

ENGDSC-303

Popular Literature

Course Objective: This course aims to provide students with a comprehensive exploration of popular literature spanning various forms and genres, from traditional fairy tales to science fiction, from detective novels to graphic novels. These readings will facilitate a critical understanding of the characteristics and significance of popular literature within society

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Learning Outcome: Upon completion of this course, students will be equipped with a range of analytical and interpretive skills that will enable them to engage with popular literature at a deeper level.

Unit 1:

- i. Leslie Fiedler, 'Towards a Definition of Popular Literature', in *Super Culture: American Popular Culture and Europe*, ed. C.W.E. Bigsby (Ohio: Bowling Green University Press, 1975) pp. 29–38.
- ii. Abin Chakraborty: "Literary Forms of Popular Culture" (from *Popular Culture* by Abin Chakraborty, Orient Black Swan)

Unit 2:

Hans Christian Andersen: "The Emperor's New Clothes", "The Old House" "The Happy Family" & "The Story of a Mother" (From Anderson's *Fairy Tales*)

Unit 3:

Agatha Christie: *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*.

Unit 4:

Chetan Bhagat: *Five Point Someone*

Unit 5:

Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam: *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability*



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UNIT – 1

Q.What is Fiedler's core argument about popular literature?

A: Fiedler defines popular literature as "popular song and story," specifically focusing on "story," that has been excluded from formal academic or "serious" study but continues to be read and enjoyed by the public, particularly in the context of the printing press and mass readership.

Q. What does Fiedler suggest critics do to define popular literature?

A: Fiedler points out that critics often create a separation between serious novelists and "mere entertainers," dividing writers and their works into categories like "best sellers" and "art novels" to categorize literature and distinguish between popular and serious works.

Q. What are the key characteristics of popular literature according to the context?

A: Popular literature is characterized by its mass audience, its function as a source of entertainment for readers with accessible stories, and its separation from or exclusion from academic curricula.

Q. What is the role of the printing press in Fiedler's view of popular literature?

A: The printing press, from its inception onwards, significantly increased the volume of literary production and consumption, leading to a rise in what came to be defined as popular literature with its mass audience.

Q. Does Fiedler believe popular literature is inherently "bad" or "low" quality?

A: Not necessarily. While popular literature is often contrasted with "serious" or "art" novels by critics, Fiedler's work implies that the defining factor is its mass appeal and exclusion from academic study, not its inherent literary merit or quality.

Q: How does Fiedler initially describe popular literature?

A: He defines it as "popular song and story, mostly story" that has been "ghettoized" or excluded from academic study and university classes on literature.

Q: What is Fiedler's primary critique of how popular literature has been treated by critics?

A: Fiedler argues against the artificial distinction between "serious novelists" and "mere entertainers" created by elitist critics who disregard popular genres, a division he views as "delusive and unreal".

Q: What does Fiedler suggest literary critics should focus on instead of conventional standards like ethics and aesthetics?

A: He urges critics to embrace an "Ecstasies" approach, focusing on a work's capacity to evoke emotional responses and explore themes of myth, archetype, fantasy, and wonder.

Q: How did mass production technology influence the rise of popular literature?

A: Fiedler notes that the technical ability to mechanically reproduce cultural products, especially from 1765 onwards, allowed for a dramatic increase in popular literary works. He calls this technology the "mother of popular literature".

Q: What role does emotional engagement play in Fiedler's view of popular literature?

A: Fiedler believes popular literature can move readers on a deeper, more emotional level than works considered "high art." He states it touches "levels of response deeper and more archaic" than those that distinguish between high and low culture.

Q: In what way does Fiedler argue that popular literature challenges the "decorum and abstraction of academic prose?"

A: Fiedler's writing and approach to popular culture were characterized by a direct, passionate engagement with the reader, mirroring the style of the popular works he championed and contributing to a loosening of academic rigidity.

Q: What are three genres of popular literature that Fiedler discusses?

A: He examines Sentimental Literature (like novels by Samuel Richardson's imitators), Horror Literature (from Frankenstein to horror comics), and Classic Pornography (including the works of the Marquis de Sade).

Q: What does Fiedler mean by "crossing the border—closing the gap"?

A: In his postmodernist critique, this phrase symbolizes his call to break down the artificial and exclusionary divide between so-called highbrow and lowbrow literatures and cultures.

Q: How does Fiedler's approach differ from the principles of New Criticism?

A: While New Criticism focuses on the formal elements of canonical texts, Fiedler rejects these constraints and instead applies psychological and mythopoeic concepts to analyze a wider range of cultural phenomena, including noncanonical works.

Q: How does Fiedler describe the distinction critics have traditionally made between "High" and "low" literature?

A: He considers the distinction "delusive and unreal," a form of "ghettoization" where academic critics, often driven by class-based biases, dismiss mass-market works without even reading them.

Q: According to Fiedler, what is the connection between the rise of the novel and the creation of "literary standards"?

A: Fiedler argues that the new bourgeois ruling class of the 18th century invented literary standards out of cultural insecurity. They wanted to control literary culture like previous aristocracies but needed "expert" critics to tell them which novels were acceptable.

Q: What is Fiedler's view on the idea that popular literature corrupts the masses?

A: He dismisses this theory as a "condescending corollary" to the idea of a high/low divide. It's a paranoid delusion, he claims, used by critics to justify their own elitist biases.

Q: Fiedler differentiates between "Folk Literature" and "Popular Literature." How?

A: Folk Literature refers to orally transmitted stories and songs from before the printing press. Popular Literature, by contrast, is enabled by and defined by post-Gutenberg mass-production technology, including both print and electronic media.

Q: How does the novel itself figure into Fiedler's historical argument?

A: The modern novel was the first genre born specifically for mass production technology. Its development was tied to technological changes like cheap paper and new marketing channels, not just aesthetic evolution.

Q: What role does the "marketplace" play in the history of popular literature?

A: For Fiedler, the market and mass production technology serve as the "midwife" and "wetnurse" of popular literature. The free enterprise marketplace, not academic critics, ultimately determines which works succeed and persist.

Q: Instead of focusing on aesthetics, what does Fiedler urge critics to consider?

A: He advocates for a new approach centered on "Ecstatics"—the ability of literature to generate emotion and a temporary release from the limits of rationality.

Q: What elements of a literary work would critics of "Ecstatics" focus on?

A: This approach would emphasize myth, fable, archetype, fantasy, and wonder, rather than traditional formalist elements like structure, theme, and irony.

Q: What is the ultimate goal of Fiedler's argument for recognizing and studying popular literature?

A: To deliver readers from the "indignity of having to condescend publicly to works we privately relish" and to move past the "delusive and unreal" distinctions between "high" and "low" culture.

Q: How does Fiedler's essay connect with the emergence of postmodernism?

A: He is considered one of the first critics to use the term "postmodernism". His essay challenges the modern, elitist division between "high" and "low" culture, which is a key tenet of postmodern thought.

Q: What is Fiedler's stance on "artistic hierarchies"?

A: He explicitly rejected artistic hierarchies, arguing that all forms of culture, including pop art, are worthy of critical attention. His desire to "cross the border—close the gap" between high and low art is a foundational postmodern gesture.

Q: What does Fiedler mean by calling for a "contextual rather than textual" criticism?

A: Instead of focusing exclusively on the formal elements of a text (as New Criticism did), Fiedler wanted a "New New Criticism" that would consider the broader cultural context, including popular culture.

Q: What is the "myth of the popular mind" that Fiedler dismisses?

A: He rejects the notion that popular works are "corrupting the masses". This idea was often used by elitist critics to justify their dismissal of popular literature, and Fiedler saw it as a condescending bias.

Q: How does the free enterprise marketplace relate to Fiedler's definition?

A: Fiedler argues that the free marketplace serves as the "midwife" and "wetnurse" of popular literature, suggesting that market forces, not academic critics, are what ultimately determine a popular work's success.

Q: In what way was the 18th-century novel a turning point for Fiedler?

A: For Fiedler, the novel was the first mass-produced literary form, emerging as the dominant genre for a mass audience. The subsequent creation of literary "standards" was a defense mechanism by a new, insecure bourgeois class.

Q: Why was Fiedler's argument so controversial within the academic community?

A: His work challenged the long-held institutional and intellectual biases that marginalized popular culture. By advocating for the study of works like horror comics and sentimental novels, he pushed against the "staid, traditional, patriarchal business as usual" of literary studies.

Q: How did Fiedler's work on popular literature pave the way for later fields of study?

A: By dismantling the high-low distinction, Fiedler helped establish the groundwork for what would become Cultural Studies. This field takes popular phenomena, from television shows to video games, as serious objects of academic inquiry, an approach that Fiedler championed.

Q: What is the main outcome Fiedler desired from his critique of literary divisions?

A: Fiedler wanted to liberate both critics and readers from the "indignity of having to condescend publicly to works we privately relish". He sought to end the pretense that enjoying "low" culture was a shameful act, thereby encouraging a more honest and emotionally engaged criticism.

A. In his essay, "Towards a Definition of Popular Literature," Leslie Fiedler argues that "popular literature" encompasses works that are not part of the academic "canon" but have endured, encompassing things like popular songs and stories, though he also critiques the way critics and universities attempt to divide literature into categories of "serious" vs. "entertaining" works. He challenges the exclusion of these widely read works from formal education, advocating for their inclusion and analysis within academic settings to understand their enduring cultural impact.

Rejection of the Canon:

Fiedler's core argument is a challenge to the traditional separation of "high" (or canonical) and "low" (or popular) literature. He believed that works traditionally excluded from university curricula, such as comic books and science fiction, are worthy of serious academic study.

Endurance and Popularity:

He defines popular literature as works that have managed to survive and achieve widespread appeal outside of academic institutions. He suggests that the concept of popular literature is linked to the increased production of literature with the advent of printing and rising literacy.

Critique of Critics and Academics:

Fiedler critiques how academic critics and institutions create artificial distinctions between different types of literature, like "serious novelists" versus "mere entertainers". He believes this creates a "ghetto" for popular works, preventing a comprehensive understanding of culture.

A Call for Inclusion:

He urges for an accommodation of counter-culture and popular forms within academic discourse, arguing it doesn't mean "opening the gates to the barbarians" but rather embracing new areas of study like film, comics, and media.

Q: Who is Abin Chakraborty?

A: Abin Chakraborty is an academic, writer, poet, and literary editor from West Bengal, India. He teaches English literature at Chandernagore College and co-founded the online literary platform Plato's Caves.

Q: What is his profession?

A: He is an Assistant Professor of English. He previously taught at Presidency University and the Budge Budge Institute of Technology before joining Chandernagore College.

Q: Where did he study?

A: He was the top student in both his undergraduate and postgraduate studies in English Literature at the University of Calcutta, where he was also awarded his Ph.D. He was a Junior Research Fellow and

then a Senior Research Fellow with the University Grants Commission (UGC).

Q: What is the topic of his doctoral research?

A: His doctoral thesis focused on "Staging the Subaltern: The Politics of Postcolonial Subalterneity in the Plays of Utpal Dutt, Girish Karnad and Mahesh Dattani".

Q: Has he won any awards?

A: Yes. He received a gold medal from the University of Calcutta for topping his post-graduation exams. He also won several prizes during his time at the university, including the Charuchandra Ghosh Memorial Prize, and received an ICCR Travel Grant in 2012.

Q: Is he a published author?

A: Yes. He is the author of the academic monograph Popular Culture (2019) and the poetry collection Unlettered Longings.

Q: What is his involvement in literary publishing?

A: He is the editor of the online journal Postcolonial Interventions and a co-editor of the literary platform Plato's Caves.

Q: What are his main areas of academic research?

A: His research interests include World Literature, Postcolonialism, Literary Theory, Cultural Studies, and Indian Writing in English.

Q: Where can his poetry be found?

A: His poems have been published in various Indian and international literary publications. Some of these include Café Dissensus, Rupkatha Journal, Muse India, Pine Cone Review, Acumen, Joao-Roque Literary Journal, Kitaab, NELIT Review, and Borderless Journal. His poetry is also featured on the website for Plato's Caves.

Q: What is the focus of his online literary journal, Postcolonial Interventions?

A: Postcolonial Interventions is an interdisciplinary online journal that focuses on postcolonial studies and related fields.

Q: What is Plato's Caves, the literary platform he co-founded?

A: Plato's Caves is an online platform that features and hosts a range of literary works, including poetry, fiction, and non-fiction.

Q: What are some specific examples of his academic publications?

A: In addition to his monograph Popular Culture, he has authored scholarly articles and book chapters on topics such as representations of India in the Harry Potter series, analyses of Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass, and explorations of popular culture in a postcolonial context.

Q: Where did he previously teach before Chandernagore College?

A: He taught at the Budge Budge Institute of Technology and was a guest lecturer at Presidency College (now University) in Kolkata.

Q: Has he explored photography as an artistic medium?

A: Yes. He has published a photo essay titled "'Kolkata is a kaleidoscope'" on the platform The Chakkar, where he shares his vision of the city through photography.

Q: What is the main subject of Abin Chakraborty's book Popular Culture (2019)?

A: The book provides an overview of popular culture, with a specific focus on how it represents and influences Indian society. It analyzes popular culture through various theoretical frameworks, including Marxism, gender studies, sexuality, and postcolonialism.

Q: What is the significance of the co-edited anthology Postcolonial Popular Culture in India?

A: This anthology examines the complexities of Indian popular culture from a postcolonial perspective. It explores how cultural forms produced within a postcolonial nation constantly negotiate with both global and internal currents of power and influence.

Q: How does postcolonial theory apply to the study of Indian popular culture?

A: Postcolonial theory helps analyze how colonial histories and continued forms of cultural and economic imperialism shape a nation's popular culture. In the Indian context, it examines how popular forms negotiate with, resist, or sometimes incorporate colonial legacies, and how they represent internal national "fissures" based on class, caste, gender, and ethnicity.

Q: What is meant by the "negotiations of hegemony and counter-hegemonic currents" in popular culture?

A: This refers to the power struggles and dynamics inherent in popular cultural representations. Popular culture can be a space where dominant social, economic, and political ideologies (hegemony) are reinforced, but also where subaltern or marginalized groups can express resistance and alternative perspectives (counter-hegemonic currents).

Q: In Chakraborty's work, what is the connection between popular culture and national identity?

A: His work demonstrates how popular culture is not merely a reflection of a nation's identity but is actively involved in reinventing and constructing it. The various forms of popular culture, from films to memes, participate in shaping how a postcolonial nation like India sees itself and its place in the world, often in complex and contradictory ways.

Q: What is the significance of the "plurality of discourses" in Chakraborty's analysis of Indian popular culture?

A: In the co-edited anthology *Postcolonial Popular Culture in India*, the concept of "plurality of discourses" acknowledges that popular cultural representations are created and received within multiple contexts. The various forces at play—both dominant and counter-hegemonic—influence how representations are made and interpreted.

Q: How does Chakraborty connect popular culture with national identity?

A: In his 2019 book *Popular Culture*, Chakraborty explores how popular culture not only mirrors Indian society but also actively constructs and reinvents it. In the postcolonial context, popular forms like films and memes play a role in shaping how the nation perceives its own identity and its place in a globalized world.

Q: In what ways does his work address the issue of caste in popular culture?

A: In *Postcolonial Popular Culture in India*, the analysis extends to the internal "fissures" of the nation, including those based on class and caste. Other academic work on Indian popular culture, such as that published in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, discusses how dominant cultural forms have historically marginalized caste-based cultural practices and stereotypically represented marginalized groups in media like cinema.

Q: How does Chakraborty's work use a feminist lens to analyze popular culture?

A: The anthology on popular culture includes analyses of gender and sexuality. These examinations likely investigate how forms like "chick-lit" and social media portrayals either reinforce or challenge traditional gender norms, which aligns with broader scholarly discussions on the topic in India.

Q: How does he and his co-editors analyze digital and social media in *Postcolonial Popular Culture in India*?

A: The anthology's essays analyze forms such as Instagram poetry, memes, and online games. This approach acknowledges the profound impact of digital media on modern Indian popular culture and how new online platforms influence cultural trends, social connections, and the dissemination of information.

Q: What is the significance of the inclusion of talk shows and news channels in the analysis of popular culture?

A: By including essays on talk shows and 24/7 news channels, Chakraborty's co-edited book shows that popular culture extends beyond traditional entertainment to include media that shapes public

opinion and political discourse. Other research confirms that news media controlled by capitalist interests can be used to promote specific political narratives, making it a critical site for cultural analysis.

Q: Does his work discuss Bollywood's role in popular culture?

A: While the anthology covers a range of Indian popular culture, the broader discourse around the "Bollywoodization" of visual culture is relevant. This phenomenon has shaped not only Hindi cinema but also television, music, and fashion, and is a key topic within Indian cultural studies.

Q: How does Chakraborty's background inform his analysis of culture?

A: As a West Bengal-based academic, Chakraborty brings a specific regional perspective to his research. His work considers regional cultural nuances and has previously engaged with topics like the historical and political dynamics within the Bengali cultural sphere.

Q. write a short note on towards a definition of popular culture by leslie fiedler.

A. In his essays on popular culture, especially regarding literature, Leslie Fiedler argued for breaking down the artificial distinction between "high" and "lowbrow" culture, advocating for a "cross the border" approach to bridge the gap between elite and popular artistic forms. He challenged traditional literary criticism by suggesting that works consumed by a mass audience could be as worthy of serious study as canonical works, even if they were initially viewed as inferior or relegated to a "residual category".

Challenging the High/Low Dichotomy:

Fiedler questioned the inherent superiority of classical literature over popular forms, suggesting that they were not mutually exclusive but rather part of a continuum.

"Cross the Border":

This was a central call to action for cultural studies, encouraging scholars to move beyond traditional boundaries and study the cultural products and practices that were popular among the masses.

Popular Literature as a Subject of Serious Study:

He asserted that popular works, often dismissed as "trash literature" or "trivial literature," deserved critical attention and analysis, rather than being ignored by the academic establishment.

Psychological and Mythological Analysis:

Fiedler applied psychological theories and mythological archetypes, as he did in his influential work *Love and Death in the American Novel*, to understand the deeper meanings and enduring appeal of popular narratives.

The Mass Audience:

He recognized that popular culture was deeply connected to the concept of a mass audience and the technologies of mass reproduction, and that these elements shaped its nature and reception.



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UNIT – 2

CHAPTER – 1

The Emperor's New Clothes

Q. Who is the main character and what is his passion?

A. The Emperor, who is obsessed with new clothes.

Q. What do the swindlers promise to weave?

A. A magical fabric that is invisible to anyone unfit for their position or exceptionally stupid.

Q. How does the Emperor react to the swindlers' claim?

A. He is delighted, believing it will help him identify the wise from the fools in his empire.

Q. Who else pretends to see the clothes?

A. The Emperor's courtiers, who are afraid of being thought stupid or unfit for their jobs.

Q. What happens when the Emperor is paraded through the city?

A. Everyone in the crowd pretends to admire the non-existent clothes.

Q. Who finally speaks the truth?

A. A small child who has no need to conform and blurts out, "But he hasn't got anything on!".

7. What is the consequence of the child's statement?

The other people in the crowd begin to whisper and eventually shout the truth, but the emperor continues his parade anyway.

8. What is the main moral of the story?

The story teaches about the dangers of conformity, how pride and fear can prevent people from speaking the truth, and the value of a child's unvarnished perspective.

9. What did the emperor love more than anything else?

Answer: The emperor loved his clothes more than anything. He spent all his money and time on buying and showing off new outfits.

Question: What did the two weavers promise to make for the emperor?

Answer: The weavers promised to make him a new suit of clothes that they claimed was invisible to anyone who was either hopelessly stupid or unfit for their office.

Question: Why did the emperor's ministers pretend to see the clothes?

Answer: The ministers all pretended to see the beautiful clothing because they didn't want the emperor to think they were either stupid or unfit for their positions. They feared being judged and losing their jobs.

Question: What happened during the procession?

Answer: As the emperor paraded naked through the streets, the crowds admired his "new clothes" out of fear of looking foolish. But a young, innocent child yelled out that the emperor had nothing on.

Question: What was the child's role in the story?

Answer: The child's honest exclamation exposed the truth that the emperor was not wearing any clothes. The child was the first to speak what everyone else saw but was afraid to say.

Question: What is a key moral of The Emperor's New Clothes?

Answer: A key moral is that vanity, pride, and fear of judgment can lead people to ignore the truth and go along with the crowd. The story teaches that one should be honest and speak up for what is right.

Question: Why were the two weavers able to successfully trick the emperor?

Answer: The swindlers successfully deceived the emperor by exploiting his vanity and fear of appearing foolish. They convinced him that only stupid or incompetent people could not see the magical, non-existent clothes.

Question: Who did the emperor first send to check on the weavers' progress, and what did that person report?

Answer: The emperor first sent his honest old minister to check on the weavers. The minister, seeing nothing but fearing being labeled stupid or unfit for office, lied and reported back that the clothes were beautiful.

Question: How did the weavers pretend to "dress" the emperor?

Answer: The weavers mimed the act of dressing the emperor. They went through the motions of putting on trousers, a cape, and a train, all while praising the lightness of the non-existent clothing.

Question: What did the crowd do immediately after the child spoke the truth?

Answer: At first, the crowd was unsure what to believe, but after the child's statement was repeated, they all began to murmur and agree that the emperor was wearing nothing at all.

Question: What was the emperor's reaction after the truth was revealed?

Answer: The emperor realized he had been deceived, but he was too proud to admit his foolishness. He continued walking proudly in the procession, with his chamberlains still pretending to carry his non-existent train.

Question: How does the story highlight the danger of blind conformity?

Answer: The story illustrates how fear of social judgment can lead an entire community to conform to a falsehood. Everyone, from the ministers to the townspeople, pretends to see the clothes to avoid being seen as foolish, demonstrating the power of peer pressure over individual judgment.

Question: Why didn't the weavers use any real thread or materials?

Answer: The weavers didn't use any real materials because they were swindlers. The story says they pocketed the gold, silk, and other riches the emperor gave them while pretending to weave.

Question: How did the swindlers claim to know if their invisible fabric was ready?

Answer: The weavers did not have any special method to know when the clothes were "done." They just mimed getting the outfit ready for the emperor when the time came for him to wear it during the procession.

Question: Why was the emperor nervous before he saw the "new clothes" for himself?

Answer: The emperor grew uneasy before seeing the clothes because he was afraid that he wouldn't be able to see them, which would mean he was either unfit for his office or "unusually stupid".

Question: What is the main point of dramatic irony in the story?

Answer: The dramatic irony is that the audience knows from the very beginning that the weavers are frauds and that there are no magic clothes. This makes the deception and fear of the characters more apparent to the reader.

Question: What societal issues does the story satirize?

Answer: The story satirizes the vanity and superficiality of those in power, as well as the blind conformity of the populace. It critiques how people go along with a lie out of fear of social judgment and the need to protect their reputations.

Question: What does the idiom "The Emperor's New Clothes" mean today?

Answer: Today, the idiom "The Emperor's New Clothes" is used to describe a situation where people widely accept or praise something that is false or has no value, simply because they are afraid to go against popular opinion. It represents a collective illusion caused by social pressure.

Question: Why do the weavers announce that their special fabric is only visible to those who are "unfit for their office" or "hopelessly stupid"?

Answer: The weavers invent this magical property to exploit people's vanity and fear. The emperor wants to know which officials are stupid or incompetent, and his ministers lie because they don't want to lose their jobs. This clever lie ensures no one dares admit they can't see the cloth.

Question: Why was a child the one who exposed the truth?

Answer: The child is innocent and lacks the social anxiety and pressure to conform that affects the adults. Unconcerned with reputation or holding a position, the child simply states the obvious, breaking the collective illusion with pure honesty.

Question: What does the procession symbolize?

Answer: The procession is a public spectacle that symbolizes the emperor's vanity and power, as well as his disconnection from reality. The public setting exposes his foolishness, and the crowd's reaction reveals the power of social pressure and conformity over individual truth.

Question: What does the "invisible cloth" represent more broadly?

Answer: The invisible cloth symbolizes falsehoods, empty ideas, and illusions that people accept out of social pressure or fear. It represents the empty concepts that uphold a social order built on pretense and conformity rather than on truth or merit.

Question: What is the significance of the emperor continuing the procession after the child speaks up?

Answer: The emperor's decision to continue the procession, even after realizing he has been fooled, shows the depth of his vanity and pride. He is too proud to admit his folly and humiliate himself further by stopping the charade, a final pathetic attempt to maintain the illusion of his authority.

Question: How does the story's climax challenge the emperor's power?

Answer: The child's statement shatters the illusion of the emperor's majesty and authority, which only existed as long as everyone agreed to pretend it was there. By revealing the emperor's nakedness, the child exposes that the emperor's power is not based on innate qualities but on a collective, agreed-upon deception.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A. In Hans Christian Andersen's "The Emperor's New Clothes," a vain emperor is swindled by two weavers who claim to make magical clothes invisible to the foolish and incompetent. The emperor and his court pretend to see the non-existent garments to avoid appearing foolish, until a child speaks the truth aloud, revealing the emperor's nakedness to everyone's shock and amusement. The story illustrates the dangers of vanity, pride, and conformity.

There was once an Emperor who loved new clothes to the point of excess and spent all of his money and time buying and showing them off. One day, two swindlers come to the town disguised as weavers, and claim to be able to make beautiful garments with rich colors and patterns, but which are only visible to those who are worthy of the positions they hold, and are invisible to the impossibly dull and those who are not fit for their jobs. The Emperor is enthralled and gives them a large sum of money in advance to make the clothes. He wishes to check up on their progress, and, having his own reservations, sends his minister to see the weavers in his stead. The faithful old minister finds the two swindlers pretending to be hard at work at their looms, and can't see a single bit of fabric because it is not really there. He worries that he may not be fit for the position he holds, and does not dare tell the Emperor he cannot see anything, so he pretends to be able to see it. The Emperor sends another official to see the stuff, and the same thing happens to him. Soon, the whole town is talking about how splendid the fabrics are. Wishing to see it for himself before it is taken off of the loom, the Emperor goes accompanied by the two men he had sent to check up on it. He cannot see a thing either and worries that he himself is not worthy of being the emperor. But, he lies, and exclaims that the patterns and the colors are beautiful. Everyone in the suite agrees with him, and the two swindlers are given an order of knighthood. The next day, a very big deal is made out of dressing the Emperor in his new clothes, and they tell him that they are marvelously light so that he will not feel like he is wearing anything at all. They 'dress' him, and he starts a procession to show off his new clothes, with chamberlains

pretending to be holding up his train while he walked. The entire town pretends, also, to see the clothes, until a little boy shouts that he is naked, and everyone else begins to say the same thing. The Emperor knows that they are right, but continues with the procession anyway.

CHAPTER – 2

The Old House

Q: Who are the main characters in the story?

A: The main characters are a lonely old man and a young boy who befriends him.

Q: What does the boy give the old man?

A: The boy gives the old man one of his tin soldiers.

Q: What is the old house like?

A: The house is nearly 300 years old, with verses over the windows and grotesque faces under the cornices. It is filled with old portraits, furniture, and historical objects.

Q: How does the tin soldier feel about the old house?

A: The tin soldier finds the house to be a sad, lonely, and melancholic place to live.

Q: What is the eventual fate of the old house?

A: The old house is eventually pulled down, and a new house is built in its place.

Q: What is one of the themes in the story?

A: A key theme is the importance of memory, as the old man's memories of the past and the boy's memories awakened by the soldier are central to the story, according to Course Hero.

Q: Who is the main character in "The Old House"?

A: The story is told from the perspective of a little boy who observes and befriends an old man living across the street.

Q: What is the significance of the old house?

A: The old house, nearly 300 years old, represents the past, memory, and the history that is often forgotten in the face of modern progress.

Q: Why does the little boy give the old man a tin soldier?

A: The boy, after hearing his parents say the old man is lonely, gives him a tin soldier to keep him company.

Q: What happens to the tin soldier while in the old house?

A: The tin soldier, unhappy and bored with the solitary life, throws himself down from a shelf and disappears into a crack in the floorboards.

Q: What happens to the old man and the old house?

A: The old man eventually dies, and the house is later torn down by builders who consider it "complete rubbish".

Q: How is the tin soldier found again?

A: Many years later, the little boy, now a man, buys the new house built on the site of the old one. His wife finds the lost tin soldier in the garden while planting a flower.

Q: What is the story's main theme?

A: A key theme is that while people and things may pass away, memories and connections are precious and can last. The tale also explores the contrasts between the old and the new, and the importance of intergenerational friendship.

Q: What is the final fate of the tin soldier?

A: The tin soldier is remembered and treasured by the grown-up boy and his wife. As a voice says in the end, it is "delightful not to be forgotten".

Q: What is the primary difference between the old house and the new houses in the story?

A: The old house is filled with history, memories, and character, symbolized by its unique carvings, portraits, and aging state. In contrast, the new houses are described as "clean and well-built" but lacking any distinct personality or depth.

Q: Why does the tin soldier become unhappy in the old house?

A: Although he was given to the old man for company, the tin soldier feels bored, melancholy, and forgotten in the lonely house. He prefers

the exciting memories of battles and processions to the solitary quiet of the old house.

Q: How does the old man perceive his memories?

A: The old man tells the boy that he is not lonely because he is "visited by memories". His memories, such as looking at old picture books and a portrait of a beautiful lady, are a source of pleasant companionship for him.

Q: What happens when the little boy visits the old man?

A: The old man invites the boy in, shows him his pictures, and gives him treats like preserved fruits, apples, and nuts. The boy's visit brings life and joy into the old, quiet house.

Q: What does the withered bouquet of flowers under the portrait of the lady likely represent?

A: The withered bouquet symbolizes a past love or life event. Like the house and its history, it is a preserved memory that the old man cherishes.

Q: What does the tin soldier's desire to go "to the wars" symbolize?

A: His cry to return to war and his eventual fall through the floor represent his impatience and rejection of a peaceful, solitary life. He seeks action and adventure rather than living with memories.

Q: In the end, what becomes of the old house's history and legacy?

A: After the house is torn down, a new, modern house is built. However, its legacy is not forgotten. The grown-up boy finds the tin

soldier and remembers his friendship with the old man, ensuring that the connection and memories live on.

Q: What broader social theme might this story be illustrating?

A: The tale can be seen as an allegory for the contrast between the old ways of life and modern industrial society. It explores the loss of history and deep human connections that can be a consequence of rapid progress and a focus on the "new".

Q: What does the little boy do that finally prompts the old man to invite him inside?

A: The boy offers the old man a tin soldier as a gift, which shows his kindness and breaks the initial barrier of their silent nodding relationship.

Q: Why do the objects in the old man's house talk?

A: Andersen uses personification to give a voice to inanimate objects. This allows the furniture, decorations, and even the tin soldier to express emotions and memories, creating a richer and more animated narrative. The creaking furniture complains, "I shall certainly have the gout like the old cupboard," bringing the house to life.

Q: How do the new houses react to the old house?

A: The new houses are judgmental and consider the old house "a disgrace". They see its age and unique features as flaws, illustrating the contrast between the unthinking conformity of the new and the rich history of the old.

Q: What is the significance of the withered nosegay under the lady's portrait?

A: It represents a past love or important memory for the old man. Its decayed state, along with the worn-out picture books and furniture, emphasizes the passage of time and the cherished history contained within the old house.

Q: What is the main difference between the old man and the tin soldier's perspective on the house?

A: The old man is content with his memories, which make him feel not lonely. The tin soldier, in contrast, feels trapped by the lack of action and adventure, showing a different, more impatient perspective on a solitary life.

Q: What happens immediately after the old man's death?

A: The old house is considered "rubbish" by builders and is torn down, replaced by a new, more modern house. This reflects how the past is often discarded in the name of progress.

Q: How is the central theme of memory and legacy resolved at the end of the story?

A: The boy, now a man, buys the new house and his wife finds the long-lost tin soldier in the garden. This discovery awakens the man's cherished memories of his friendship with the old man, ensuring that the legacy of their connection lives on.

Q: What is the final fate of the tin soldier?

A: The tin soldier is found many years later by the grown-up boy's wife. It is remembered and treasured by the man, who recalls his

friendship with the old man. The story ends with the idea that it is "delightful not to be forgotten".

Q: What literary device does Andersen frequently use to animate the story's setting?

A: Andersen uses personification and anthropomorphism throughout the tale. The old house's features, the furniture, and the tin soldier are all given human-like qualities to evoke a sense of history and emotion.

Q: What is the significance of the year 1648 being carved on the house?

A: This date indicates that the house is very old—nearly 300 years old when the story was written. It immediately establishes the house as a historical artifact, contrasting with the clean, new houses around it.

Q: What is the purpose of the grotesque faces carved under the cornices?

A: The grotesque faces, along with the tulips and hop-tendrils carved on the beams, add to the house's unique and antique character. They hint at a bygone era with different artistic tastes, making the house seem like a living entity with its own stories.

Q: How does the narration style contribute to the story's charm?

A: The story is told from the first-person perspective of the little boy, which gives the narrative a nostalgic, intimate feel. He is able to observe the small details and build a personal connection with the old man and the house, which contrasts with the impersonal attitude of the new houses.

Q: What does the little boy's act of giving the tin soldier represent?

A: The boy's gift represents a small act of kindness and empathy. He recognizes the old man's loneliness and offers a companion, showing the compassion of youth.

Q: What is the symbolic meaning of the "Dragon's Head" on the gutter?

A: The dragon's head is another unique, fantastical detail of the old house. The fact that it is broken and the rain runs from its body rather than its mouth symbolizes the decay and imperfections that come with age.

Q: How does the old man show gratitude to the boy for his visits?

A: The old man offers the boy picture books, preserved fruit, apples, and nuts. This shows his appreciation for the companionship and his enjoyment of their friendship.

Q: What does the story imply about the value of history and memory?

A: By showing how the new houses reject the old one as "rubbish," Andersen suggests that modern society often dismisses the past. However, the boy's lingering memory of the old man and the discovery of the tin soldier at the end prove that history, connections, and memories are precious and enduring.

Q: What does the story suggest about the purpose of a home?

A: For the old man, the old house is a vessel for cherished memories and a comfortable retreat. For the newer houses and their occupants, a home is simply a "well-built" structure. The story seems to argue that

a home is more than just a building; it is a repository of life, connection, and history.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A. "The Old House" is a Hans Christian Andersen story about a lonely old man who forms a silent friendship with a little boy across the street, eventually receiving a tin soldier as a gift that highlights the contrast between the man's rich memories and the soldier's loneliness. After the old man's death, his house is torn down, and decades later, the now-grown boy finds the lost tin soldier, recognizing it as a symbol of his forgotten friendship and the old man's enduring legacy.

Throughout Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste*, the old house in which the author lives symbolizes the "old house" she believes the United States to be. In stating that the U.S. is an old house, Wilkerson calls attention to the deterioration of the country's "skeleton" (underlying social structure) due to its having been built on the "mudsill," or foundational stone, of casteism and slavery. Throughout the book, Wilkerson argues that old houses need even more attention than modern ones—and failing to keep up with the house's maintenance will lead to it crumbling. In several chapters, Wilkerson describes the overwhelming and often uncomfortable maintenance her own house requires. This suggests to her readers that Americans must collectively

come together to do maintenance on the “old house”: that is, expose the deep societal flaws in the country’s foundation. The U.S. must root these problems out and replace them with a new underlying structure, otherwise the country will continue to decline into a state of unmanageable disrepair.

When his parents tell their boy the old man living across the street from them is very lonely, he takes one of his tin soldiers to the neighbor and strikes up a friendship. The old man lives in an old house that has many quaint features the boy finds most interesting, even though it looks out of place among all the much-newer buildings on that street.

Many inanimate objects, including the tin soldier, come to life in that house, as the old man pulls out memories and stories to tell the boy. In time the old man dies, the quaint old house is torn down, and the boy grows up and marries. He brings his young wife to the fine modern house he has bought that replaced his neighbor's old one, and she finds the tin soldier while planting a flower. Her husband recognizes it as the gift he had made to the old man many long years ago and tells his wife the story of the old house and the old man. The tin soldier remarks, "it is delightful not to be forgotten."

CHAPER -3

The Happy family

Q: Where does the story take place?

A: The story is set in a burdock forest that was once part of a grand estate.

Q: Who are the main characters in the story?

A: The main characters are a family of white snails who believe themselves to be of noble birth.

Q: What is the snails' perception of their own social status?

A: The snails believe they are of noble origin and have a high social standing, viewing the burdock forest as built for them, accordingly.

Q: What event shows the snails' pride and ignorance?

A: The mother snail, out of pride, suggests that her son cannot live in an ant-hill, leading to a refusal of the marriage proposal from the ants.

Q: What is the main theme of "The Happy Family"?

A: A main theme is the contrast between true contentment with one's simple, natural life and the unfulfilled ambition for social status and material wealth.

Q: What is the message conveyed by the story?

A: The story suggests that genuine happiness comes from appreciating the present moment and living in harmony with nature, rather than from a false sense of superiority.

Q: What does the story satirize?

A: It satirizes the pride and arrogance of those who believe themselves to be superior, as well as their mistaken ideas of what constitutes a noble or happy life.

Q: Who are the main characters of "The Happy Family"?

A: The main characters are an elderly couple of white snails who live in a burdock forest.

Q: Where do the snails live?

A: The snails live in a large burdock forest, which they believe was planted just for their family. This forest was once part of a nobleman's garden.

Q: Why do the old snails think they are of noble birth?

A: The old snails believe they are descended from a noble line because their ancestors were cooked and served on a silver dish to the humans in the castle.

Q: What is the mother snail's main ambition for her descendants?

A: The mother snail wishes for her children to one day achieve the same "honor" as their ancestors: to be boiled and served on a silver platter.

Q: What do the younger snails believe happened to the humans?

A: Since they are never taken away to be cooked, the younger snails conclude that the humans in the castle must have died out.

Q: How do the older snails find a wife for their son?

A: They ask the ants and gnats for help. They are told of a little lady-snail living on a gooseberry bush, and the snails arrange for a modest wedding.

Q: What do the young snails think when they are not taken to the palace?

A: They assume that the castle and all the humans are gone and that they now own the entire world.

Q: How does the story end for the young snail couple?

A: The young snails and their numerous children live happily and contentedly in the burdock forest, believing themselves to be the sole inhabitants of the world.

Q: What is the moral or theme of the story?

A: The story is a satirical look at contentment versus ambition. The snails' happiness comes from their ignorance and satisfaction with their simple life, even though they have a deluded, romanticized view of their family's history.

Q: What is the setting of the story?

A: The story is set in a large forest of burdock leaves that has overgrown what was once a nobleman's garden next to a castle.

Q: What is ironic about the name "The Happy Family"?

A: The title is ironic because the snails' happiness comes from a false and ignorant worldview. They believe they are noble and that the universe exists to serve them, when in reality, they are common garden snails with a very limited understanding of their world.

Q: What does the mother snail fantasize about for her children?

A: She dreams that her children will one day achieve the "honor" of their ancestors: being taken to the manor house, boiled black, and served on a silver dish.

Q: What is the father snail's attitude toward life?

A: In contrast to the mother's ambition, the father snail is content with their simple, slow-paced life within the burdock forest.

Q: How do the older snails find a wife for their son?

A: They ask the ants and white gnats, who act as messengers in their limited world. They find a lady-snail on a gooseberry bush and arrange the marriage.

Q: What does the slow journey of the lady-snail symbolize?

A: The lady-snail takes eight days to travel a distance of "one hundred man-steps," which showcases the snails' incredibly slow pace of life and provincial perspective.

Q: Why do the younger snails believe the humans have died out?

A: Since they are never taken to the palace for their anticipated fate, the younger snails conclude that the humans who used to live in the castle must have all died.

Q: What is the significance of the burdock forest to the snails?

A: The snails believe the entire forest was planted specifically for them, demonstrating their ego and self-importance. In reality, the burdock simply took over the neglected garden.

Q: What is the story's overall message or theme?

A: The tale uses satire to explore themes of contentment versus ambition and the unreliability of stories passed down through generations. It suggests that happiness can be found in simplicity and peace, even if it is based on ignorance.

Q: What is the significance of the "silver dish"?

A: The "silver dish" represents the snails' misconstrued idea of success and nobility. In their ignorance, they believe being boiled and served to humans is the highest honor, when in reality, it's a grim fate.

Q: How do the older snails find a wife for their son?

A: They enlist the help of the ants and white gnats, acting as their messengers in the small, insular world of the garden.

Q: How does Andersen use irony in this story?

A: The central irony is that the snails' "happiness" is based on complete ignorance. The source of their pride (their ancestors being served to humans) is actually the reason they were killed, and the contentment of the younger snails comes from their false belief that everyone else in the world is dead.

Q: What does the burdock forest symbolize?

A: The burdock forest symbolizes the snails' limited and narrow worldview. They believe it is the entire world, planted just for them, when it is just a neglected part of a larger garden.

Q: What is the moral of the story?

A: The story is a satirical commentary on social status and ambition. It suggests that genuine happiness and peace can come from simple contentment and living in harmony with nature, rather than chasing a perceived, and ultimately fatal, "nobility".

Q: What is the tone of the narrative?

A: The narrative tone is a blend of whimsical and ironic. The narrator describes the snails' provincial worldview with a subtle, gentle mockery, highlighting the flaws in their assumptions.

Q: How do the different generations of snails differ in their perspectives?

A: The older snails cling to the family's romanticized past, aspiring for their children to experience the same fate as their ancestors. The younger generation, however, is more content with their simple, slow-paced existence, and because their ancestors' prophecy never comes true, they invent their own explanation for why it hasn't happened.

Q: Why are slugs looked down upon by the "happy family"?

A: The snails believe themselves to be a superior, more "aristocratic" race because they have shells, or "houses," that they are born with. They view the shell-less slugs as vulgar and inferior.

Q: What is significant about the snails' perception of their environment?

A: The snails, in their limited view, see the burdock leaves as a vast, magnificent forest and the castle grounds as the entire world. This provincial perspective is used to satirize human vanity and self-importance.

Q: Why do the older snails believe their family is so "aristocratic"?

A: Their belief in their noble lineage stems from the story that their ancestors were cooked and served to humans in the castle on a silver dish. They interpret this grim fate as a great honor, demonstrating their ignorance.

Q: How do the older snails find a wife for their son?

A: They ask the ants and gnats, who act as messengers in their limited world, to help them. They find a little lady-snail on a gooseberry bush, and the parents arrange a simple wedding.

Q: What is the significance of the snails taking eight days to travel a short distance?

A: This scene, involving the snail bride's slow journey, emphasizes the snails' incredibly slow and limited existence, contrasting humorously with their grand worldview.

Q: What does the story's ending reveal about the younger snails?

A: Since they are never taken to the palace, the younger snails conclude that the humans have died out and that they now own the entire world. This makes them "entirely and perfectly happy," highlighting how their happiness is based on ignorance and an invented reality.

Q: What is the main conflict of the story?

A: The story's conflict is not a grand, dramatic one but rather an internal and thematic one. It lies in the contrast between the older generation's blind, status-driven ambition and the younger generation's simple, happy contentment.

Q: How does Andersen use irony in the story's title, "The Happy Family"?

A: The title is ironic because the snails' happiness is rooted in their false and ignorant beliefs. The family is happy precisely because they are oblivious to the larger reality of their small, insignificant lives.

Q: How does the "Happy Family" satirize human society?

A: The tale uses the snails' absurd values to satirize human social constructs like ambition, class distinctions, and misplaced pride. The snails' belief that having a shell makes them superior to slugs, and their misinterpretation of their ancestors' death as an honor, reflect human follies.

Q: What happens to the old snails at the end of the story?

A: After their wedding speech, the old snail couple "crept into their houses, and came out no more." This peacefully symbolizes their death, marking the transition from the old generation to the new.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A. This classic fairy tale features an old snail couple who raise an adopted snail in a lush burdock forest. The parents hope their

descendants will be honored by a nobleman, but their children and grandchildren live a simple, happy life, believing their ancestors' dreams never came true. The story contrasts contentment with ambition and suggests true happiness lies in living in harmony with nature.

In "The Happy Family," two aristocratic snails live contentedly in a burdock forest, a tradition passed down by their family. When they eventually give the forest to their children, they bless the young couple with the same tradition: the promise of one day being boiled and served at the lord's manor. The young snails, having never experienced human presence, mistakenly conclude that the manor has fallen into decay and that all humans are gone. They embrace their simplified, happy life in the forest, believing it's proof of the story's truth, which highlights themes of contentment, ambition, and the subjective nature of happiness and reality

The largest green leaf in this country is certainly the burdock-leaf. If you hold it in front of you, it is large enough for an apron; and if you hold it over your head, it is almost as good as an umbrella, it is so wonderfully large. A burdock never grows alone; where it grows, there are many more, and it is a splendid sight; and all this splendor is good for snails. The great white snails, which grand people in olden times used to have made into fricassees; and when they had eaten them, they would say, „O, what a delicious dish!“ for these people really thought them good; and these snails lived on burdock-leaves, and for them the burdock was planted.

There was once an old estate where no one now lived to require snails; indeed, the owners had all died out, but the burdock still flourished. It grew over all the beds and walks of the garden— its growth had no check— till it became at last quite a forest of burdocks. Here and there

stood an apple or a plum-tree; but for this, nobody would have thought the place had ever been a garden. It was burdock from one end to the other; and here lived the last two surviving snails.

They knew not themselves how old they were; but they could remember the time when there were a great many more of them, and that they were descended from a family which came from foreign lands, and that the whole forest had been planted for them and theirs. They had never been away from the garden; but they knew that another place once existed in the world, called the Duke's Palace Castle, in which some of their relations had been boiled till they became black, and were then laid on a silver dish; but what was done afterwards they did not know. Besides, they could not imagine exactly how it felt to be boiled and placed on a silver dish; but no doubt it was something very fine and highly genteel. Neither the cockchafer, nor the toad, nor the earth-worm, whom they questioned about it, would give them the least information. For none of their relations had ever been cooked or served on a silver dish.

The old white snails were the most aristocratic race in the world,— they knew that. The forest had been planted for them, and the nobleman's castle had been built entirely that they might be cooked and laid on silver dishes.

They lived quite retired and very happily; and as they had no children of their own, they had adopted a little common snail, which they brought up as their own child. The little one would not grow, for he was only a common snail; but the old people, particularly the mother-snail, declared that she could easily see how he grew; and when the father said he could not perceive it, she begged him to feel the little snail's shell, and he did so, and found that the mother was right.

One day it rained very fast.

„Listen, what a drumming there is on the burdock-leaves; turn, turn, turn; turn, turn, turn,“ said the father-snail.

„There come the drops,“ said the mother; „they are trickling down the stalks. We shall have it very wet here presently. I am very glad we have such good houses, and that the little one has one of his own. There has been really more done for us than for any other creature. It is quite plain that we are the most noble people in the world. We have houses from our birth, and the burdock forest has been planted for us. I should very much like to know how far it extends, and what lies beyond it.“

„There can be nothing better than we have here,“ said the father-snail; „I wish for nothing more.“

„Yes, but I do,“ said the mother; „I should like to be taken to the palace, and boiled, and laid upon a silver dish, as was done to all our ancestors; and you may be sure it must be something very uncommon.“

„The nobleman’s castle, perhaps, has fallen to decay,“ said the snail-father, „or the burdock wood may have grown out. You need not be in a hurry. You are always so impatient, and the youngster is getting just the same. He has been three days creeping to the top of that stalk. I feel quite giddy when I look at him.“

„You must not scold him,“ said the mother-snail; „he creeps so very carefully. He will be the joy of our home; and we old folks have

nothing else to live for. But have you ever thought where we are to get a wife for him? Do you think that farther out in the wood there may be others of our race?“

„There may be black snails, no doubt,“ said the old snail; „black snails without houses; but they are so vulgar and conceited too. But we can give the ants a commission. They run here and there, as if they all had so much business to get through. They, most likely, will know of a wife for our youngster.“

„I certainly know a most beautiful bride,“ said one of the ants. „But I fear it would not do, for she is a queen.“

„That does not matter,“ said the old snail; „has she a house?“

„She has a palace,“ replied the ant,— „a most beautiful ant-palace with seven hundred passages.“

„Thank-you,“ said the mother-snail. „But our boy shall not go to live in an ant-hill. If you know of nothing better, we will give the commission to the white gnats. They fly about in rain and sunshine. They know the burdock wood from one end to the other.“

„We have a wife for him,“ said the gnats; „a hundred man-steps from here there is a little snail with a house, sitting on a gooseberry-bush. She is quite alone, and old enough to be married. It is only a hundred man-steps from here.“

„Then let her come to him,“ said the old people. „He has the whole burdock forest. She has only a bush.“

So they brought the little lady-snail. She took eight days to perform the journey; but that was just as it ought to be. For it showed her to be one of the right breeding.

And then they had a wedding. Six glow-worms gave as much light as they could; but in other respects it was all very quiet. For the old snails could not bear festivities or a crowd. But a beautiful speech was made by the mother-snail. The father could not speak. He was too much overcome. Then they gave the whole burdock forest to the young snails as an inheritance, and repeated what they had so often said, that it was the finest place in the world, and that if they led upright and honorable lives, and their family increased, they and their children might some day be taken to the nobleman's palace, to be boiled black, and laid on a silver dish.

And when they had finished speaking, the old couple crept into their houses, and came out no more. For they slept. The young snail pair now ruled in the forest, and had a numerous progeny. But as the young ones were never boiled or laid in silver dishes, they concluded that the castle had fallen into decay, and that all the people in the world were dead; and as nobody contradicted them, they thought they must be right. And the rain fell upon the burdock-leaves, to play the drum for them, and the sun shone to paint colors on the burdock forest for them, and they were very happy. The whole family were entirely and perfectly happy.

CHPATER – 4

The Story of a Mother

Q: Why does Death take the child?

A: The child dies because the mother, watching over it for three days and nights, briefly closes her eyes and falls asleep, and Death takes the child in that moment.

Q: Where does the mother go to find her child?

A: The mother follows clues to find Death's greenhouse, a place where human lives are kept as plants, and where she finds her child's plant.

Q: Who does the mother meet on her journey?

A: She meets Night, who gives her a clue to the forest's direction if she sings lullabies, and an old woman in Death's greenhouse, who advises her on how to deal with Death.

Q: What must the mother sacrifice?

A: She sacrifices her eyes to the lake and her hair to the old woman in the greenhouse.

Q: How does the mother find her child's life?

A: She recognizes her child's plant in the greenhouse by its heartbeat.

Q: What must the mother do to save her child?

A: She must threaten to rip up all the other human-life plants, forcing Death to yield to God's will, which is the only one who decides when to transplant the plants to Paradise.

Q: What happens at the end of the story?

A: The mother is given back her eyes and instructed to look into a well. The story doesn't explicitly state if the child is returned but implies that their future depends on the will of God and their placement in Paradise.

Q: What happens at the very beginning of the story?

A: A mother watches over her sick child, but when she closes her eyes for a moment, Death takes the child away.

Q: Who is the first character the mother encounters during her pursuit of Death?

A: She meets Night, a woman dressed in black, who tells her to sing all the lullabies she has ever sung to her child in exchange for directions.

Q: What sacrifice does the mother make to the bramble bush?

A: She warms the thorn bush with her chest, allowing the thorns to draw blood, so that it will tell her which way to go.

Q: What does the mother give up to cross the lake?

A: She cries her eyes into the lake, effectively blinding herself, so that the lake will carry her to the greenhouse.

Q: How does the mother recognize her child in Death's greenhouse?

A: She is now blind but can identify her child's flower among millions by the sound of its heartbeat.

Q: What choice does Death ultimately offer the mother?

A: Death restores her sight and shows her a vision of two possible futures for her child—one full of happiness and one filled with misery. He forces her to choose whether to take her child back or let it go to the "unknown land".

Q: What is the mother's final decision?

A: Overwhelmed by the painful vision of her child's potential unhappy life, she prays for God's will to be done and ultimately chooses to let her child go with Death to the unknown land.

Q: What is the main theme of the story?

A: The story explores the power and selfless nature of a mother's love, the inevitability of death, and the acceptance of God's will and the limits of human control.

Q: What does the ticking grandfather clock symbolize when it stops?

A: When the clock stops, it symbolizes time standing still for the grieving mother. Her world has frozen with the loss of her child.

Q: Why does the mother give up her long, black hair?

A: The mother gives her hair to the old woman who tends Death's greenhouse, in exchange for information on where to find her child.

The hair symbolizes her beauty and vitality, which she gladly sacrifices.

Q: Why does the mother let go of the flowers she was about to rip out?

A: The mother lets go when Death tells her that she will make another mother as unhappy as she is. This reminds her of the suffering of others and stops her from inflicting similar pain.

Q: What do the flowers and trees in Death's greenhouse represent?

A: The flowers and trees represent human lives. Some are vibrant and healthy, while others are small and sickly, mirroring the fates of human beings.

Q: What does the well symbolize in the story?

A: The well symbolizes the unknown, and it is through the well that the mother is shown the two possible futures for her child. It is an unknowable fate, and the mother is forced to confront it.

Q: Why does the mother pray against her own request at the end?

A: After seeing the potential life of misery for her child, the mother realizes that a loving God would not wish that suffering upon her child. She prays that her human will to get her child back does not go against God's best will.

Q: Is Death portrayed as a villain in the story?

A: No. Death is portrayed as a calm, even-tempered figure who is simply doing God's will. He is not malicious but reflects the inevitable nature of the life cycle.

Q: How is this fairy tale different from others?

A: Unlike many fairy tales where wishes are granted and heroes achieve their goals, this story ends tragically. The mother's sacrifices and journey do not result in her getting her child back, showing the limits of human power over life and death.

Q: What is the mother's motivation throughout her journey?

A: Her motivation is her fierce and unconditional maternal love for her child, which drives her to overcome every obstacle.

Q: What does the Old Woman in Death's greenhouse represent?

A: The Old Woman represents a resigned and more cynical perspective on life and death. She has accepted the cycle, but still holds the secrets to navigating Death's domain, which she offers in exchange for a sacrifice.

Q: What is the purpose of the narrator in this story?

A: The narrator's purpose is to convey the emotional journey and inner turmoil of the mother. It acts as a moral guide, highlighting the mother's sacrifices and her ultimate submission to divine will.

Q: Why does the mother ultimately give up her own prayers and wishes?

A: She recognizes that her human will and desperate desire may not align with God's ultimate plan, which is what is best for her child. Her final prayer is a demonstration of her profound acceptance and trust in a higher power.

Q: How does Death demonstrate his power in the story?

A: Death shows his power by effortlessly removing the child, controlling the fates of the flowers (representing human lives), and revealing future outcomes. He is not a purely evil villain, but a force of nature that represents the inevitable and impartial cycle of life and death.

Q: What do the sacrifices the mother makes (singing, blood, eyes, hair) represent?

A: These sacrifices represent the mother's immense willingness to give up every part of herself—her voice, her vitality, her sight, her beauty—for the sake of her child. They symbolize the selfless nature of a mother's love.

Q: What is the significance of the "unknown land"?

A: The "unknown land" symbolizes the afterlife or the world after death. It is a place the mother cannot follow, reinforcing the story's theme of the limits of human control.

Q: How is this story different from traditional fairy tales?

A: Unlike many fairy tales with a happily-ever-after ending, this story concludes with a tragic but compassionate acceptance of loss. The mother's journey, while heroic, does not succeed in reversing death, emphasizing the story's mature themes.

Q: What is the significance of the mother finding her own child by the sound of its heartbeat in the greenhouse?

A: Even though the mother is blind, her maternal instinct is so strong that she can recognize her child by a unique, spiritual connection. It

shows that the mother-child bond goes beyond what can be seen and is deeply tied to the essence of a person.

Q: Why does Death give the mother her eyes back at the end, only to show her a painful vision?

A: Death gives the mother her sight back so that she can see the potential futures of the flowers (human lives). The vision is not meant as a punishment but as a test of her love. It forces her to confront the complex reality of human fate and the pain her child might endure, pushing her to choose what is truly best.

Q: What is the central irony in the mother's journey?

A: The central irony is that all the sacrifices the mother makes—her songs, her blood, her eyes, her hair—do not ultimately lead to the desired outcome. Instead of getting her child back, her journey leads her to the wisdom that forces her to give her child up completely to a higher power.

Q: How does the story's ending subvert the traditional fairy tale format?

A: The story rejects the "happily ever after" of a typical fairy tale. The mother does not get her wish; her heroic quest ends in a devastating but necessary loss. This provides a more realistic and mature commentary on grief and acceptance, and the limits of human power over life and death.

Q: What does the repeated phrase "unknown land" suggest about Death?

A: The "unknown land" reinforces the mystery of the afterlife. Death is not portrayed as a place of judgment or suffering but simply a realm

beyond human understanding. This implies a higher, benevolent purpose behind Death's actions.

Q: Why does the story include a mix of human-like emotions and fantastical elements, like talking night and personified death?

A: The blend of realistic emotions and fantastical elements helps convey the psychological and emotional truth of the experience. The personification of natural forces, such as Night, helps the reader understand the mother's subjective, frantic, and desperate state of mind during her quest.

Q: What final lesson does the mother learn, and how does it change her?

A: The mother learns that true love requires selfless acceptance, not just fierce pursuit. She accepts that she cannot control her child's fate, and her ultimate act of love is to submit to God's will for her child's sake. This surrender transforms her from a desperate griever into a compassionate and understanding soul.

Q: How does the story connect to the time it was written?

A: Written in 1847, the story reflects the high child mortality rates of the 19th century and the difficult reality that parents often faced. It provides a way for readers to process grief and loss within a larger, spiritual framework.

Q: What is significant about the old man who takes the child in the beginning?

A: The old man is Death personified. His initial appearance as a shivering, harmless figure that the compassionate mother lets into her home is a powerful example of dramatic irony. The reader knows

before the mother does that she has made a grave mistake by being kind to him.

Q: What is the significance of the clock stopping after the child is taken?

A: The stopped clock symbolizes how a parent's world comes to a standstill in the face of such a profound loss. It's a poignant and relatable image that expresses the feeling of frozen time during overwhelming grief.

Q: What is the deeper meaning behind the mother's conversation with the lake?

A: The lake, representing the harsh forces of nature, demands the mother's eyes in exchange for passage. This symbolizes how grief and suffering can blind a person to the world around them, leaving them to rely on inner strength and instinct rather than outward sight.

Q: What is the thematic significance of the mother choosing to let go of the other flowers in the greenhouse?

A: When the mother threatens to pull up the other flowers (human lives), Death warns her that she will make other mothers just as unhappy as she is. This moment forces the mother to confront the universality of suffering. It broadens her perspective from her personal grief to an understanding of a larger human condition.

Q: What makes this story so different from Andersen's other, more famous fairy tales?

A: While many of Andersen's stories deal with melancholy themes, "The Story of a Mother" is notable for its refusal of a happy ending through human effort. It rejects the "happily ever after" of many

traditional fairy tales and instead offers a mature, spiritual resolution through submission to a higher will.

Q: Why does Death not simply refuse the mother's demands outright?

A: Death isn't portrayed as cruel or malicious, but rather as an impartial force acting under God's command. By restoring her sight and offering her a vision of two possible futures, Death offers the mother a choice grounded in love rather than desperation. He tests her selfless love for her child, rather than simply thwarting her.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A. "The Story of a Mother" is a Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale about a grieving mother's desperate quest to save her dying child by confronting Death. She follows Death through enchanted woods and a dark forest, aided by mythical figures like Night and a thorn bush, eventually reaching Death's garden where human lives are represented by flowers. To save her child, the mother must make sacrifices and gain knowledge from a wise old woman, learning she can only threaten Death with destroying other lives to prevent him from taking her child.

A mother has not slept for three days and nights watching over her sick child. When she closes her eyes for just a moment, Death comes and takes her child. The mother rushes into the street and asks a woman, who is Night, which way Death went.

Night tells her to go into the forest, but first the mother must sing every lullaby that she has ever sung for her child. In the forest, a thorn bush tells her which way to continue, but only after she has warmed the bush by pressing it to her chest, causing her to bleed. The mother then reaches a lake that carries her across in exchange for her eyes, which she cries out.

The now blind mother reaches the greenhouse where Death cares for the flowers and trees, each one a human life. Here the mother finds the little sick plant that is her child, recognizing it by the sound of its heartbeat. The old woman who helps care for the greenhouse tells her, in exchange for her hair, that when Death comes, she must threaten to rip up the other flowers. Death will then be afraid for he must answer to God; only God decides when the plants are pulled up and planted in the garden of Paradise, where we do not know what happens.

Death gives her back her eyes and asks her to look into a well. Here she sees the futures of two children, one full of happiness and love, the other full of misery and despair. He says that one of these futures would be the future of her child, were it to live.

Then the mother screams in fear, "Which is my child! Rather carry my child into God's kingdom than allow it to suffer such a life."

Death says, "I do not understand. Do you want your child back or should I carry it away into the unknown?"

And the mother wrings her hands, gets down on her knees, and prays to God:

"Do not listen to me when I ask against your will! Do not listen to me, do not listen to me, do not listen to me!"

And Death leaves, carrying her child into the unknown land.



CAREER STUDY
The Learning App

UNIT – 3

The Murder of Roger Ackroyd

Q. Who is the narrator of the novel?

A. The narrator is Dr. James Sheppard, a physician in the village of King's Abbot.

Q. Who is the victim?

A. The victim is Roger Ackroyd, a wealthy industrialist.

Q. Who is the famous detective called in to solve the case?

A. The famous detective is Hercule Poirot, who has retired to the village to grow vegetable marrows but is drawn back into detective work.

Q. What is the shocking twist ending of the novel?

A. The shocking twist is that the narrator, Dr. James Sheppard, is revealed to be the murderer.

Q. How did the murderer kill Roger Ackroyd?

A. Dr. Sheppard stabbed Roger Ackroyd in the neck with a Tunisian dagger from his own collection.

Q. Why did Dr. Sheppard commit the murder?

A. Dr. Sheppard was Mrs. Ferrars's blackmailer and murdered Ackroyd to prevent him from discovering this secret. He was afraid

that Mrs. Ferrars's letter to Ackroyd, which confessed to her first husband's murder, would also reveal his identity as the blackmailer.

Q. How did Dr. Sheppard create a false alibi for himself?

A. After killing Ackroyd, Dr. Sheppard used a dictaphone (a recording device) to play a pre-recorded message of Ackroyd's voice. This made it sound like Ackroyd was still alive after Sheppard had left the study, creating a false timeline for the murder.

Q. What does Hercule Poirot do at the end of the novel?

A. Poirot confronts Dr. Sheppard, revealing his knowledge of the truth. He offers Sheppard a choice: confess to the police or commit suicide to spare his sister, Caroline, from the disgrace of his public arrest and trial. Dr. Sheppard chooses the latter, and his final manuscript serves as his confession.

Q. Who is Caroline Sheppard and what role does she play in the story?

A. Caroline Sheppard is Dr. Sheppard's older sister and a notorious gossip. She has a talent for piecing together information and rumors, and her observations often provide Poirot with vital, if unintentional, clues. She is, in many ways, an amateur detective herself.

Q. What is the significance of the locked room mystery aspect of the crime?

A. Roger Ackroyd's study is found locked from the inside after the murder, and the window is also found shut. This classic "locked room" mystery seems to suggest that no one could have entered or exited the room after Ackroyd's death, making the crime appear

impossible. Poirot's genius lies in unraveling how this seemingly impenetrable setup was a deliberate part of the murderer's plan.

Q. Who is the primary suspect for most of the novel?

A. Roger Ackroyd's stepson, Ralph Paton, is the primary suspect. He is in debt, has a strained relationship with Ackroyd, and disappears mysteriously after the murder, leading both the police and many of the characters to believe he is guilty.

Q. What other secrets are revealed throughout the investigation?

A. The investigation uncovers a web of secrets among the villagers:

- * Flora Ackroyd, the victim's niece, confesses to stealing money from her uncle's room.
- * Ralph Paton is secretly married to Ursula Bourne, the parlourmaid.
- * John Parker, the butler, is a former blackmailer.
- * Miss Russell, the housekeeper, has a secret illegitimate son who was seen near the Ackroyd estate on the night of the murder.
- * Major Hector Blunt is secretly in love with Flora Ackroyd.

Q. How does the novel subvert the conventions of the detective fiction genre?

A. The Murder of Roger Ackroyd is famous for its groundbreaking twist. By making the narrator the murderer, Agatha Christie broke one of the unspoken rules of detective fiction at the time: that the narrator is always a reliable and trustworthy source of information. This move shocked and delighted readers and solidified the novel as a landmark in the genre.

Q. What is the key piece of evidence that makes Poirot suspect Dr. Sheppard?

A. Poirot's suspicion is solidified when he realizes that Dr. Sheppard's "black bag" contains the dictaphone used to fake the alibi. Sheppard's odd behavior and evasiveness when Poirot asks about his bag confirm the detective's suspicions.

Q. What is the "little grey cells" a reference to?

A. The "little grey cells" is Hercule Poirot's famous phrase for his brain, which he believes is his most powerful tool for solving mysteries. He relies on logic and deduction rather than physical evidence alone.

Q. What is the significance of the missing chair from Ackroyd's study?

A. A missing chair is a subtle but crucial clue. The chair was used by the murderer, Dr. Sheppard, to prop up the dictaphone on the night of the murder. Its absence and eventual return to the room is noted by Poirot as a sign of tampering.

Q. How does the novel's title, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, differ from a more conventional title like *Who Killed Roger Ackroyd*?

A. The title focuses on the act of murder itself rather than the question of the killer's identity. This choice subtly directs the reader to focus on the "how" rather than the "who," which is key to how the novel's twist functions. The reader is led to believe they are looking for a hidden killer, while the killer has been in plain sight all along.

Q. How does Agatha Christie's use of an unreliable narrator differ from other authors?

A. Unlike many unreliable narrators who are mentally unstable or intentionally lie to the reader, Dr. Sheppard's unreliability comes from his clever use of omission. He doesn't tell direct falsehoods but simply leaves out the most incriminating details, manipulating the reader's perception by presenting a biased, incomplete version of events.

Q. What is the significance of the title of Hercule Poirot's final report on the case?

A. Poirot titles his final report "The Murder of Roger Ackroyd". This is a deliberate choice. He offers the report to Dr. Sheppard, giving him the chance to write a confession and make the manuscript the official, documented account of the crime. This clever move also links the title to the very text the reader is holding.

Q. What famous Agatha Christie book does the final twist of The Murder of Roger Ackroyd resemble in its concept?

A. The twist in The Murder of Roger Ackroyd—the revelation that the seemingly trustworthy narrator is the killer—is famously echoed in And Then There Were None. In that novel, the killer is not the narrator, but a character who seems above suspicion, just as Dr. Sheppard did. Both novels are famous for breaking the unwritten rules of detective fiction to deliver a shocking reveal. .

Q. Why does Poirot choose to retire to the village of King's Abbot?

A. Poirot has retired to King's Abbot to pursue his hobbies in peace. His primary goal is to grow vegetable marrows and enjoy a quiet, rural life. The murder of Roger Ackroyd interrupts his plans and forces him to put his "little grey cells" back to work.

Q. What is the role of the a blue object found near the murder scene?

A. A blue quill pen, belonging to Roger Ackroyd, is found near the murder scene. It is a subtle clue, as it is seemingly insignificant. However, it is an item that only the murderer would have had a reason to hide or move, adding to the list of inconsistencies that eventually lead Poirot to the truth.

Q. How does the novel critique the upper class and village life?

A. The novel presents the village of King's Abbot as a hotbed of secrets, gossip, and moral hypocrisy. Behind the seemingly tranquil facade of the upper-class village, characters are engaged in blackmail, theft, secret marriages, and murder. Christie uses the seemingly idyllic setting to highlight the hidden darkness that can exist within seemingly respectable communities.

Q. What is the key difference between Dr. Sheppard's version of events and Poirot's reconstruction?

A. The key difference lies in the dictaphone. Dr. Sheppard's narrative leaves out the crucial detail of him using a dictaphone to fake Ackroyd's voice after the murder, while Poirot's reconstruction of the crime is centered on the use of this device.

Q. What is the role of the parlor maid, Ursula Bourne?

A. Ursula Bourne is the parlor maid at Fernly Park and is secretly married to Ralph Paton. Her secret provides a possible motive for Ralph, making him seem even more guilty. However, her true purpose in the plot is to be a well-placed red herring.

Q. Why does Poirot not immediately reveal Dr. Sheppard as the murderer?

A. Poirot doesn't immediately reveal Sheppard because he lacks a concrete confession. He presents the entire case to a group of suspects and friends, laying out the logical case against Sheppard without explicitly naming him, to see if Sheppard will react or confess.

Q. What is the most famous line from the novel?

A. The most famous line is "The truth, however ugly in itself, is always beautiful." This line, spoken by Poirot, encapsulates his philosophy that logic and truth are paramount, regardless of the painful consequences they may bring.

Q. How does the novel challenge the reader to be a detective themselves?

A. Christie challenges the reader by presenting all the necessary clues in the narrative, but she does so through the eyes of the killer. The reader is given all the information to solve the case but must interpret it differently from the narrator's misleading perspective.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A. The first-person narrator of the story, Dr. James Sheppard, lives with his older unmarried sister Caroline in the country village of King's Abbot on the outskirts of London. As the local physician with an active practice, Dr. Sheppard becomes emmeshed in a mysterious

suicide and murder and the ensuing investigations into them over a nine-day period.

Dr. Sheppard begins his account on the morning of September 17 with the overdose death of his patient Mrs. Ferrars, a wealthy widow whose husband had died the previous year. Dr. Sheppard had attended Mr. Ferrars's death as well, ruling he died of acute gastritis resulting from alcoholism. Now he must determine Mrs. Ferrars's cause of death. Caroline has an inexhaustible curiosity about everyone and a keen imagination. She tells Dr. Sheppard that she believes Mrs. Ferrars's overdose was not accidental but suicide from the remorse for having poisoned Mr. Ferrars.

At the time of her death, Mrs. Ferrars had been seeing another of Dr. Sheppard's patients, the wealthy widower Roger Ackroyd, and the townspeople expected them to announce plans to marry. Roger had also lost his spouse to alcoholism twenty-one years prior, leaving him to raise her son from a previous marriage, Ralph Paton, whom Roger adopted. Also living with Roger at his Fernly Park estate are his late brother's widow, Mrs. Cecil Ackroyd, and her daughter, Flora. His main staff includes secretary Geoffrey Raymond, housekeeper Miss Russell, butler Parker, parlormaid Ursula Bourne, and housemaid Elsie Dale.

On the evening of September 17, Roger Ackroyd invites Dr. Sheppard to dinner to consult with him about a matter causing him much distress. After dinner, they retire to Roger's study to confer privately. Roger tells Dr. Sheppard that he had been engaged to Mrs. Ferrars for three months. The day before her death, she confessed to him that she had poisoned her husband Ashley Ferrars, was being blackmailed, and would reveal the name of the blackmailer in twenty-four hours' time. At that point, Parker delivers a blue envelope with Mrs. Ferrars's

handwriting, and Roger reads aloud to Dr. Sheppard her suicide note. But Roger abruptly stops reading aloud before Mrs. Ferrars reveals the name of the blackmailer. Dr. Sheppard records in his manuscript, which he started after the murder, that Roger asked to be left alone to absorb the contents of the letter. Dr. Sheppard returns home by 9:15. At 10:15, he receives a phone call and rushes back to Fernly Park, telling Caroline that Parker has informed him that Roger has been murdered.

When Dr. Sheppard arrives at Fernly Park, Parker denies having made the phone call and is unaware of any murder. They break down the door to Roger's study, which has been locked from inside, to find Roger dead with a dagger in his neck. Mrs. Ferrars's letter is missing. The police are called to the scene and find footprints leading into and out of the study through an open window. They interview everyone in the house, but no one saw anything unusual. The police can't find Ralph, last seen earlier in the day at the Three Boars inn where he was staying. They collect a pair of Ralph's boots to compare with the muddy footprints and find that they match.

The next day, Flora visits Caroline and Dr. Sheppard to ask for their help. Flora explains that their new neighbor is the famous detective Hercule Poirot, and she asks Dr. Sheppard to accompany her to request his involvement in the case to clear Ralph, to whom she is engaged. Although Poirot has retired from active police work, he listens to Flora's plea. Poirot warns Flora that if he were to take the case, he would not stop until he has the whole truth, and she agrees to his terms.

Poirot immediately asks Dr. Sheppard to visit the scene of the crime with him. Dr. Sheppard presents the background information, and Poirot makes observations. Poirot identifies to Dr. Sheppard key

clues: the phone call, the open window, the door locked from the inside, and an out-of-place chair. Throughout Poirot's investigation, he uncovers truths. He points out those who stood to gain by Roger's death. The unknown blackmailer was about to be unmasked. Ralph and Ursula were secretly married, which would be grounds for Ralph's disinheritance. Poirot states unequivocally that everyone involved is hiding something.

Dr. Sheppard records the unfolding investigation in a personal manuscript with mounting mistrust of Poirot's techniques. Poirot confides in Dr. Sheppard less and less. As Poirot fits together the puzzle pieces using evidence and knowledge of human behavior, a composite of the killer emerges. Poirot paints a psychological portrait of the blackmailer—a once-decent but now-weak man who can't resist the temptation to extort a rich widow and who pushes her too far. Poirot postulates that as this man faced exposure for his crime, the man became desperate and killed the person who stood to ruin him.

Poirot concludes his investigation and assembles the family and staff, where he challenges everyone in the room that they have until the next day to come forward, at which time he will reveal the murderer to the police. Poirot's warning, however, is only aimed at Dr. Sheppard. Poirot then privately tells Dr. Sheppard that he has identified him as Mrs. Ferrars's blackmailer and Roger's killer. Dr. Sheppard scoffs, and Poirot lays out the entire scenario of motive, means, and opportunity, offering Dr. Sheppard one alternative to arrest and conviction. Dr. Sheppard finishes his manuscript with the details of his crime and his confession. He then overdoses using the same poison that killed Mrs. Ferrars.

UNIT – 4

Five Point Someone

Q.What is the full title of the novel?

A.The full title is Five Point Someone: What not to do at IIT.

Q.Who are the three main characters?

A.The three main characters are Ryan Oberoi, Hari Kumar, and Alok Gupta.

Q.What is the central setting of the story?

A.The story is set at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), specifically from the perspective of three engineering students.

Q.What is the main conflict the characters face?

A.The main conflict is the struggle of the three friends to cope with the immense academic pressure at IIT, which leads to poor grades and a constant fear of failing out.

Q.Who is the author of "Five Point Someone"?

A.The author is Chetan Bhagat.

Q.How did the three friends get their nickname "five-pointers"?

A.They earned the nickname because their Grade Point Average (GPA) was consistently around 5.0 out of 10, placing them at the bottom of their class.

Q.What is the name of the girl Hari is in love with?

A.Hari is in love with Neha Cherian, who is the daughter of their strict and egoistic Head of Department, Professor Cherian.

Q.What is a key difference between Hari and Ryan's personalities?

A.Hari is the narrator and is more cautious, lacking confidence. Ryan, on the other hand, is innovative, daring, and rebellious against the rigid IIT system.

Q.What is the major turning point in the novel's plot?

A.A major turning point occurs when the friends, desperate to improve their grades, make a plan to steal an exam paper from Professor Cherian's office.

Q.How does the story's title, "Five Point Someone," relate to the characters?

A.The title refers to the characters' low academic standing, as they are "five-pointers." However, the "someone" suggests that they are more than just a number or a GPA; they are individuals with their own personalities, dreams, and struggles.

Q.Why is the novel considered a critique of the Indian education system?

A.The novel criticizes the system's overemphasis on rote learning and grades, arguing that it stifles creativity and turns students into "human machines." The characters' struggles highlight the intense academic pressure and stress that can lead to depression and even suicide, showing the negative side of the competitive environment.

Q.What is the role of Professor Veera in the story?

A.Professor Veera is an unconventional and sympathetic professor who acts as a mentor to the friends, especially Ryan. He encourages their creativity and innovation, providing a stark contrast to the rigid and grades-focused approach of most other professors, particularly Professor Cherian. He represents a glimmer of hope and an alternative to the traditional system.

Q.How do the main characters find their way in the end?

A.After a serious setback, the friends finally find their footing. Ryan, passionate about his project, becomes a research assistant to Professor Veera. Hari and Alok secure jobs, with Alok fulfilling his family's wish for him to get a good corporate job. Although they miss their convocation, they are able to get their degrees and move on with their lives, proving that success isn't just about high grades.

Q.What is the significance of the title "Five Point Someone"?

A.The title is a direct reference to the low GPA (Grade Point Average) of the three protagonists. In the IIT grading system, a "five-point something" is a low score, marking a student as an underperformer. The use of "someone" instead of "something" is crucial, as it humanizes the characters, emphasizing that despite being labeled as low-scorers, they are individuals with unique talents, dreams, and personal worth beyond their academic performance.

Q.Why does Ryan initially rebel against the IIT system?

A. Ryan rebels because he sees the system as stifling creativity and innovation. He believes that the focus on grades and rote learning kills a student's true potential and passion for engineering.

Q. What is Alok's biggest fear?

A. Alok's biggest fear is failing at IIT and disappointing his family. He is under immense pressure to succeed and secure a high-paying job to lift his family out of poverty.

Q. Why does Hari feel like a failure at the beginning of the story?

A. Hari feels like a failure because he constantly compares himself to the smarter students around him and struggles to get good grades. He lacks self-confidence and feels like he doesn't belong at a prestigious institution like IIT.

Q. What is the significance of the "convocation" in the story's climax?

A. The convocation ceremony is a symbol of academic success and completion. The friends' choice to skip their own convocation represents their rejection of the traditional path to success and their personal victory over the system they fought against.

Q. What is the role of the "Gandi" in the novel?

A. "Gandi" is the nickname given to the girls' hostel at IIT. It's a key setting for Hari's romantic pursuits and highlights the social life (or lack thereof) at the campus.

Q. How does the novel portray the life of an IIT student?

A. The novel shows the life of an IIT student as a mix of intense academic pressure, social struggles, and close friendships. It portrays a highly competitive environment where students must navigate a demanding curriculum while also dealing with personal and emotional challenges.

Q. Is the book "Five Point Someone" based on a true story?

A. While the characters and events are fictional, the novel is inspired by Chetan Bhagat's own experiences as a student at IIT Delhi. The themes of academic pressure, a rigid educational system, and the struggles of an average student are based on the author's real-life observations.

Q. What is the significance of Ryan's final project, the "car engine"?

A. Ryan's car engine project is symbolic of his rebellious genius. It demonstrates his passion for hands-on, creative engineering, and his belief that a student's true talent lies in practical application, not just theoretical knowledge and good grades.

Q. What is the overall message of the novel?

A. The novel's main message is a powerful critique of the Indian education system, urging it to move beyond grades and rote learning. It advocates for a more holistic approach that values creativity, original thought, and personal well-being. It also celebrates the importance of friendship and finding your own path to success.

Q. How does the book's ending differ from the movie adaptation, "3 Idiots"?

A. In the novel, the three friends achieve a more modest, personal victory—they find their own paths and get their degrees, but their lives are not portrayed as a complete transformation. In contrast, the movie "3 Idiots" gives the characters a more fantastical and successful ending, where they become highly successful and famous, making the ending more of a fairy tale.

Q. What is the significance of the "mess" in the novel?

A. The mess, or dining hall, is where the friends often meet, discuss their struggles, and make plans. It represents a central social hub where friendships are forged and where the characters can temporarily escape the pressures of their academic lives.

Q. How does Professor Cherian's character serve as an antagonist?

A. Professor Cherian embodies everything the three friends are rebelling against. He is arrogant, rigid, and obsessed with grades and academic rankings. His strictness and disapproval of their poor performance make him the perfect representation of the flawed system they are fighting.

Q. What is the "Dassault" incident, and why is it important?

A. The Dassault incident is when the friends are caught by Professor Cherian while trying to access his computer to steal an exam paper. This event is the major climax of the novel. It represents their rock-bottom moment and forces them to confront the consequences of their actions, leading to a significant turning point in their lives.

Emotional and Psychological Aspects

Q. How does the novel address mental health?

A. The novel subtly touches on mental health issues by portraying the immense stress and depression that the characters, especially Alok, face due to academic pressure. It suggests that the competitive educational environment can take a serious toll on a student's emotional and psychological well-being.

Q. What is the significance of the "backdoor" at the institute?

A. The "backdoor" refers to the secret passageway the friends use to sneak around the campus. It's a symbol of their rebellious spirit and their desire to find their own way around the rules and conventions of the rigid institution.

Q.How does Hari's relationship with Neha change his character?

A. Hari's relationship with Neha gives him a new purpose beyond just getting good grades. It provides him with a source of motivation and emotional support, allowing him to grow in confidence and stand up for himself.

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A.Five Point Someone by Chetan Bhagat follows the story of three friends—Hari, Alok, and Ryan—as they navigate their struggles at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in the early 1990s. They face academic pressure, strict professors, and societal expectations, but their strong friendship helps them persevere. The novel explores themes of parental pressure, the failings of the education system, and the importance of independent thinking and creativity, ultimately showing that success can be found beyond academic grades.

The novel Five Point Someone was the basis for the popular Bollywood film 3 Idiots. While the film shares the core story, there are differences in the characters and plot details.

Chetan Bhagat's "Five Point Someone" revolves around a life of three IIT students from Delhi. The first friend of group is Ryan Oberoi, a son of wealthy businessman who is a weakest student of class in studies. Ryan is an innovative and daring student who hates Indian education system. Ryan doesn't like his parents as they spend most of their time in abroad to handle their businesses.

The second friend is Alok Gupta, a bibliophile who belongs to poor middle-class family. Alok is opposite of his friend, Ryan, as he cares for his family, and he is a very emotional person. He keeps one paint brush in his geometry box which is given by his father to him. Alok's father is paralyzed, and he keep paint brush as a memory of him. Alok's mother is a biology teacher who is an only earning person in their family. The third friend is Hari Kumar, a son of Indian Army officer who falls in love with a girl named, Neha, a daughter of Mr. Cherian, a professor at IIT, Delhi.

The story begins with first day of college where professor is teaching students about a power of machine. He claims that Anything which reduces human effort is called Machine. At the same time, Ryan asks a very interesting question, if machine reduces human effort, then what do we call to gym equipment as they do opposite and increase human effort. Ryan made his professor speechless in front of whole class.

Furthermore, all three friends go to watch a movie at night, and they return very late from movie show. The subsequent day, they perform

very bad in a class of Professor, Dubey. Alok got highest mark in his friend group which is 7 marks, and Hari achieve 5 marks. Alok is very angry, he tells his friend that a plan of watching a movie was a bad idea. On the other side, Ryan doesn't react on anything as he has no interest in studies. He considers cramming as boring thing to do.

Meanwhile, Alok believes that all the students must do cramming to graduate from IIT. Ryan suggests his friend, Hari to start doing morning walk as he was gaining weight day after day and becoming unfit. Hari was on walk where he meets a girl, Neha, who gives him lift to college. During their conversation, Hari learns that Neha is a daughter of their professor, Mr. Cherian. As Neha was dropping Hari in college, Alok saw them together and advises Hari to keep a distance from Neha.

One day, Ryan received a money from his parents, and he buys scooter with that money. After a while, Alok got a call from his family member as his father is very unwell. Alok goes with Ryan on his scooter to bring his father to hospital. There Ryan learns that his friend, Alok belongs to poor family. Ryan booked a taxi for Alok's father and brings him to hospital in taxi. On the next day, Alok doesn't perform good in his class while Ryan doesn't care about his low marks. Ryan tells Alok that perhaps IIT is India's best college, but IIT haven't invent anything great till now. Alok replies IIT has produced great engineers for India. Ryan made a plan that they are going to study for 2 – 3 hours daily.

One day, Hari saw Neha on college campus bookstore and says "Hello" to her. Neha comes outside and bring him inside of store. She tells him that book seller knows his father and his father is very strict about her friendship with boys. Afterwards, they decide to go in Ice cream Parlour for casual talk. There she tells him that her driving

license has been issued. Hari checks Neha's license and learns about her full name "Neha Sameer Cherian". Neha tells him that Sameer was her brother who died in an accident. They promised to meet again in same Ice cream Parlour and goes back to home.

Ryan, Hari and Alok exams are very close, they realized even if they study for 20 hours a day that won't be enough to pass out in exam. Finally, exams have been started, first exam is Ryan's favourite practical exam. On the contrary, Neha and Hari are falling in love, they meet every month on a date of 11. They meet only on date, 11 because that day every month Neha's parents goes on Temple's railway track where her brother died. She doesn't go with her family as she feels depressed there.

As results declared, all three friends get below 5.5 marks which is lesser than average. Ryan is still happy with his marks and tells his friends to party with him. But Alok is very disappointed with his marks, and he even abuses Ryan in anger. Alok decides to go in Venkat's room who is a topper in their class. Their trio is not a trio anymore as Alok is not in their group now. As the story progresses, we learn about Alok who achieve 6 marks in his next semester while Hari and Ryan get only below 5 marks. Hari and Ryan started meeting on the room of their hotel to drink and smoke. They are enjoying their life to fullest.

One day, Ryan heard an argument of Alok with Venkat in which he was asking for Venkat's help for his father. But Venkat denied helping Alok's father. Ryan decides to help Alok's father and bring him to hospital again. Afterwards, Alok returns to his old friend, Ryan, and Hari's room. There comes Neha's birthday on month of December, Ryan planned with Hari to enter in Neha's room secretly to give her gifts. Hari gives Neha flower from her father's garden.

Simultaneously, Neha's father learns that somebody is in his house, he shouts who is it? On which Ryan replied it is your father and they immediately run away from his home.

During their fourth semester Viva, Hari was very scared for what they did to their professor, Ryan advises him to drink Vodka to be confident in front of Mr. Cherian. Hari drinks vodka though but get caught by him through Vodka's smell. Mr. Cherian throws Hari out of his class and gives zero marks to him. Ryan plans to rob question papers from professor office for his friend, Hari. Ryan takes a help of Neha to rob question paper, and she tells him that her brother didn't die by accident, he died by suicide. Her brother, Sameer committed suicide because he failed to clear is IIT entrance exam.

Furthermore, Ryan enters Mr. Cherian's office secretly but get caught by his security guard. Guard brings Ryan to Cherian. Mr. Cherian failed Ryan, Hari and Alok in their next semester. Alok in depression attempt suicide by jumping from the roof of their college building. He was taken to hospital through Ambulance and his body had 12 fractured but he survives. Neha forgives Hari and they meet again in Ice Cream Parlour. She gives him her late brother's suicide note as she doesn't want her father to see that suicide note. Simultaneously, Neha's father, Mr. Cherian comes in and caught Neha and Hari together. He snatches suicide note from Hari's hand and started reading.

As soon as Mr. Cherian reads letter, he started crying for his son. Since then, Mr. Cherian changed himself and become a good person. He even praises Ryan and his friends for their lubricant project. During placement, Alok got high paying job in Delhi, Hari got high paying job in Mumbai, but Ryan only got job as an assistant in his college though he made such a great project in college. He only gets 2

thousand monthly for his job. Hari's girlfriend, Neha got great job as a fashion designer. Hari is not happy with his job as it allows him no time to meet her love, Neha.

Ryan was a creative and an innovative person who has the audacity to think outside the box and change the world. But he doesn't get any placement because he was not good in cramming like other students. The story of Five Point Someone teaches us about our country education system who has no value for creative and innovative people as they just value people who are good in cramming and following others.



CAREER STUDY
The Learning App

UNIT – 5

"Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability"

Q: Who wrote Bhimayana?

A: Srividya Natarajan and S. Anand, with art by Durgabai Vyam and Subhash Vyam.

Q: What is Bhimayana about?

A: It's a graphic novel about Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's experiences with untouchability and caste discrimination in India.

Q: What art style is used in Bhimayana?

A: The novel features Gond art, a traditional tribal art form from central India.

Q: What is the significance of Bhimayana?

A: It raises awareness about caste-based discrimination and promotes empathy and understanding of Dalit experiences.

Q: Who is the main figure in Bhimayana?

A: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a key figure in Indian history and the fight against caste discrimination.

Q: What is the main theme of Bhimayana?

A: The main theme is the experience of untouchability and caste discrimination in India.

Q: How does Bhimayana convey its message?

A: Through a combination of powerful storytelling and evocative Gond art.

Q: What impact does Bhimayana aim to have?

A: To raise awareness about caste-based discrimination and promote social justice and equality.

Q: Is Bhimayana a true story?

A: Yes, it's based on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's real-life experiences with untouchability and caste discrimination.

Q: Why is Bhimayana an important work?

A: It provides a unique perspective on Indian history and society, highlighting the struggles and resilience of Dalits.

Q: What symbolism is used in Bhimayana?

A: The graphic novel is generous with its symbolism, featuring animals, birds, and trees to convey emotions and ideas. For example, a thirsty young Ambedkar is depicted as a fish, and happiness is represented by a dancing peacock.

Q: What art form is used in Bhimayana?

A: The Pardhan-Gond art form, known for its intricate patterns and vibrant colors, is used to visually represent the harsh realities of untouchability .

Q: What is the main theme of Bhimayana?

A: The graphic novel explores the theme of untouchability and caste-based oppression in India, highlighting Ambedkar's experiences and struggles.

Q: What message does Bhimayana convey?

A: Bhimayana conveys a powerful message about the need to challenge caste-based discrimination and promote social equality and justice.

Q: Who is the main character in Bhimayana?

A: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar is the main character, with the graphic novel depicting his life and struggles against untouchability.

Q: What is the significance of the Mahad Satyagraha in Bhimayana?

A: The Mahad Satyagraha was a pivotal event in Ambedkar's fight against untouchability, where he and his followers protested against the denial of access to a public water tank .

Q: How does the art style contribute to the narrative?

A: The Gond art style adds depth and emotion to the narrative, making the story more engaging and impactful.

Q: What impact does Bhimayana aim to have?

A: Bhimayana aims to raise awareness about caste-based discrimination and promote empathy and understanding, encouraging readers to critically examine the issue .

Q: How does Bhimayana portray the caste system?

A: Bhimayana portrays the caste system as a deeply ingrained and oppressive social structure that perpetuates inequality and discrimination.

Q: What role does education play in Bhimayana?

A: Education is depicted as a key factor in empowering individuals and communities to challenge caste-based discrimination and strive for social equality.

Q: How does Ambedkar's childhood experiences shape his later life?

A: Ambedkar's childhood experiences of untouchability and discrimination shape his later life by motivating him to fight against caste-based oppression and advocate for social justice.

Q: What is the significance of the water tank scene in Bhimayana?

A: The water tank scene highlights the humiliation and exclusion faced by Dalits, emphasizing the need for equal access to resources and dignity.

Q: How does the graphic novel format contribute to the story?

A: The graphic novel format makes the story more accessible and engaging, using visuals to convey the emotional impact of Ambedkar's experiences.

Q: What audience is Bhimayana suitable for?

A: Bhimayana is suitable for readers interested in social justice, history, and graphic novels, particularly those looking to understand the experiences of Dalits in India .

Q: How does Bhimayana challenge social norms?

A: Bhimayana challenges social norms by highlighting the injustices of the caste system and advocating for equality and dignity for all individuals.

Q: What is the role of resistance in Bhimayana?

A: Resistance is a key theme, as Ambedkar and others fight against caste-based oppression, seeking to create a more just society.

Q: How does Ambedkar's family influence his life?

A: Ambedkar's family faces discrimination, which motivates him to fight for change and equality.

Q: What is the significance of the Kholapur episode in Bhimayana?

A: The Kholapur episode highlights Ambedkar's determination to challenge caste-based restrictions and assert his rights.

Q: How does the art in Bhimayana enhance the story?

A: The Gond art style adds a unique visual dimension, making the story more impactful and memorable.

Q: What is the overall impact of Bhimayana?

A: Bhimayana raises awareness about caste-based discrimination, promotes empathy, and inspires readers to think critically about social justice issues .

Q: How does Bhimayana portray the struggle for equality?

A: Bhimayana portrays the struggle for equality as a long and difficult journey, highlighting the challenges faced by Dalits in their quest for dignity and rights.

Q: What is the significance of Ambedkar's legacy in Bhimayana?

A: Ambedkar's legacy is significant as a symbol of resistance against caste-based oppression and a beacon of hope for social justice and equality.

Q: How does Bhimayana depict the relationship between caste and identity?

A: Bhimayana depicts the relationship between caste and identity as complex and deeply ingrained, highlighting how caste shapes individual and collective experiences.

Q: What role do community and solidarity play in Bhimayana?

A: Community and solidarity are crucial in Bhimayana, as Ambedkar and others come together to challenge caste-based oppression and fight for their rights.

Q: How does Bhimayana contribute to the understanding of Indian history?

A: Bhimayana contributes to the understanding of Indian history by highlighting the experiences of Dalits and the struggles against caste-

based oppression, providing a unique perspective on the country's social and political landscape.

Q: What is the relevance of Bhimayana in contemporary society?

A: Bhimayana remains relevant in contemporary society as it highlights ongoing issues of caste-based discrimination and social inequality, encouraging readers to think critically about these issues and their impact .

Q: How does Bhimayana address the issue of social exclusion?

A: Bhimayana addresses social exclusion by highlighting the ways in which Dalits are marginalized and excluded from mainstream society, emphasizing the need for inclusion and equality.

Q: What is the role of memory and testimony in Bhimayana?

A: Memory and testimony play a crucial role in Bhimayana, as Ambedkar's experiences and stories serve as a testament to the struggles faced by Dalits and inspire others to take action.

Q: How does Bhimayana portray the relationship between Ambedkar and his community?

A: Bhimayana portrays Ambedkar as a leader who is deeply connected to his community, working tirelessly to uplift and empower them.

Q: What is the significance of the Parvati tank episode in Bhimayana?

A: The Parvati tank episode highlights the humiliation and exclusion faced by Dalits, emphasizing the need for equal access to resources and dignity.

Q: How does Bhimayana use visual storytelling to convey its message?

A: Bhimayana uses visual storytelling to convey its message through powerful and evocative illustrations, making the story more accessible and impactful.

Q: What is the impact of Bhimayana on readers?

A: Bhimayana has a profound impact on readers, raising awareness about caste-based discrimination and inspiring empathy and understanding .

Q: How does Bhimayana challenge readers to think about caste

A: Bhimayana challenges readers to think critically about caste and its impact on individuals and society, encouraging them to consider the ways in which caste-based discrimination can be addressed.

Q: What is the significance of Ambedkar's message in Bhimayana?

A: Ambedkar's message in Bhimayana emphasizes the importance of equality, justice, and dignity for all individuals, regardless of caste or social status.

Q: How does Bhimayana portray the struggles of Dalit children?

A: Bhimayana portrays the struggles of Dalit children as particularly poignant, highlighting the ways in which caste-based discrimination affects their lives and opportunities.

Q: What role do women play in Bhimayana?

A: Women in Bhimayana are depicted as strong and resilient, playing important roles in their communities and supporting Ambedkar's efforts to challenge caste-based oppression.

Q: How does Bhimayana contribute to the discourse on caste and social justice?

A: Bhimayana contributes to the discourse on caste and social justice by providing a powerful and accessible narrative that highlights the need for equality and dignity for all individuals.

Q: What is the relevance of Bhimayana in educational settings?

A: Bhimayana is relevant in educational settings as it provides a valuable resource for teaching about caste, social justice, and human rights, encouraging critical thinking and empathy [1][2].

Q. Briefly explain the title of this lesson

Or

Write the summary of this lesson

Or

Describe the main idea of this lesson

Or

write the central theme of this lesson

A: Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability begins in “the recent past”. A young man waiting at a bus stop complains about his unsatisfactory job and blames his lack of advancement on the system of reservations that ensures job quotas for people from the backward and scheduled castes. As a young woman waiting at the bus stop responds and engages in the debate, this man trots out a series of arguments that will be familiar to those of us who have had this

debate before. That caste has been abolished; that his own merit has been unfairly overlooked; that in arguing with him the woman is talking “like one of them”. It’s almost a parody of the ignorant and privileged, and it works only because we have all met people like this. It is at this point that the unnamed woman sets out to educate him about the continuing violence perpetrated against Dalits, and she does this with reference to B.R. Ambedkar.

This framing narrative provides us with a context in which to read the main body of the text. First, it is explicitly, openly didactic. This is not a criticism of the text; simply a statement of its form. Secondly, Ambedkar’s story here is told specifically in terms of how it is relevant to present day caste discrimination.

With art by Durgabai and Subhash Vyam, Bhimayana is physically gorgeous. The artists here have chosen to eschew the traditional panel style of the graphic novel (in S. Anand’s afterword they describe this as “forc[ing] characters into boxes”), and the pages are open and free-flowing, divided in places by traditional dignas. Durgabai and Subhash Vyam are working from the Pardhan Gond tradition, and each page is filled with details that act as clever signifiers.

There are the animals, for one thing. Nature is all over this book — fortresses are fierce beasts; trains are snakes; the road is a peacock’s long neck. The handle of a water pump turns into an elephant’s trunk. The first section of the book, which deals with the right to water, is full of water-based imagery — when the young Ambedkar is thirsty his torso turns into a fish, and when he urges a crowd to stand up for their rights the speakers morph into showers sprinkling water into the audience. A section on shelter has the recurring imagery of the banyan tree and its many twisted roots. Even the speech bubbles have significance — harsh or prejudiced words are given a tail like a

scorpion's to evoke their sting. Gentle words are encased in bubbles shaped like birds, and unspoken thoughts are given an icon to denote the mind's eye. Trying to work out what each of these symbols mean is part of the joy of the book. With this in mind it's rather a pity that the afterword should explain everything —this assumption that we need a translation makes me feel rather as if a layer of separation has been placed between the reader and the book.

The text itself, by Srividya Natarajan and S. Anand, is workmanlike, serving mostly as a background for the art. Bhimayana doesn't attempt a comprehensive biography of Ambedkar; what we get instead is a selection of important scenes from his life. At no point does Bhimayana attempt (or claim) objectivity. We are allowed to see the justifiable bitterness against the Hindu religion — at one point the text even makes a flippant comment about the priests' attempt to "purify" water touched by Dalits by using cow urine. The scorpion speech bubbles are occasionally applied to comments that are well-meaning, if ignorant and harmful.

Yet none of this is evidence of any kind of simplistic reading of caste. It's clear throughout that caste oppression is a complex, many-tentacled beast — Bhimrao faces discrimination from Muslims, Parsis and Christians as well as Hindus. If it's possible to draw from this book a child's narrative of good versus evil, this is because the simplest narratives are the most politically expedient. Bhimayana is always conscious of that, and of the sort of book it aspires to be.