of beauty, new symbols of luxury, new forms for entertainment, and entire new lifestyles promoted through the international media. We already need much more to make our lives more comfortable and "happier".
Meanwhile a large section of our population remains oblivious to the changes taking place all around us, particularly to the changes affecting us. We are not aware of the pitfalls so we cannot avoid them. That is why we need the institutions to replace the traditional systems of check and balance. Apart from the conventional institutions like the police force and law enforcers there is already a growing need for corrective centers. In this sense we view last week's initiative to establish a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center with sadness and appreciation. Sadness because our society now needs it and appreciation because it is not a government initiative but it comes from civil society, with the support from the Youth Development Fund.

It is just the beginning because we will need a variety of institutions and professionals to deal with the new mental and social problems that are emerging. Our planning process, previously restricted to the known concept of development, now involves much more complex thinking.

A British visitor might be impressed by the market but, not far up the road, there was a less happy scene that same week. There was an accident and two men were lying on the road but several cars passed by without stopping. It was getting dark and it was raining so these busy Thimphu residents had no time to stop to see what had happened. There was no impulse to help. These are new times.

2. Drugyels Destiny - *Tashi Pem*

Bhutan was given a ' Shangri-La' status, and on our part, we lived the fairy tale role to the fullest. Threat to national security was something that always came after the home news. We went through our *losars* and our National Days in the spirit of celebrating our Sundays. Joining the army was just another person choosing just another profession. Armed conflicts only made for some interesting discussions over dinner.

It took a husband packing to leave, a father going down south, a neighbour joining the militia, to drive home the realness of things. It took a Monarch-like-no-other to show me the true meaning of selfless devotion. It took a young face in a picture frame on a funeral pyre to teach me ultimate humility. Fathers and mothers, wives and children have helped loved ones pack for unknown number of days, and we have watched them leave. And as each one of us dealt differently with the emptier rooms, we were all united in the sense of pride that each one of our men and women out front gave us.

December 2003. I do not know what the stars said, but it certainly was a month that gave us a second chance. A chance that was so not 'a chance happening' but handed to us at the cost of our Druk Gyalpo having to walk the non-existent line between life and death in an armed conflict. At the cost of a son, a father, a husband, a lover, a friend.

These men and women, led by our Source of Inspiration, made sure that Drukyel's destiny was not left to chance.

The sense of relief in welcoming my husband back, the sense of sadness in knowing that another woman was mourning the loss of her husband at the very same time. While the turn of events leading to December 2003 is justified, no one can justify why one man comes back to his family and another does not. I can only hope that a few years down the road, we do not forget why he never came back.

'National Security' was for so long, and ashamedly so, thought to be the domain of strangers in uniforms. We were very comfortable with planning our future and raising our children in the face of the magnitude of the danger surrounding us. Comfortable with squabbling over a plot of space, building fences and walls around us. Equally comfortable with 'dedicating' and 'rededicating' our services to the *Tsa-Wa-Sum*.

'Nation is me and my children. It's my friends and my neighbours. When it's security at stake, so is all that we are, and dream will be. The destiny of Drukyel is intertwined with my destiny. It's legends and folklores are my ancestors, it's present is me, and it's future my children. It's independences, our independence. Independence. So beautiful a word, so taken for granted, so

fragile in its existence. In the appreciation of its fragility comes the love for it. In the defence of it emerges true valour. All through history, people have fought for a country to call their own. For a land to belong to. For a place to trace their roots to, and leave behind a legacy. People still do. And yet it was not until our land was turned into a battle ground that I began to see what I have and more.

The battle is over, but is the war? I had dreamt of a cottage on a hill, mentally painted the walls, even chosen the colour of the kitchen tiles. I forgot that the hill had to be secured first that way.

Reprint 2024

3. The Night The Bed Fell – *James Thurber*

I suppose that the high-water mark of my youth in Columbus, Ohio, was the night the bed fell on my father. It makes a better recitation (unless, as some friends of mine have said, one has heard it five or six times) than it does a piece of writing, for it is almost necessary to throw furniture around, shake doors, and bark like a dog, to lend the proper atmosphere and verisimilitude to what is admittedly a somewhat incredible tale. Still, it did take place.

It happened, then, that my father had decided to sleep in the attic one night, to be away where he could think. My mother opposed the notion strongly because, she said, the old wooden bed up there was unsafe- it was wobbly and the heavy headboard would crash down on father's head in case the bed fell, and kill him. There was no dissuading him, however, and at a quarter past ten he closed the attic door behind him and went up the narrow twisting stairs. We later heard ominous creaking as he crawled into bed. Grandfather, who usually slept in the attic bed when he was with us, had disappeared some days before. (On these occasions he was usually gone six or seven days and returned growling and out of temper, with the news that the federal Union was run by a passel of blockheads and that the Army of the Potomac didn't have a chance.)

We had visiting us at this time a nervous first cousin of mine named Briggs Beall, who believed that he was likely to cease breathing when he was asleep. It was his feeling that if he were not awakened every hour during the night, he might die of suffocation. He had been accustomed to setting an alarm clock to ring at intervals until morning, but I persuaded him to abandon this. He slept in my room and I told him that I was such a light sleeper that if anybody quit breathing in the same room with me, I would wake instantly. He tested me the first night-which I had suspected he would by holding his breath after my regular breathing had convinced him I was asleep. I was not asleep, however, and called to him. This seemed to allay his fears a little, but he took the precaution of putting a glass of spirits of camphor on a little table at the head of his bed. In case I didn't arouse him until he was almost gone, he said, he would sniff the camphor, a powerful reviver. Briggs was not the only member of his family who had his crotchets. Old Aunt Melissa Beall (who could whistle like a man, with two fingers in her mouth) suffered under the premonition that she was destined to die on South High Street, because she had been born on South High Street and married on South High Street. Then there was Aunt Sarah Shoaf, who never went to bed at night without the fear that a burglar was going to get in and blow chloroform under her door through a tube. To avert this calamity -for she was in greater dread of anesthetics than of losing her household goods-she always piled her money, silverware, and other valuables in a neat stack just outside her bedroom, with a note reading,: "This is all I have. Please take it and do not use your chloroform, as this is all I have." Aunt Gracie Shoaf also had a burglar phobia, but she met it with more fortitude. She was confident that burglars had been getting into her house every night for four years. The fact that she never missed anything was to her no proof

to the contrary. She always claimed that she scared them off before they could take anything, by throwing shoes down the hallway. When she went to bed she piled, where she could get at them handily, all the shoes there were about her house. Five minutes after she had turned off the light, she would sit up in bed and say "Hark!" Her husband, who had learned to ignore the whole situation as long ago as 1903, would either be sound asleep or pretend to be sound asleep. In either case he would not respond to her tugging and pulling, so that presently she would arise, tiptoe to the door, open it slightly and heave a shoe down the hall in one direction, and its mate down the hall in the other direction. Some nights she threw them all, some nights only a couple of pair.

But I am straying from the remarkable incidents that took place during the night that the bed fell on father. By midnight we were all in bed. The layout of the rooms and the disposition of their occupants is important to an understanding of what later occurred. In the front room upstairs (just under father's attic bedroom) were my mother and my brother Herman, who sometimes sang in his sleep, usually "Marching Through Georgia" or "Onward, Christian Soldiers." Briggs Beall and myself were in a room adjoining this one. My brother Roy was in a room across the hall from ours. Our bull terrier, Rex, slept in the hall.

My bed was an army cot, one of those affairs which are made wide enough to sleep on comfortably only by putting up, flat with the middle section, the two sides which ordinarily hang down like the sideboards of a drop-leaf table. When these sides are up, it is perilous to roll too far toward the edge, for then the cot is likely to tip completely over, bringing the whole bed

down on top of one, with a tremendous banging crash. This, in fact, is precisely what happened, about two o'clock in the morning. (It was my mother who, in recalling the scene later, first referred to it as "the night the bed fell on your father.")

Always a deep sleeper, slow to arouse (I had lied to Briggs), I was at first unconscious of what had happened when the iron cot rolled me onto the floor and toppled over on me. It left me still warmly bundled up and unhurt, for the bed rested above me like a canopy. Hence I did not wake up, only reached-the edge of consciousness and went back. The racket, however, instantly awakened my mother, in the next room, who came to the immediate conclusion that her worst dread was realized: the big wooden bed upstairs had fallen on father. She therefore screamed, "Let's go to your poor father!" It was this shout, rather, than the noise of my cot falling, that awakened Herman, in the same room with her. He thought that mother had become, for no apparent reason, hysterical. "You're all right, Mamma!" He shouted, trying, to calm her. They exchanged shout for shout for perhaps ten seconds: "Let's go to your poor father!" and "You're all right! " That woke up Briggs. By this time I was conscious of what was going on,

in a vague way, but did not yet realize that I was under my bed instead of on it. Briggs, awakening in the midst of loud shouts of fear and apprehension, came to the quick conclusion

that he was suffocating and that we were all trying to"bring him out." With a low moan, he grasped the glass of camphor at the head of his bed and instead of sniffing it poured it over himself. The room reeked of camphor. "Ugh, ugh," choked Briggs, like a drowning man, for he had almost succeeded in stopping his breathing under the deluge of pungent spirits. He leaped out of bed and groped toward the open window, but he came up against one that was closed. With his hand, he beat out the glass, and I could hear it crash and tinkle on the alleyway below. It was at this juncture that I, in trying to get up, had the uncanny sensation of feeling my bed above me. Foggy with sleep,

I now suspected, in my turn, that the whole uproar was being made in a frantic endeavor to extricate me from what must be an unheard-of and perilous situation. "Get me out of this!" I bawled. "Get me out!" I think I had the nightmarish belief that I was entombed in a mine. "Ugh," gasped Briggs, floundering in his camphor.

By this time my mother, still shouting, pursued by Herman, still shouting, was trying to open the door to the attic, in order to' go up and get my father's body out of the wreckage. The door was stuck, however, and wouldn't yield. Her frantic pulls on it only added to the general banging and confusion. Roy and the dog were now up, the one shouting questions, the other barking. Father, farthest away and soundest sleeper of all, had by this time been awakened by the battering on the attic door. He decided that the house was on fire. "I'm coming, I'm coming!" he wailed in a slow, sleepy voice-it took him many minutes to regain full consciousness. My mother, still believing he was caught under the bed, detected in his "I'm coming!" the mournful, resigned note of one who is preparing to meet his Maker. "He's dying!" she shouted.

"I'm all right!" Briggs yelled to reassure her. "I'm all right!" He still believed that it was his own closeness to death that was worrying mother. I found at last the light switch in my room, unlocked the door, and Briggs and I joined the others at the attic door. The dog, who never did like Briggs, jumped for him assuming that he was the culprit in whatever was going on and Roy had to throw Rex and hold him. We could hear father crawling out of bed upstairs. Roy pulled the attic door open, with a mighty jerk, and father came down the stairs, sleepy and irritable but safe and sound. My mother began to weep when she saw him. Rex began to howl. "What in the name of God is going on here?" asked father.

The situation was finally put together like a gigantic jig-saw puzzle. Father caught a cold from prowling around in his bare feet but there were no other bad results. "I'm glad," said mother, who always looked on the bright side of things, "that your grandfather wasn't here."

Time Allocation for XI

The maximum number of instructional days available for curriculum delivery excluding examination is 150 days in a year. The school year divided into two terms of fifteen weeks each, and that each week will have 6 periods of 40 minutes for teaching English. The total time allocated for English in a week is 240 minutes. Therefore, class XI will have 120 hours in a year which is 180 periods.

The following is the suggestive period and time allocation per week for all strands.

	Period	**Time** *(minutes)*
Reading & Literature	2	80
Writing	2	80
Listening & Speaking	1	40
Language and Grammar	1	40
Total	**6**	**240**

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Modes of Assessment for Class XI

Continuous Assessment (CA) and Examinations Weighting for Classes XI

English Paper I (Writing and Grammar) - CA and Written Examination Weighting

Term One				Term Two				Grand Total (Total A + Total B)
CA		Examination	**Total A**	CA		Examination	**Total B**	
Listening and Speaking	10%	40%	**50%**	Listening and Speaking	10%	40%	**50%**	**100%**

Note:

1. In English Paper I, the Writing and Language & Grammar strands form the written examination part, and the Listening and Speaking strand forms the CA part.

2. The Term One examination should be conducted out of 100 marks and converted to 40%. The 10% CA marks from the Listening and Speaking should be added to the examination marks to make it 50%.

3. Similarly, the Term Two examination should be also conducted out of 100 marks and converted to 40%. The 10% CA marks from the Listening and Speaking should be added to the examination marks to make it 50%.

4. Finally, the total marks of term one and term two should be added to make it 100%.

5. Listening and Speaking activities such as debates, extempore speeches, presentations, book talks, reports, and discussions should be conducted consistently throughout the year, ideally by integrating in other strands so that the learners get maximum time to practice the skills. Teachers need to develop their own additional listening and speaking exercises wherever necessary. Use Continuous Formative Assessment (CFA) to help students achieve the desired goals.

6. At the end of each Term, a formal test should be conducted to assess each learner's listening and speaking skills.

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English Paper I (Writing and Language and Grammar) - Written Examination Marks Break-up

Sl No	Genre	Weighting	Remarks
1	Essay writing	25 marks	Persuasive essay
2	Report / Summary writing	10 marks	Either can be asked
3	Information transfer	10 marks	Non-continuous to continuous or vice versa.
4	Official letter/ Memos	10 marks	Either can be asked
6	Grammar	35 marks	Items to be derived from the competencies and objectives. Questions can be asked from the lower classes as well.
7	Nature of Language	10 marks	As stated in the framework
Total		100	

Note: The questions types and patterns for written examinations shall remain dynamic.

English Paper I - Listening and Speaking CA (20%)

Sl No	Listening and Speaking activities	Remarks
1	Listening and Speaking skills	• Teachers can design additional activities to meet the Competencies and Learning Objectives of Listening and Speaking strand. • Conduct oral test/listening and speaking activities throughout the year.
2	Oral report	
3	Debates	
4	Extempore speeches	
5	Presentations	
6	Book talk	

Note: The questions types and patterns for written examinations shall remain dynamic.

English Paper II (Reading & Literature) - CA and Written Examination Weighting

Term One				Term Two				Grand Total (Total A + Total B)
CA		Examination	Total A	CA		Examination	Total B	
Reading Portfolio	5%	40%	50%	Reading Portfolio	5%	40%	50%	100%
Writing Portfolio	5%			Writing Portfolio	5%			

Note:

1. In the English Paper II, the Reading and Literature strand forms the written examination part, and the Reading Portfolio and the Writing Portfolio form the CA part.
2. The Term One examination should be conducted out of 100 marks and converted to 40%. The CA marks from the Reading Portfolio and the Writing Portfolio (5% each) should be added to the examination marks to make it 50%.
3. Similarly, the Term Two examination should be conducted out of 100 marks and converted to 40%. The CA marks from the Reading Portfolio and the Writing Portfolio (5% each) should be added to the examination marks to make it 50%.
4. Finally, the total marks of Term One and Term Two should be added up to make it 100%.
5. The Reading Portfolio should consist of record of reading, book reviews and critical response to books read. The Writing Portfolio should consist of learner's best pieces of writing (essays, articles, short stories, poems etc.), journal writing for books read, process of work, variety in number and genre.
6. Teacher should ensure that all the learners maintain their portfolios for academic purposes only.
7. The Reading and Writing Portfolios of each learner should be monitored consistently to check their progress. Teachers should provide timely feedback, support and take necessary remedial measures so that the learners achieve the objectives and competencies. The portfolios should be assessed at regular intervals and awarded marks accordingly.

English Paper II (Reading and Literature) - Written Examination Marks Break-up

Sl No	Genre	Weighting	Remarks
1	Short Story	25 marks	The prescribed short stories. Questions on more than one story can be asked.
2	Essay	25 marks	From outside the prescribed textbook
3	Poetry	25 marks	From the prescribed or outside textbook.
4	Drama	25 marks	The prescribed play – The Merchant of Venice (till Act II for class XI and the entire play for class XII)
Total		100	

Note: The questions types and patterns for written examinations shall remain dynamic.

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Reading Strategies

Secondary Reading Strategies

Reading is the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among:

- the reader's existing knowledge,
- the information Learning by the written language, and
- the context of the reading situation.

Four general purposes of reading are:

- to gain information
- to perform a task
- to experience and enjoy literature
- to form opinion

Critical Reading

Critical reading means **to look through texts rather than at them**; it means **reading beyond and beneath** surface meanings to the assumptions, arguments, and strategies behind them. Critical reading means about **how texts work**: how they make their meaning, how they appeal to your emotions and intellect, how they present arguments that are explicit and implicit; how they reason with readers and manipulate them.

To be a critical reader, you need to learn how to "slow down" your reading. Slowing down your reading doesn't mean you ought to read more slowly; it means that you need to **read in such a way that you learn to be aware of a text's various parts and processes**. Running your eye over the words on the page it is easy to think of any piece of writing as a smooth and solid object. But all writing — whether a short story by a famous writer or a paper by one of your classmates — is the result of a process and the product of a context. Both the process and context that produce a piece of writing are reflected in various ways in a text's parts and layers. When you learn to slow down your reading you will be able to see that all writing is made up of parts and layers that come together in the writing process to make something that seems whole.

Critical Reading Classroom Environment

For active, critical reading to occur, teachers must create an atmosphere which fosters inquiry. Students must be encouraged to question, to make predictions, and to organize ideas which support value judgments. Two techniques for developing these kinds of critical reading skills include **problem solving** and **to reason through reading**. Flynn (1989) describes an instructional model for problem solving which promotes analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of ideas. She states that, "When we ask students to analyze we expect them to clarify information by examining the component parts. Synthesis involves combining relevant parts into a coherent whole, and evaluation includes setting up standards and then judging against them to verify the reasonableness of ideas."

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Beck (1989) adopts a similar perspective, using the term "reasoning" to imply higher order thinking skills. Comprehension requires inferencing, which plays a central role in reasoning and problem solving. For Beck, children's literature has the potential to engage students in reasoning activities.

When literature is approached from a problem solving perspective, students are asked to evaluate evidence, draw conclusions, make inferences, and develop a line of thinking (Riecken and Miller, 1990). According to Flynn (1989), children are capable of solving problems at all ages and need to be encouraged to do so at every grade level. (See, for example, "Using Fairy Tales" 1991 for young children; Anton 1990 for elementary children; Johannessen 1989 for middle school children.) Teachers may want to experiment with a particular children's book and plan a lesson which places reasoning at the centre of instruction.

Wilson (1988) suggests that teachers re-think the way they teach reading and look critically at their own teaching/thinking processes. She cautions against skills lessons that are repackaged in the name of critical thinking but which are only renamed worksheets. She points out that teaching students to read, write, and think critically is a dramatic shift from what has generally taken place in most classrooms.

According to Wilson, critical literacy advocates the use of strategies and techniques like formulating questions prior to, during, and after reading; responding to the text in terms of the student's own values; anticipating texts, and acknowledging when and how reader expectations are aroused and fulfilled; and responding to texts through a variety of writing activities which ask readers to go beyond what they have read to experience the text in personal ways.

Critical Reading Strategies

Mastering these strategies will not make the critical reading process an easy one, it can make reading much more satisfying and productive and thus help students handle difficult material well and with confidence.

Fundamental to each of these strategies is annotating directly on the page: underlining key words, phrases, or sentences; writing comments or questions in the margins; bracketing important sections of the text; constructing ideas with lines or arrows; numbering related points in sequence; and making note of anything that strikes you as interesting, important, or questionable.

Previewing: about a text before really reading it. Previewing enables readers to get a sense of what the text is about and how it is organized before reading it closely. This simple strategy includes seeing what you can learn from the head notes or other introductory material, skimming to get an overview of the content and organization, and identifying the rhetorical situation.

Contextualizing: Placing a text in its historical, biographical, and cultural contexts. When you read a text, you read it through the lens of your own experience. Your understanding of the words on the page and their significance is informed by what you have come to know and value from living in a particular time and place. But the texts you read were all written in the past, sometimes in a radically different time and place. To read critically, you need to contextualize, to recognize the differences between your contemporary values and attitudes and those represented in the text.

Questioning to understand and remember: Asking questions about the content. As students, you are accustomed to teachers asking you questions about your reading. These questions are designed to help you understand a reading and respond to it more fully, and often this technique works. When you need to understand and use new information though it is most beneficial if you write the questions, as you read the text for the first time. With this strategy, you can write questions any time, but in difficult academic readings, you will understand the material better and remember it longer if you write a question for every paragraph or brief section. Each question should focus on a main idea, not on illustrations or details, and each should be expressed in your own words, not just copied from parts of the paragraph.

Reflecting on challenges to your beliefs and values: Examining your personal responses. The reading that you do for this class might challenge your attitudes, your unconsciously held beliefs, or your positions on current issues. As you read a text for the first time, mark an X in the margin at each point where you feel a personal challenge to your attitudes, beliefs, or status. Make a brief note in the margin about what you feel or about what in the text created the challenge. Now look again at the places you marked in the text where you felt personally challenged. What patterns do you see?

Outlining and summarizing: Identifying the main ideas and restating them in your own words. Outlining and summarizing are especially helpful strategies for understanding the content and structure of a reading selection. Whereas outlining levels the basic structure of the text, summarizing synopsizes a selection's main argument in brief. Outlining may be part of the annotating process, or it may be done separately (as it is in this class). The key to both outlining and summarizing is being able to distinguish between the main ideas and the supporting ideas and examples. The main ideas form the backbone, the strand that holds the various parts and pieces of the text together. Outlining the main ideas helps you to discover this structure. When you make an outline, don't use the text's exact words.

Summarizing begins with outlining, but instead of merely listing the main ideas, a summary recomposes them to form a new text. Whereas outlining depends on a close analysis of each paragraph, summarizing also requires creative synthesis. Putting ideas together again — in your own words and in a condensed form — shows how reading critically can lead to deeper understanding of any text.

Evaluating an argument: Testing the logic of a text as well as its credibility and emotional impact. All writers make assertions that want you to accept as true. As a critical reader, you should not accept anything on face value but to recognize every assertion as an argument that must be carefully evaluated. An argument has two essential parts: a claim and support. The claim asserts a conclusion — an idea, an opinion, a judgment, or a point of view — that the writer wants you to accept. The support includes reasons (shared beliefs, assumptions, and values) and evidence (facts, examples, statistics, and authorities) that give readers the basis for accepting the conclusion. When you assess an argument, you are concerned with the process of reasoning as well as its truthfulness (these are not the same thing). At the most basic level, in order for an argument to be acceptable, the support must be appropriate to the claim and the statements must be consistent with one another.

Comparing and contrasting related readings: Exploring likenesses and differences between texts to understand them better. Many of the authors we read are concerned with the same issues or questions, but approach how to discuss them in different ways. Fitting a text into an ongoing dialectic helps increase understanding of why an author approached a particular issue or question in the way he or she did.

The Student's Role

Critical thinking implies that a reader is actively and constructively engaged in the process of reading. The reader is continually negotiating what s/he knows with what s/he is trying to make sense of. The role of background knowledge and the student's ability to draw upon it are essential to critical thinking/.

It is not an easy task to incorporate higher level thinking skills into the classroom, but it is a necessary one. For students to participate in the society in which they live, they must have experiences which prepare them for life. In order to become critical thinkers, it is essential that students learn to value their own thinking, to compare their thinking and their interpretations with others, and to revise or reject parts of that process when it is appropriate.
A classroom environment which is student-centred fosters student participation in the process. that is both personal and collaborative encourages critical thinking. Students who are reading, writing, discussing, and interacting with a variety of materials in a variety of ways are more likely to become critical thinkers.

The Teacher's Role

Teachers who encourage **pre-reading discussions** to help readers activate prior knowledge or fill in gaps in background knowledge set the stage for critical reading. They help students identify purposes for reading, formulate hypotheses, and test the accuracy of their hypotheses throughout the reading process. In addition, asking students to examine their own reading and processes creates the awareness necessary for critical reading.

Post-reading activities that extend texts provide an opportunity for teachers to check for learning. Transforming ideas from reading into artwork, poetry, etc. is an evaluative, interpretive act that reveals the student's level of understanding. Critical readers are active readers. They **question, confirm, and judge** what they read throughout the reading process. Students engaged in such activities are likely to become critical thinkers and learners.

How Do I Sharpen My Critical Reading Strategies?

Reading critically does not mean that you are criticizing the writer's message but rather that you are **assessing the validity and reliability of the writer's material**. Critical readers are also aware that they bring their beliefs, values, experiences, and prior knowledge to the reading process. Critical readers ask questions about themselves, the writer, and the writing. Below is a set of questions to sharpen your critical reading strategies.

Menu of Critical Reading Questions

1. Reader's Background and Value Assumptions

i. What do I know about the topic?
ii. What are my beliefs and values regarding the topic?
iii. What is my purpose for reading this material?

2. Writer's Background and Value Assumptions

i. What is the writer's background?
ii. How might it affect the writer's approach to the topic and the selection and interpretation of the evidence presented?
iii. What are the writer's value assumptions regarding this topic?

3. Writer's Argument, Conclusion, and Evidence

i. What is the topic of the writer's argument?
ii. What is the writer's conclusion?
iii. How has the writer limited the scope of the argument through definitions of key terms and the use of qualifying words and phrases?

4. Writer's Use of Evidence to Support the Conclusion

i. Are there any logical fallacies?
ii. What sort of evidence does the writer use to support the conclusion(s)?
iii. Does the evidence offer adequate support for the writer's conclusion?
iv. Are the sources creditable?
v. If the writer uses research studies as evidence, does the research satisfy these conditions:
   - Is it timely?
   - Is the sample group representative of the target population?

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- Who conducted the research? What was the purpose of the research?
- Has the research been replicated?
- Are the statistical findings and writer's conclusion focused on the same topic?
- Do the graphic illustrations represent the data in a truthful manner?
- Do the various physical dimensions of the graphic accurately portray the numerical relationships?
- What is the source of the data in the illustration?
- Are the statistical findings and the writer's conclusion focused on the same topic?

5. Reader's Reaction to the Reading

i. Do I accept the writer's evidence as reliable and valid support of the conclusion?
ii. To what degree do I accept the conclusion?
iii. How does the conclusion relate to what I already know and believe about the topic?
iv. How has the writer's argument changed my views on this topic?

Here are some strategies that may be used:

1. Take inventory of what you will be reading.

Think about what you already know about the subject. Write down some notes on these thoughts. Look over the material you are reading - look for key words and phrases that may be in italics or boldface. Look for any graphs, captions, pictures or other graphics. See if there is a summary at the end or a set of comprehension questions. Most textbooks have summaries and questions. These can be very helpful to guide your reading. You should always read the summary and the questions before you read the text. These will give you a good idea of what to look for when you read. Remember: not everything in the text is equally important: read for the main ideas.

2. See the forest, not the trees!

There is an English idiom that says, "You can't see the forest for the trees." This means that a person cannot see the overall picture or idea because she/he is concentrating on the details too much. When you are reading, don't try to understand every word - get the overall idea.

3. Don't just read —WRITE!

Take notes while you are reading. Sometimes notes can be words and phrases that help you remember main ideas. However, you can also draw pictures or diagrams of key ideas. It's like drawing a map with roads connecting different cities or locations. If each location is an idea, connect them together in your notes.

4. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

If possible, read the text more than once.

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5. Don't be afraid to make guesses.
Try to guess at meaning by looking at the context. The sentences and words immediately before and after the point you are reading can give you good ideas.

6. Try to analyze the text.
Look for the introduction and conclusion. Look for the topic sentences in each paragraph.

7. Make connections.
Try to make connections between main ideas and supporting details. Well-written texts will attempt to make connections of their ideas in a logical way.

8. Summarize & Paraphrase.
When you have finished reading a paragraph or a portion of the text, stop and try to summarize in your own words what you have read. You can do this in your notes or you can explain it orally to someone else.

9. Talk with your friends.
Discuss what you have read with others who have also read the same text.

SQ3R....for students & teachers

When you read, it is important to have a strategy or a plan for reading effectively. If you do not have a plan, you may be easily distracted or may not focus on the right things in the text. As a result, when you are finished reading, you may not understand very much of what you have read. Also, you may not have developed your English very much, either.

When you read, you must be actively involved in the reading process in order to understand most effectively. The SQ3R method is one way to help you do this.

How does the SQ3R method work?

Survey
Survey means to scan the main parts of the text you are going to read. This includes looking at the title, headings of paragraphs, introduction and conclusion, first lines of each paragraph, and any extra information that may be presented in boxes on the page. Doing this gives you some basic understanding of what the text is about and helps you know what to expect when you read in more detail.

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Question

Questions are very helpful when you read a text. Most of the time, people read first, and then look at questions at the end of the text. However, this is not the best way to read. If possible, read the questions provided for you FIRST. This will help you know what specific information to look for. Questions (those that are provided with text and those provided by your teacher) are designed to focus on the main points. Therefore, if you read to answer these questions, you will be focusing on the main points in the text. This helps you read with a goal in mind - answering specific questions.

3 R's

Read

Once you have some idea of what the text is about and what the main points might be, start reading. Do not be afraid if the text has many words you cannot understand. Just read!

Follow these suggestions:

- Do not use your dictionary the first time through the text.
- Try to understand as much as you can from the context.
- Take notes as you go.
- Make a note of places that you do not understand, or words that are unclear.
- Go through the text a second time.
- Try to answer the questions.

Recite

Studies have suggested that students remember 80% of what they learn, if they repeat the information verbally. If they do not repeat verbally, they often forget 80%. Writing down the answers to questions from the text and saying these answers will help you remember the information. One good way to do this is to discuss the information with a friend or classmate, or with the professor. Try to summarize the main points you have learned from the reading and add to your knowledge from the comments and responses of the person you are talking with.

Review

Review means to go over something again. In order to remember information, you cannot simply memorize it one day and then put it aside. After you have read and discussed and studied your information, it is important to review your notes again a few days or weeks later. This will help you keep the information fresh in your mind.

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Strategies for Teaching Reading Strategies

Modes of Reading

Different modes of reading offer varying levels of support for students, from having the teacher read the entire text aloud to having students read the text independently. It is frequently appropriate to combine several modes of reading at once. The combination provides a scaffold for learning that gradually releases responsibility to the students and helps them to become more proficient readers. Different combinations are used to meet the differing needs of students in relation to the materials they are reading.

Reading Aloud

The teacher reads aloud from a text that is too challenging for the students to read and comprehend alone. Usually the students do not have a copy of the text. The teacher may complete the text in one reading or may continue reading a longer text over a period of time. Reading aloud is used to develop background information, to make connections across texts, or for enjoyment.

Teacher-Directed Interactive Reading

Using grade level materials which may include magazine or newspaper articles, poems, charts, or other forms of print, the teacher provides direct, supported reading of text to the whole class. The text is read in a variety of ways.

- The teacher introduces the text and sets a purpose for independent, silent reading of a part or all of the text.
- The teacher reads the text or part of the text aloud while students follow the reading in their own texts. The teacher pauses for predictions, clarifications, and questions. A summary of what was read is developed orally or in writing with the class.
- Students are paired for buddy reading of the text.
- Small groups of students read the text together using reciprocal teaching strategies.
- The teacher reads the text aloud to a small group of students while the rest of the class reads the selection independently, with a buddy, or in a small group.
- Groups of students or the whole class may read the text together as a choral reading activity.

Guided Reading

The teacher provides small group instruction using materials at the instructional level of the group. The teacher supports the development of effective reading strategies for processing new texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty. This progression of difficulty must be in increments small enough to allow the reader to bridge the gap without being frustrated. Therefore, the best materials for guided reading are sets of books that have the progression built in. For elementary school students whose instructional reading level is close to grade level, the grade level basal may be used to provide guided reading instruction.

During Guided Reading, the teacher works with a small group of students who use similar reading processes and are able to read similar levels of text with support. The teacher introduces a text to this small group and works briefly with individuals in the group as each student reads to him/herself. The teacher may select one or two reading strategies to present to the group following the reading and may have students participate in extension activities. Basic to Guided Reading is that the text is one that offers the reader a minimum of new concepts to learn so that students can read the text with the strategies they currently have, but it provides an opportunity for new learning.

Structured Independent Reading

Students build reading fluency, practice strategic reading skills, and increase their vocabularies by spending sustained periods of in-class time engaged in independent reading. Books may be self-selected or teacher assigned, but are at the students' independent reading levels. Time for this fluency practice must be built into the school day and must include a daily homework assignment.

Students in Pre-primary should spend a minimum of 15 minutes each day in developmentally appropriate independent reading behavior. **Students in grades 1-12 must spend 30 minutes each day on in-class independent reading**. **All students, PP-12, must read 30 minutes each night as daily reading homework.** Activities which support and strengthen independent reading include:

- drawing a picture of a favorite part of the book;
- discussing the book/chapter read with a partner or a small group;
- keeping a record or log of each book completed;
- writing a brief summary of the content;
- making a personal response to the reading in a log or journal;
- writing dialogue journals to the teacher about the independent reading material; and/or
- taking the Accelerated Reader test.

Working With Words

Students receive daily explicit, systematic instruction in one or more of the following as appropriate:

- phonemic awareness, students are taught the sounds of the language;
- phonics instruction, students receive instruction in letter/sound matching;
- blending and segmenting sounds, and decoding;
- graphophonic instruction, students learn to use letter/sound correspondence to write;
- syntactic, students learn word patterns and spelling, prefixes, suffixes, root words, etymologies; and
- vocabulary, students learn word meanings, analogies, usage, and cognates.

Reciprocal Teaching

Students are taught to become **strategic readers through an active dialogue** with a teacher/leader and other students. Working in small groups, students practice the following critical reading strategies:

- making predictions based on titles, captions, pictures, prior knowledge, etc.;
- formulating good questions based on the text (e.g., writing test questions);
- seeking clarification of words, phrases, or concepts not understood;
- summarizing, getting the main idea; and
- forming visual images while reading.

Questions and Discussion

Critical to reading comprehension is the ability to ask and answer higher order thinking questions about text and to defend or challenge answers using information and details from the text to support positions. Students at all levels and in all subject areas **must have daily opportunities** to raise questions to be used in group discussions about texts. Student-generated questions should be used to formulate teacher-made tests.

Read and Retell

Retellings are powerful tools because they serve authentic instructional and assessment purposes. Students retell, orally or in writing, narrative or expository text. In the retelling, they use the same form, style, and language of the original text. This strategy aids comprehension of text, expands vocabulary, and provides good models for students to transfer to their personal writing. Retellings provide insights into the thinking, organization, and comprehension levels of the readers. In primary grades students may use drawings in combination with oral retelling.

Learning to Write, Writing to Learn

Writing and reading are reciprocal skills which strongly support one another. It is important that students receive daily instruction in effective writing and that they use writing to demonstrate what they have learned. Writing is thinking made visible. It supports students in learning to construct meaning and become proficient readers. It involves many activities including:

- exploring different modes of writing;
- mini-lessons that include modeling; and
- engaging students in meaningful interactions with text.

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