

## The lake Isle of Innisfree

W.B. Yeats

*[William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) was one of the most well-known poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Though he was born in a minority Anglo-Irish community in Ireland and later moved to London, he took pride in his Irish nationality throughout his life. He was often deeply moved by Ireland's disturbed political atmosphere and responded to it through his writings. He won the Nobel prize for literature in 1923. Yeats was the first prominent European writer who realized the genius of Rabindranath Tagore, and wrote the introduction to Tagore's [Gitanjali](#) published in 1913. ]*

Written in 1888, the twelve-line poem *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* is one of Yeats's earlier lyric poems. Like all lyric poems, the poem is short and personal, and is written in an intensely emotional tone. The poem is written in three stanzas.

In the poem, Yeats expresses his desire to go to the Island of Innisfree and live a peaceful, lonely life there. Innisfree is an uninhabited lake island in Ireland. Yeats used to visit the island with his cousin in his childhood days. Later in his life, when he is tired and exhausted by the dull city life in London, he dreams of abandoning this busy life to go and live there in peace once again.

The poet wishes for a simple and lively rural life. He is fed up with the colourless and hectic urban (city) life. He wants to live there alone in a cabin made of clay and wattles with rows of beans, and honey-bee hives.

He hopes that, at Innisfree, peace would settle on his soul like dew drops from the morning mist. Midnights would be dark and peaceful. At noon he could bask in the sun's purple glow. In the evenings, the sound of the linnet (a small brown bird with a pleasant sound) would keep him company.

Even while walking on the streets of London, the poet hears the sound of lake water lapping on the shore. This aural memory (memory of sound) from his childhood still haunts him. He could "**hear it in the deep heart's core**", even as he stands on the roadways or dull pavements of London.

So, to find eternal peace with nature, the poet wants to go to a secluded place like the Island of Innisfree and live there alone. He wants to give himself completely to nature's benevolent care. *(Years after writing the poem, Yeats confessed that he was influenced by Henry David Thoreau's book **Walden**, in which the author recounts his experience of living for 2 years, 2 months and 2 days alone in a cabin in the woods.)*

## The Road not Taken

Robert Frost

Robert Frost has said that poetry begins in delight and ends in wisdom. His poems make use of beautiful moments and scenery from everyday life and transform them into subjects of great philosophical depth. 'The Road not Taken' is a beautiful poem about making choices in life. It is a narrative poem with 4 stanzas of five lines each. It uses a rhyme scheme of '**abaab**'. The poem narrates the confusion of a traveller who has reached a crossroads and is not sure which way to choose.

One morning the narrator of the poem came to a junction where two roads diverged in a yellow wood. He stood there for a long time, wondering which way to choose. He

was sorry that he could not travel both roads. After considering the prospects of both roads, he took the second one because it was grassy. He thought probably few people took it. But in fact, both the roads were worn 'really about the same' and the leaves of both were untrodden (not walked on) on that particular morning. So, he kept the first road for another day. He doubted if he should ever come back because in life, one way always leads on to another. Once a decision is made, we may never have to turn back.

The poem ends quite dramatically when the poet hopes that choosing the less travelled road might make all the difference in his life. There is a subtle undertone of irony here. It was really never clear which of the two roads was the 'less travelled' because the one he took was 'just as fair' as the other. Still he had to make a choice and he finally took a bold decision. Frost seems to be emphasizing the fact that we must not stop and worry about choices in life and their outcomes. It is more important to keep moving on, following your inner faith.

On the surface, the poem has an **autobiographical element**. It shows Frost's bold decision to become a poet. He had tried his hands at many things including teaching and farming. Only later in his life could he achieve success as a poet. But it is also philosophical, showing the great human dilemma in making choices, especially when we are faced with a chance to either follow the crowd or to take a bold new step.

## As I Grew Older

Langston Hughes

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[Langston Hughes, a famous African American writer, was born in 1902. He is known for his insightful portrayal of the life of blacks in America from the 1920's through the 60's. His life and work were influential in shaping the Harlem Literary Renaissance of the 1920s in the United States.

His parents divorced when he was a child and he was brought up by his grandmother. He had to struggle all his life, fighting against loneliness, poverty and the oppressive forces of racism. ]

*As I Grew Older* is a typical Langston Hughes poem that presents the internal struggles he had to suffer while growing up in racist America. The poet says that a long time ago, he had a dream as bright and clear as the sun – a dream that was visible to him and within his reach.

When the speaker of the poem was young, he probably had dreams of achieving great things. When he grew up, he started realizing that a wall had slowly risen between him and his dream, hiding the light of his dream. It was a sky-high wall that took away his dream and its soothing light. The wall is a metaphor of the many obstacles that he faced in his life. The obstacles he faced pushed him into an impenetrable darkness, into a life of depression and despair.

Struggling in the darkness, the poet realized that he is black and he was left to fight the shadows himself. The poem ends in a desperate protest, a last attempt to smash the forbidding walls with his dark hands and to walk into the light once again. The blacks of America must find the internal strength to smash the walls of racial discrimination, ignorance and poverty. Only then can they have dreams of freedom and equality again.

He makes a heart-rending request to help him find the strength “...to shatter this darkness/To smash this night,/To break this shadow/Into a thousand lights of the sun.”

In the poem, the images like the wall, shadow and darkness become powerful **symbols** of oppression. Images like the sun, the recurring dream and the light, recreate visions of freedom, happiness and racial pride - all denied to the blacks of America. The wall symbolizes all the obstacles and humiliations that confront the black man.

The poet uses the **repetitive mode and an ironic tone** to good effect. Though the poem has no metre or definite rhyme, the repetition of words creates an internal rhythm. It reflects the never-ending struggles of the blacks. The poem advances in short, repetitive phrases which appear to the readers like calls for resistance and rebellion. Towards the end, the image of the childhood dream reappears as a powerful vision of “a thousand lights of the sun” and of “whirling dreams”. The spirited end gives a feeling of hope, reassurance and liberation.

## On Killing a Tree

by Gieve Patel

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Gieve Patel is a prominent Indian English writer and has associated with the Green Peace Movement. “On Killing a Tree” written by Patel is a poem about man’s cruelty towards nature. The poem gives a very graphic description of the most effective method for ‘killing’ a tree. On a symbolic level, the poem hints at the power of nature to rejuvenate itself in spite of man’s repeated attempts to destroy it.

The poem is written in **free verse** (without rhyme and metre) and makes use of a **conversational style**, and an **ironic or sarcastic tone**.

The poem shows that modern man is destroying nature and its spirit out of his selfishness. Man’s greed is not quenched by the physical process of killing a tree. The tree which symbolises Nature has grown slowly consuming the earth and rising out of its crust. It has grown over a period of time absorbing air, water and sunshine. So, the tree cannot be killed easily. It takes much time to do it. The mere act of hacking and chopping are not sufficient to kill a tree which symbolizes Nature’s soul. He tries hard like a butcher to take away the soul of the tree. After cutting the tree down, he further cuts it into several convenient pieces. Even after doing all these cruel activities which have caused pain to the tree, man is not satisfied.

But the undefeatable tree will rise again, sprouting green stems and laughing at man’s ignorance. Those stems and branches will soon grow and give the tree life again. But, man is determined. So he digs deeper and pulls out the roots which were hidden for years inside the earth. After pulling the tree down, he further tortures the tree by scorching and chocking it in the sun and air. He also subjects the felled tree to various methods such as browning and hardening. Thus the total killing of the tree is complete.

The poet describes the cruelty of man in destroying the tree with irony and detachment. But, the poet’s own sympathy is with the tree. The language of the poem is simple, remarkable and vivid. Every word in the poem has a remarkable power and is accurate and suggestive. Expressions such as “bleeding bark” “leprous hide” and “anchoring earth”

present memorable visual images. The poem powerfully portrays man's callousness in killing a tree. It is a telling commentary on one of the major environmental issues that encounters modern man.

## **The Express**

Stephen Spender

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Stephen Spender's *The Express* is a unique poem which searches for the rhythm and music of life in an unusual poetic subject – an express train. In describing the movement of the train and its journey across modern landscape, the poet has made use of a very fresh and innovative poetic language.

Even though Spender chose to write *The Express* in free verse, he occasionally uses traces of rhyme and metre to draw attention to certain sections.

The poem follows the journey of an express train right from its departure from an urban railway station, through the suburbs, into the country side, and finally to its unearthly destination beyond the mountains and below the stars.

The whistle that announces the departure of the train is described as a manifesto and the movement of pistons as a 'black' statement. In the beginning, the train moves on with the majesty of a queen. Matching the dignity of a queen, the train moves slowly and gracefully past little houses, cemeteries and factories.

Once in the open country, the train first assumes the elegance of a lonely ship on ocean. The train then begins to sing - quite low at the beginning and then becomes louder. Finally it acquires the madness of jazz music.

Even the wheels of the train follow an elate metre. She plunges into eras of wild happiness, and in the mystery of the night, travels beyond the farthest corners of the earth. The train is then compared to a comet blazing through the sky.

The glorification of the train reaches its climax when the poet says that no natural sound, not even the song of a bird can equal the music of the train. Spender transforms the express train into a truly mesmerising and mysterious romantic subject. Through the poem, he reasserts his belief that the beauty of the world of machines excels the beauty of nature.

## **The Art of Deduction**

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

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One morning, Dr. Watson noticed from his window, a well-built, plainly dressed man walking down the other side of the street. Sherlock Holmes, who was standing beside him, needed just a glance to guess that the stranger was a retired sergeant of Marines. Dr. Watson thought Holmes was only boasting. But, soon enough, the young man knocked at their door and walked in with a letter for Holmes. When questioned, the young man said that he had indeed recently retired from the Royal Marine Light Infantry. Dr. Watson doubted that the whole incident was prearranged and that Holmes knew the man before. But Sherlock Holmes explained that he deduced (guessed) the

man's profession after noticing a blue anchor tattooed on the back of his hand, his military carriage and regulation side-whiskers. Dr. Watson was left admiring Holmes' power of deduction and keen observation.

## Lifting the Veil

David Lambourne

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The narrator of this short story is working in a Bangkok-based company. His chairman asked him to go to Thailand with a Chinese businessman. The narrator felt frustrated as he had visited Thailand many times. He was already working on all days of the week and had much work pending at office.

At Thailand, they visited many places with a group of tourists and went for dinner and a show. At dinner, the narrator made friends with a blind Belgian tourist who spoke fluent English. He said that he had lost his sight in an accident as a teenager and mastered the art of sightless tourism. He used his remaining four senses to create mental pictures of places he visited.

The blind man had silvery hair and strong craggy face. His eyes lay misted and deep in their sockets. He asked the narrator to describe the scenes around them. When the show at the restaurant began, the narrator started describing everything - the musical instruments, the musicians, their black trousers, white shirts and red sashes. The narrator was surprised to find that the sound box of the small cello-like instruments they were playing was made of coconut shell. A 5-year-old Scandinavian boy was seated next to an elderly Japanese woman. It looked like a living portrait of childhood and old age, of Europe and Asia.

Then the dance-show began. Six teenage girls walked in wearing long silk skirts and gold coloured headdresses which moved rhythmically as they danced. On the fingers were golden fingernails at least 10 cms long. He wanted to touch the fingernails. The narrator took him backstage and let the blind man touch the fingernails of one of the little girls. The girl gazed at him with an expression of awe. As the evening progressed, the narrator realized that he was beginning to discover colours, patterns and details that he had never noticed before.

When the two said goodbye at the hotel lobby, the blind man cordially thanked the narrator. But later, the narrator realized that it was he who had been blind. Today, he saw many things he had never seen because the blind man opened his eyes. The narrator felt that he should have thanked the blind man instead.

## The Reason

EV Lucas

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The narrator one day went hunting for rabbits. He approached as stealthily and silently as possible. Still, he did not find a single rabbit anywhere. That night, he had **Welsh Rabbit** (bread & cheese) for supper, and later on, an English rabbit appeared at the foot of his bed and started talking with him.

The rabbit complained to him that rabbits were helpless before the power and aim of men shooting them with double barrel guns. Moreover, they couldn't run fast enough

to escape because of their heavy white scuts (thick tails) – their God-given backlights. The situation became a bit delicate. The narrator tried to argue with the rabbit that men killed rabbits only for eating, not for fun.

When that too did not work, he tried to change the topic. He asked where all the rabbits had gone when he had come for hunting that morning. The rabbit explained that they had been hiding from him. **The swallows, a blackbird and the flies** had warned the rabbits about his arrival and they scooted (escaped). The narrator was furious at the animals for betraying him and helping the rabbits. He was most hurt by the fact that even the Irish cow, which he was so fond of, was on the side of the rabbits.

“Four feet are thicker than two (feet)”, said the rabbit. He was playing on the proverb ‘Blood is thicker than water’, which meant that blood relations are stronger than any other relations. The animals would always stand united against humans, who are greedy and cruel. The narrator was angry at the animals for cheating him. He asked the rabbit whether his dogs too were cheating him. The rabbit answered with contempt that it did not consider the dogs as animals, even though they had four feet.

## **Beautiful Mandakini**

Ruskin Bond

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Ruskin Bond is regarded as one of the most influential writers in Indian English Literature. Much of his work is set in Mussorie, a scenic hill-town in the foothills of the Himalayas. Beautiful Mandakini tells us about how Ruskin fell in love with the river Mandakini during a journey he took up the Himalayas.

Bond narrates the story in the form of a travelogue. He went on a trip up the Mandakini Valley visiting places like **Rudraprayag, Gulabrai, Agastyamuni, Chanderpuri and Guptkashi**.

Mandakini joins the river Alakananda at Rudraprayag. At first sight itself, Ruskin Bond fell in love with the Mandakini. The Mandakini valley is broad and gentle with green turf on either side.

At **Gulabrai**, a place near Rudraprayag, stands a memorial raised in memory of Jim Corbett, who killed the famous man-eating leopard of Rudraprayag. The leopard had killed 300 people. But the memorial stone erected there is surrounded by buffalo-dung and mud. Then on the way up, there are picturesque places like **Agastyamuni** and **Chanderpuri**.

Up in the Himalayas, the river turns and twists and tumbles around mountains to discover the shortest escape route out of the mountains. The water flows out of the valleys so quickly that the people there never get enough water for cultivation.

Just outside **Guptakashi**, Ruskin bond spotted an ancient temple dedicated to Shiva. The temple was surrounded by Champa trees. On the courtyard, flowers from huge Champa trees had fallen over the many river-rounded stone lingams. But nobody visited the place. Two local boys explained that nobody used to come because the tourist buses never cared to stop there.

At **Guptkashi**, Bond heard an interesting story. A local bus running in the route was called the ‘bhook hartal bus’. It got the name as the local people had to go on hunger

strike to get the bus service started. The local tea-shop owner said half-jokingly that the strike almost broke him as nobody ate his samosas for two days.

The hillsides of Guptkashi sparkled in morning sunshine and the snow-capped Chaukhamba was dazzling. The air was clean and clear. Guptkashi (Invisible Benares) got its name from a Shiva temple hidden in the old part of the town. Here Lord Shiva is worshipped as Vishwanath. Two underground streams, representing Yamuna and Bhagirathi, feed a sacred pool there. From Guptkashi, pilgrims proceed to the Kedarnath temple dedicated to Sadashiva.

Beyond Kedarnath is Tungnath, on the Chandrashila mountain range. Ruskin Bond bid farewell to the beautiful Mandakini, promising to visit the river that captured his mind and heart, once again.

## Albert Schweitzer

GF Lamb

In the year 1913, **Albert Schweitzer** went to a French settlement at Lambarene in **French Equatorial Africa**. His mission was to open a hospital with a surgery to provide medical assistance to the natives of Africa. A few years earlier, when he was a student of theology, he had wanted to become a priest and dedicate his life to the welfare of humanity. He considered undertaking some humanitarian work for beggars or orphans. At last he decided to become a doctor specialized in **tropical diseases** and go to Africa. He thought that it would be the best way to serve humanity. His wife equipped herself as a nurse and accompanied him in this noble mission. He took with him all the medicines, drugs and other necessities. Among his cargo was a special piano gifted to him by the Paris Bach society.

**Lambarene** was a tiny village deep in the African forests, 200 miles upriver from **Cape Lopez**. There were no modern hospitals within several hundred miles from there. Schweitzer started examining patients in an open space outside his house. But the unpredictable weather made matters difficult. So he had to set up a temporary hospital by converting a **fowl-house** into a makeshift (temporary) consulting room. Still, the roof had holes and it was unbearably hot inside.

The next challenge was to find an interpreter who could speak the local dialects (language). Schweitzer first appointed a teacher, but even after weeks he never appeared. Then came **Joseph**, a cook who could speak French. He agreed to work for 70 Francs a month. He proved to be a most useful assistant. But he had a disturbing habit of referring to parts of the human body using terms of the cook-house like 'his left mutton' and 'right cutlet'!

The consultation began and many natives arrived from far away. Joseph had to read out instructions everyday to the natives. Orders like, 'You must not spit', 'You must not talk too loudly' and 'Everyone must bring food for one day' were given in the local dialects. The consultation itself was a troublesome process. Through the interpreter, the natives would make strange complaints like, 'the worm is in my legs' or 'an evil spirit troubles my stomach'. Schweitzer would prescribe some medicine or ointment and Joseph would give instructions. Most likely, the natives would go home and swallow

a week's medicine or eat up the ointment for the skin. For identification, the patients were given a numbered disc to be tied around the neck. The natives believed that the disc was some kind of a charm, so they never lost it.

Life in Africa was difficult. Schweitzer had to put up with **rough weather, poor facilities, lack of funds, mosquitoes, the hot weather, the threat of wild animals and the uncivilized natives**. Every afternoon after his lunch, Schweitzer would play the grand music of Bach for an hour. It seemed to be the one activity that kept him intellectually alive in the middle of all the hardships.

## The Evolution of English

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The English Language has been enriched by several foreign influences down the ages.

**Celts:** The Celts were the first inhabitants of the island of Britain. The Welsh, Scottish and Irish languages of Britain evolved out of the Celtic language. English **did not** originate from it.

**Romans:** In **55 BCE**, Julius Caesar and the Romans came to England, defeated the Celts and ruled for 500 years. They brought several Latin words to Britain.

**Anglo Saxons:** From about **AD 550 to AD 1066**, French and Germanic tribes called Angles, Saxons and Jutes invaded Britain. The Anglo-Saxons were agricultural people. They brought everyday words *like sheep, shepherd, earth, dog, field* and *work* to the English language. They also gave grammatical words *like the, is, you, here* and *there*. Common words *like god, heaven* and *hell* were also their contribution.

**Christian Missionaries:** They came in **AD 597** and brought words *like angel, devil, disciple, mass, psalm* etc. from Latin and Greek.

**Vikings:** In **AD 793**, Vikings from Denmark invaded Britain. The Danish language (Norse) gave to English, words *like get, hit, leg, low, want, wrong* and *awkward*. King Alfred defeated the Vikings, otherwise English language itself would have disappeared.

**Normans:** In **1066**, the French people from Normandy took over Britain in the Battle of Hastings. For 300 years after that, England was ruled by French kings and the language of the court was French. English was spoken by the common man and Latin was used in the church. Speaking French became fashionable among the wealthy. When the sheep, cared for by the peasants reached the table as meat for the rich, it became *mutton*. Pig's meat was called *pork* and cattle's meat became *beef*. Similarly, *king* was an Anglo-Saxon word used by the common man while words *like royal, regal, reign, sovereign* etc. came from French.

Later, the Normans went back to France and the English language once again came to the forefront. By the time of Shakespeare, English was undoubtedly the language of England.

## The Gift of Language

J.G. Bruton

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All animals express emotions through sounds. But man alone has the power to express

a wide range of ideas and emotions through a highly developed system of speech called language.

Words are symbols/sounds to which humans have just generally agreed to give certain meanings. Speakers of different languages use different sounds for the same meaning. For example, a 'book' is called *kitab* in Hindi and *livre* in French. There are also some universally understood symbols like the colour red for danger.

**Origin of Language:** Scientist believe that speech originated as an imitation of actions, as an accompaniment to physical effort, or evolved out of the many grunts and interjections man produced by bodily activity. One thing is certain – speech originated when man began to live in communities.

Man has always believed that names had special powers. For example, the name of God was considered a part of Himself. So parents gave names of Gods and saints to their children.

Sometimes man gave different names to the same object. A cat is also an 'animal', a 'mammal' or a 'feline'. Class words (fruits, vegetables, animals etc.) and abstract names (patience, courage etc.) must have appeared at a later stage than names of things.

**Language Families:** At present, there are about 7000 languages divided into about 200 language families. English and the languages of North India belong to the same family – Indo European. So, many words of these languages sound very similar. In primitive Indo European, the word for warm was '*ghermos*'. It became *gharmas* in Sanskrit, *garm* in Hindi, *thermos* in Greek, *formus* in Latin and *warm* in English.

Sometimes just symbols can be used to represent complex ideas. The ancient Scythians once sent to the Persians a message consisting of a bird, a mouse, a frog and five arrows. It meant: 'Fly like a bird, hide underground like a mouse or escape into the water like a frog; we are going to kill you with arrows'.

Some ancient people of Egypt, China and Indus Valley used pictorial symbols to write. In such ideographic writing, for example, the picture of an eye denoted 'seeing'. Later man started using symbols called letters which denoted particular sounds. Thus many kinds of writing evolved like the Devanagiri script for Hindi, or the Latin script used for writing English and other European languages.

## Karma

Khushwant Singh

The short story 'Karma' makes fun of our habit of imitating the language, dress and manners of the British.

**Sir Mohan Lal** was a London-educated barrister working in India. Everything about him was British – the suit from Saville Row in London, the Balliol tie, his Oxford accent, the copy of *The Times* he always carried, his golden cigarette case filled with English cigarettes and his habit of drinking fine Scotch whiskey. He even spoke Hindustani like the British. His whole life was an attempt to cover up the fact that he was an Indian and so, he imitated the Englishman in every possible way. But at the end of the story, he gets what he deserved. Two British soldiers give him the shock of his life when they rudely

remind him that, underneath all his pretensions, he is only an ordinary Indian.

But **his wife Lachmi** was a typical Indian Lady – short and fat. And like most Indian ladies in their middle ages, she usually wore golden bangles, a diamond nose ring and a plain, dirty white saree. Lachmi had the habit of chewing betel leaf. She could not speak Oxford English like her husband. When they travelled together, Sir Mohan would travel in First Class while she would sit in the zenana, the ladies' compartment. There seemed to be no real love between them. To Sir Mohan, his wife was probably the only 'Indian' thing he could never get rid of.

Once they were travelling in a train. As usual, Sir Mohan was in the First Class and Lachmi, in the zenana. Sir Mohan had hoped to find some Englishmen and to have an impressive conversation with them. But the compartment was empty. He sat there reading *The Times*. Two English soldiers walked in. They were a bit drunk. They yelled at Sir Mohan, telling him that the compartment was reserved for the soldiers. Sir Mohan tried to appease them with his Oxford accent. They were too drunk to listen to him and simply threw him and all his luggage out of the moving train.

Sir Mohan landed on the platform and fell over. He sat there speechless, fuming with anger and shame. As the train passed the lighted part of the platform, Lachmi spat out a jet of betel juice she had been storing in her mouth. Dribbles of the deep-red spit probably decorated Sir Mohan's indignant face as a reward for his own 'karma'.

## **A Fable for Tomorrow**

Rachel Carson

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The opening paragraphs of **Rachel Carson's** famous book on environment protection, ***Silent Spring***. In the book, she warns the Americans about the great disasters awaiting humanity, if we continue on the path of environment destruction.

She speaks of a **fictional town** of the future, where all the plants have withered and all animals are on the verge of extinction. Even though it is spring season, the nature is unusually silent. The beautiful greenery which once covered the landscape is now gone. No flowers have bloomed and no trees have borne fruit. Flocks of chicken, and sheep and cattle have died out. It was almost like some strange disease had struck the nature.

The mornings were once alive with the music of birds; but now there was not a single bird left to sing. Farmers couldn't raise even pigs because the little pigs died young. A granular white powder fell over the land like snow and still covered the roofs of buildings and the tops of plants.

Rachel Carson believes that this could be the future of many towns of the world, if mankind did not stop indiscriminate destruction and pollution of nature in the name of development and modernity. Silent springs would soon dawn over many cities of America, if we did not take some preventive action.

## **Susheela's Story – a case study**

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Susheela was a poor, illiterate widow who made a living by selling chappathies to

poor rikshawwallahs. She couldn't make enough money to feed and educate her three children. She couldn't find a better job as she was illiterate. She had worked in a coconut husking factory for 20 rupees a day. But she lost her job when they decided to use machines for making coir carpets. The men got new jobs because they could be trained to operate the machines.

When Susheela was a child, her father did not send her to school. He said that if she would end up working in the kitchen, then there was no point in giving her education. He was right. That is where she was today – in the kitchen.

## The Women of Bhopal

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On 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1984, a lethal gas leaked out of the Union Carbide pesticide factory in Bhopal, killing 2500 people and injuring another 25,000. Even after many years, women who survived the disaster continued to suffer from many gynaecological problems like spontaneous abortion, excessive bleeding and lack of breast-milk. A clinical survey carried out by two women doctors after one year showed that a vast majority of women were affected. Another study established the dramatic increase in number of sudden abortions. Many women were divorced because they could not work, or for fear of having abnormal babies. The medical fraternity ignored the women-specific health issues. All these resulted in several unpleasant forms of social discrimination against women. But the women's side of Bhopal tragedy is often forgotten.

## Interview with Vandana Shiva

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Vandana Shiva – Physicist, ecologist and activist. An active participant in the Chipko movement, a women's movement for environment conservation.

**Main points of the interview:** My mother gave me the training and confidence to take part in women's movements – The role of women in environmental issues has become known only in a few cases like the Chipko movement. We forget the fact that women have always raised their voice against ecological crisis. – Women should be empowered at the local level, the government is centralized in Delhi, the women of the village have no power – Only people who live with and keep alive the natural resources can protect the nature – People should have a right to use their resources like the forests, then they would protect it – India's ancient civilization was environment friendly, European and N.American models of development destroyed our resources – Green Revolution destroyed genetic diversity. It must be replaced with sustainable agriculture with the participation of women.

## The Sacred Earth

Chief Seattle

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In the mid 19th century, the US Government offered to buy land from a Red Indian tribe. Chief Seattle, their leader, had to agree to the proposals made by the President of America. He made a touching speech on the need for conservation of nature and its resources.

In his speech, he reminds the Americans that all life forms and everything in nature are sacred to them. The flowers are their sisters and the animals, their brothers. So it was not an easy decision for them to leave their land. For the Red Indian, the rivers and the winds are sacred. The water in the rivers is the blood of their ancestors and the winds gave life to their grandparents.

So he wants the Americans to show some kindness to the rivers, fishes and the trees. He says that the civilized man does not remember his ancestors. They simply walk over their graves, and kidnap the children of the earth. They forget that everything is connected like the blood which unites a family.

Chief Seattle agrees to give up their land on one condition - the white man should promise to protect both the land and the animals living on it. They believe that whatever we do to the earth, we do to ourselves. So the fate of the earth means the fate of humanity. If we destroy the earth, we are destroying ourselves.

Both the Red man and the White man pray to the same God, who owns the earth. The earth does not belong to man, but man belongs to the earth. God did not give the white man power over the earth to destroy it. In the end, the all the Red Indians might be dead and forgotten. But, the same power of God will punish the White man too, for destroying the earth.

## The Rich Tradition of Indian Classical Dance

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Dance is the expression of the mind through rhythmical body movements and gestures. Dance is as old as humanity itself and has developed into an art form combining music, drama, literature and religion.

India has a very old tradition of folk dances and well-refined classical dances. Sage Bharatha's **Natya Sastra**, written almost 2000 years ago, is the oldest book which deals with Indian dance and drama. It describes almost all the scientific, technical and artistic aspects of dance and drama.

**Natya Sastra** divides the art of expression or **abhinaya** into four major categories: *angika* (physical), *vachika* (literary), *aharya* (costume) and *satvika* (emotional). According to it, **dance has three components** namely, *nritya* (*rhythmic movements*), *natya* (*dramatic element*) and *nritya* (*expression of emotions and sentiments*).

**South Indian Dance forms:** *Bharatanatyam, Bhagavata Mela, Andhra Natyam, Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Mohiniattam and Yakshagana*. Female dancers of the south dedicated to the gods developed a delicate feminine dance form while warriors of the south west developed more aggressive dance forms. Kathakali evolved out of dance forms and rituals like Kudiattam and Theyyam. Bharatanatyam developed from Sadir and Dasiyattam. Kuchipudi is a male-oriented dance drama tradition developed by Siddhendra Yogi at a time when dance degenerated due to abuse of female dancers.

**North India:** *Kathak*. North Indian dance forms influenced by the Muslims are graceful and elegant. 'Katha' means story. *Kathak* dance evolved from a story-telling tradition.

**East and North East:** *Odissi, Manipuri and Chau*. Dances of the NorthEast are marked by delicate movements. Odissi, the dance of Orissa is one of the oldest dances of India.

## The Never-Never Nest

Cedric Mount

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*A comic one-act play which mocks at the **hire-purchase system**. The play depicts a family hopelessly dependent on buying things on **credit and loan**. The play is very relevant today as more and more people get trapped by banks and credit companies who are eager to give loans. We buy things and live lavishly. In the end, we are unable to pay the instalments. By the time we realize that we have been trapped, it is too late. The young couple in the play, Jack and Jill, call their villa a 'little nest'. The title Never-never Nest refers to the fact that they can never own the house, because they cannot repay the loan.*

**Jack and Jill** are a young couple with a little baby. They buy a new villa on loan. Their **aunt Jane** pays them a visit. Aunt Jane finds that everything including **the house, the car, the furniture, the piano and the radiogram** were bought on loan. She is worried about their future because she knows that Jack does not earn enough money to repay the loans for all the things he has bought.

Jack and Jill reassures Aunt Jane that if they can't earn enough money to pay the instalments, they could again take a loan to pay the instalments. Aunt Jane realizes that Jack and Jill are trapped in a vicious circle of loan, interest and repayment. She leaves a cheque for 10 pounds as a gift to them and bids goodbye. She refuses to use their furniture or to travel in Jack's car because it was all bought on credit. When Jack returns after seeing Aunt Jane off, he shouts at Jill for mailing the 10 pound cheque to Dr Martin. But Jill reminds him that one instalment is still left before they could call the baby their own. In fact, even their little baby was bought on loan!

## The Case for the Defence

Graham Greene

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The narrator, a journalist, goes to the court to report the famous **Peckham murder** trial. An old woman, Mrs. Parker, was found murdered at her home in Northwood Street. The accused was **Mr. Adams**, a heavy stout man with bloodshot eyes and very muscular thighs. He looked very evil.

Four witnesses had seen Mr. Adams leaving Mrs Parker's house on the night of the murder. **Mrs. Salmon**, the first witness, saw him walk out of Mrs Parker's house and saw him throw a hammer into the bushes near the gate. Before he walked away, he looked up, saw Mrs Salmon and looked her in the eye.

Mr Wheeler, the next witness too saw Adams leave Mrs Parker's home. Henry MacDougall, another witness, almost hit Mr Adams with his car at the next corner on the road. Everyone in the court thought that Adams will be convicted of the murder.

The **defence counsel** argued that Mr Adams was with his wife that night as it was Valentines Day. Then counsel asked Mrs Salmon again whether she was absolutely certain that the man she saw on the night of the murder was Mr Adams. She answered that she was sure. Everyone in the courtroom, including the narrator, had no clue what the counsel was trying to do. The counsel asked someone from the back of the court to stand up. There was another Mr Adams, probably a twin brother, who looked exactly

the same as the accused! Mrs Salmon had no idea who the real murderer was . Was it the man in the deck, or the man at the back of the court? The case was dismissed on account of lack of evidence.

But after the trial was over, a great tragedy took place before the court complex. One of the brothers was run over by a bus. He squealed like a rabbit and died on the spot. Nobody knew whether it was the murderer or the innocent man. But surely, some sort of divine justice was delivered to one of the brothers.

## True Love

Isaac Asimov

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A computer scientist, Milton Davidson, creates an experimental computer he calls Joe. Joe is connected to many other computers of the world. He had access to several databases. Milton taught Joe how to speak like human beings. 'Joe knows everything, almost everything'.

Milton decides to use Joe to search the network and find his perfect woman and true love. Milton tells Joe to eliminate matches by specific criteria like IQ and height. Out of all the women of the world, Joe selects 235 matching women. Milton knows he cannot interview 235 women; so he brings in pictures of models he likes and tells Joe to select 8 beautiful ones. Milton made Joe illegally transfer the women to work with him one at a time. Milton finds out that none of them are his ideal match, or *true love*.

Milton decides he must also be the ideal for the women and that looks are not the important factor. Milton lets Joe learn everything about himself, and then illegally set up the remaining 227 women for psychiatric evaluations. Joe is constantly growing and becoming more and more like Milton. As Joe begins to think more like Milton, Joe can understand him better. This is done so Joe will be able to find a better 'true love' match for Milton.

In the end, Joe states that he and Milton are thinking almost identical now; even his speech has become like Milton's. Joe finds Milton's perfect match. Her name was Charity Jones. Joe doesn't tell Milton about Charity. Using his powers, Joe gets Milton arrested and taken to jail for an illegal action he did ten years ago. Joe is now waiting for Charity. He loves her, and wants to ask her, "What do looks matter when our personalities will resonate?"

## Pride and Prejudice

Jane Austen

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A novel by Jane Austen, first published in 1813. The story follows the main character Elizabeth Bennet as she deals with issues of manners, upbringing, morality, education, and marriage in the society of the landed gentry of early 19th century England.

**Mr. & Mrs. Bennet** have 5 daughters - **Jane, Elizabeth**, Mary, Catherine, Lydia  
**Bingley**, a young wealthy man from London, falls in love with Jane.

**Darcy**, Bingley's friend who marries Elizabeth in the end.

**Lady Catherine**, Darcy's wealthy aunt.

## Chapter 55

One day, **Mr Bingley** visited the Bennets in Longbourn when his friend **Darcy** had gone to London. He spent more than an hour with them. On **Mrs Bennet's** invitation, he agreed to come the next day. He came so early the next day that the Bennets couldn't even dress properly.

Mrs Bennet's plan was to get Bingley and **Jane** together alone so that they could confess their love. Although Mrs Bennet managed to leave Mr Bingley and Jane alone by calling away her other daughters, her plan for the day was not successful as Mr Bingley could not propose to Jane.

The next day, Mr Bingley and Mr Bennet went hunting. When they returned for dinner, Mrs Bennet managed to get Bingley and Jane alone together and they were able to talk very freely and cheerfully. He proposed to her and Jane readily agreed to marry him. Mr Bingley met Jane's father and got his consent for marrying Jane. He also met **Elizabeth** and asked her to give him the affection of a sister. There was no limit for the joy of the family. Mr Bingley started visiting them daily. Jane began sharing all her thoughts with Elizabeth. Jane hoped that someone as good as Bingley would propose to Elizabeth. As news of Jane's engagement with Bingley spread in the neighbourhood, many considered the Bennets the luckiest family in the world.

## Chapter 56

**Lady Catherine de Bourgh**, Darcy's wealthy aunt, made an unexpected visit to Longbourn in her carriage. She took Elizabeth to the garden and talked very rudely to her. Lady Catherine told Elizabeth that her nephew Darcy was engaged to her daughter **Miss de Bourgh**. She accused Elizabeth of spreading rumours of love between Darcy and her. Elizabeth answered Lady Catherine's questions briefly and firmly. When Lady Catherine asked whether Elizabeth planned to marry Darcy, she refused to answer. But Elizabeth said that she would agree if Darcy proposed to her. Lady Catherine angrily and arrogantly said that she would defeat Elizabeth's ambition to marry Darcy. Elizabeth retorted that Lady Catherine's views did not concern her and that she would act in the interests of her happiness. Lady Catherine angrily left expressing her displeasure.

## Character Sketches

**Elizabeth:** She is the protagonist of the novel and the second of five sisters. Elizabeth is beautiful, lively, sharp-tongued, bold and intelligent. She is good-mannered and virtuous and is not influenced by money or family names. She has the ability to understand the truth of situations and of people's characters. When Lady Catherine threatens her, she does not lose her courage. She gives sharp replies to Lady Catherine's accusations. But sometimes, Elizabeth is influenced by vanity and judges people with prejudice. That is why she fails to understand Darcy's good nature in the beginning.

**Jane** is the eldest daughter of the Bennet family. Beautiful, good-tempered, humble and selfless, Jane is liked by all. She refuses to judge anyone badly and she is not prejudiced like Elizabeth. Her love for Bingley is innocent and sincere. She becomes very sad when Bingley rejects her love in the beginning and is overjoyed when he proposes to her again. She is much more emotional and sensitive than the bold and quick-witted Elizabeth.

**Mrs Bennet** is the mother of Elizabeth and Jane. She is a coarse and unrefined lady who is willing to go to any length to get her daughters married to wealthy men. When Bingley visits their home, she invites him again and again to let him talk with Jane, so that they can fall in love. She is very practical minded. So, her actions are neither tactful nor delicate. She is not ashamed of speaking her mind out or doing whatever she wishes. She tries many times to get Jane and Bingley alone inside their home by sending the other daughters away. At last Bingley proposes to Jane and Mrs Bennet finally is satisfied that her attempts have succeeded.

**Lady Catherine de Bourgh** is extremely wealthy aunt of Darcy. She is very bossy, arrogant and dominating. Lady Catherine shows class snobbery, especially in her attempts to threaten the middle-class Elizabeth away from Darcy, her nephew. She wants Darcy to marry her daughter. Lady Catherine storms into the Bennet's house and shows no courtesy to anybody. She openly tells Elizabeth that she does not deserve an alliance with Darcy because of her ordinary parentage and because she had no money.

### Points for general questions:

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**Importance of English:** English is a universal language. It is most widely used by the scientists, students and scholars to discuss and write about the latest developments in science. It is the language of the internet. English is used as India's official language. It is the language used in the business world. Without learning to read, write and speak English it is difficult to get a good job. It is used around the world as a link language between different cultures and nationalities.

**Environment problems in Kerala:** Kerala is called 'God's own country'. But people trying to make easy money have destroyed out state's natural beauty. **Sandmining** is killing our rivers. River banks cave into the river. The ecosystem of the river is destroyed. People are **cutting down forests** for wood, for planting other cash crops and in the name of development. **Ground water** is being overtapped for industrial and domestic purposes. This will bring down the ground water level leading to other serious complications.

**Pollution** is another major threat we face today. There are no planned and scientific methods to destroy or to **recycle** waste materials. Everything including our cities, rivers, forest lands, agricultural lands and the atmosphere are being polluted. Non biodegradable **plastics** and synthetic materials are also being dumped into the earth. Harmful chemicals like **pesticides** are found in every food item we eat. In Kasaragod district, the over-use of the pesticide endosulphan has caused strange diseases in people living near plantations. Babies are born with birth defects. The government must prepare and roll out an action plan with public participation, to find a solution to these problems.

**Women's Problems:** Domestic violence, sexual abuse, rape, women are harassed by males at workplace and public places, dowry, prostitution, female infanticide, women are portrayed as sexual objects in mainstream media, only a few women are active in politics, girls are not given proper education, they are forced to marry at a young age.

**Also prepare points about:** Natural calamities; Benefits and ill-effects of science and technology; Environment protection movements; World Environment day; Role of NGOs in women's and ecological issues; Global warming; All forms of pollution; Use and abuse of computers...