

English First Additional Language Paper 2: Literature

Short Stories

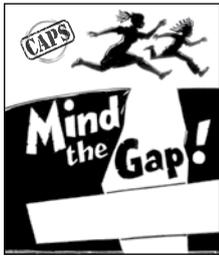
Study Guide

Grade
12



basic education

Department:
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**Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)
Grade 12 English First Additional Language Mind the
Gap study guide for Short Stories
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The first edition published in 2012 for the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) Grade 12 Mind the Gap study guides for Accounting, Economics, Geography and Life Sciences; the second edition, published in 2014, aligned these titles to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and added more titles to the series, including the CAPS Grade 12 English First Additional Language **Mind the Gap study guide for Short Stories**
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Ministerial foreword

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has pleasure in releasing the second edition of the *Mind the Gap* study guides for Grade 12 learners. These study guides continue the innovative and committed attempt by the DBE to improve the academic performance of Grade 12 candidates in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examination.

The study guides have been written by teams of experts comprising teachers, examiners, moderators, subject advisors and coordinators. Research, which began in 2012, has shown that the *Mind the Gap* series has, without doubt, had a positive impact on grades. It is my fervent wish that the *Mind the Gap* study guides take us all closer to ensuring that no learner is left behind, especially as we celebrate 20 years of democracy.

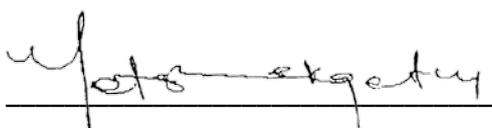
The second edition of *Mind the Gap* is aligned to the 2014 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). This means that the writers have considered the National Policy pertaining to the programme, promotion requirements and protocols for assessment of the National Curriculum Statement for Grade 12 in 2014.

The *Mind the Gap* CAPS study guides take their brief in part from the 2013 National Diagnostic report on learner performance and draw on the Grade 12 Examination Guidelines. Each of the *Mind the Gap* study guides defines key terminology and offers simple explanations and examples of the types of questions learners can expect to be asked in an exam. Marking memoranda are included to assist learners to build their understanding. Learners are also referred to specific questions from past national exam papers and examination memos that are available on the Department's website – www.education.gov.za.

The CAPS editions include Accounting, Economics, Geography, Life Sciences, Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy and Physical Sciences. The series is produced in both English and Afrikaans. There are also nine English First Additional Language (EFAL) study guides. These include EFAL Paper 1 (Language in Context); EFAL Paper 3 (Writing) and a guide for each of the Grade 12 prescribed literature set works included in Paper 2. These are Short Stories, Poetry, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *A Grain of Wheat*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Nothing but the Truth* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Please remember when preparing for Paper 2 that you need only study the set works you did in your EFAL class at school.

The study guides have been designed to assist those learners who have been underperforming due to a lack of exposure to the content requirements of the curriculum and aim to mind-the-gap between failing and passing, by bridging the gap in learners' understanding of commonly tested concepts, thus helping candidates to pass.

All that is now required is for our Grade 12 learners to put in the hours required to prepare for the examinations. Learners, make us proud – study hard. We wish each and every one of you good luck for your Grade 12 examinations.



Matsie Angelina Motshekga, MP
Minister of Basic Education
2015



Matsie Angelina Motshekga, MP
Minister of Basic Education

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Dear Grade 12 learner

This *Mind the Gap* study guide helps you to prepare for the end-of-year Grade 12 English First Additional Language (EFAL) Literature exam.

There are three exams for EFAL: Paper 1: Language in Context; Paper 2: Literature; and Paper 3: Writing.

There are nine great EFAL *Mind the Gap* study guides which cover Papers 1, 2 and 3.

Paper 2: Literature includes the study of novels, drama, short stories and poetry. A *Mind the Gap* study guide is available for each of the prescribed literature titles. Choose the study guide for the set works you studied in your EFAL class at school.

This study guide focuses on the eight prescribed short stories examined in Paper 2: Literature. **You will need to study all eight short stories for the exam:**

1. *Manhood* by John Wain
2. *The Luncheon* by W. Somerset Maugham
3. *The Soft Voice of the Serpent* by Nadine Gordimer
4. *Relatives* by Chris van Wyk
5. *The Coffee-cart Girl* by Es'kia Mphahlele
6. *The Dube Train* by Can Themba
7. *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* by James Thurber
8. *The Sisters* by Pauline Smith

How to use this study guide

There is one chapter for each of the short stories. Each chapter includes a summary, a brief statement of the importance of the title, and the themes. More detail is given on how the story is told by examining:

- Setting;
- Structure and plot development;
- Characterisation;
- Style;
- Narrator and point of view;
- Diction and figurative language; and
- Tone and mood.

All of the above information is also summarised in a set of notes. Use these notes to hold the eight short stories clearly in your mind.

You can test your understanding of each short story by completing the activities, and using the answers to mark your own work. The activities are based on exam extracts.

Learn all of the vocabulary lists for each short story at the end of each chapter.



	Pay special attention		Hints to help you remember a concept or guide you in solving problems		Activities with questions for you to answer
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Top 7 study tips



- 1.** Break your learning up into manageable sections. This will help your brain to focus. Take short breaks between studying one section and going onto the next.
- 2.** Have all your materials ready before you begin studying a section – pencils, pens, highlighters, paper, glass of water, etc.
- 3.** Be positive. It helps your brain hold on to the information.
- 4.** Your brain learns well with colours and pictures. Try to use them whenever you can.
- 5.** Repetition is the key to remembering information you have to learn. Keep going over the work until you can recall it with ease.
- 6.** Teach what you are learning to anyone who will listen. It is definitely worth reading your revision notes aloud.
- 7.** Sleeping for at least eight hours every night, eating healthy food and drinking plenty of water are all important things you need to do for your brain. Studying for exams is like exercise, so you must be prepared physically as well as mentally.

On the exam day

- 1.** Make sure you bring pens that work, sharp pencils, a rubber and a sharpener. Make sure you bring your ID document and examination admission letter. Arrive at the exam venue at least an hour before the start of the exam.
- 2.** Go to the toilet before entering the exam room. You don't want to waste valuable time going to the toilet during the exam.
- 3.** You must know at the start of the exam which two out of the four sections of the Paper 2 Literature exam you will be answering. Use the 10 minutes' reading time to read the instructions carefully.
- 4.** Break each question down to make sure you understand what is being asked. If you don't answer the question properly you won't get any marks for it. Look for the key words in the question to know how to answer it. You will find a list of question words on pages xiv and xv of this study guide.
- 5.** Manage your time carefully. Start with the question you think is the easiest. Check how many marks are allocated to each question so you give the right amount of information in your answer.
- 6.** Remain calm, even if the question seems difficult at first. It will be linked with something you have covered. If you feel stuck, move on and come back if time allows. Do try and answer as many questions as possible.
- 7.** Take care to write neatly so the examiners can read your answers easily.



Overview of the English First Additional Language Paper 2: Literature Exam

In the Paper 2 Literature exam, you need to answer questions from two sections. Choose the two sections that you know best:

- Section A: Novel
- Section B: Drama
- Section C: Short stories
- Section D: Poetry

A total of **70 marks** is allocated for Paper 2, which means **35 marks for each section you choose**.

You will have **two hours** for this exam.

Here is a summary of the Paper 2 Literature exam paper:

Question number	Title of novel	Type of question	Number of marks
Section A: Novel <i>If you choose Section A, answer ONE question. Choose the question for the book you have learnt.</i>			
1.	<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Contextual	35
2.	<i>Lord of the Flies</i>	Contextual	35
3.	<i>A Grain of Wheat</i>	Contextual	35
Section B: Drama <i>If you choose Section B, answer ONE question. Choose the question for the play you have learnt.</i>			
4.	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Contextual	35
5.	<i>Nothing but the Truth</i>	Contextual	35
Section C: Short stories <i>If you choose Section C, answer BOTH questions. You will not know exactly which short stories are included until the exam. TWO stories will be set. Answer the questions set on BOTH short stories.</i>			
6.1	Short story	Contextual	17 or 18
6.2	Short story	Contextual	17 or 18
Section D: Poetry <i>If you choose Section D, answer BOTH questions. You will not know exactly which poems are included until the exam. TWO poems will be set. Answer the questions set on BOTH poems.</i>			
7.1	Poem	Contextual	17 or 18
7.2	Poem	Contextual	17 or 18



- You don't have to answer all the sections in Paper 2.
- Before the exam starts you must know which two sections you are going to answer.
- When the exam starts, find your two chosen sections.
- Make sure to number your answers correctly – according to the numbering system used in the exam paper – for the two sections you've chosen.
- Start each section on a new page.

What is a contextual question?

In a contextual question, you are given an extract (about 20 lines) from the short story. You then have to answer questions based on the extract. Some answers you can find in the extract. Other questions will test your understanding of other parts of the short story: its plot, characters, symbols and themes. Some questions ask for your own opinion about the short story.

What are the examiners looking for?

Examiners will assess your answers to the contextual questions based on:

- Your understanding of the literal meaning of the short story. You need to identify information that is clearly given in the short story.
- Your ability to reorganise information in the short story. For example, you may be asked to summarise key points, or state the similarities or differences between two characters.
- Your ability to provide information that may not be clearly stated in the text, using what you already know about the short story. This process is called inference. This may include explaining how a figure of speech affects your understanding of the short story, explaining themes or comparing the actions of different characters.
- Your ability to make judgements about aspects of the short story, and make your own opinions based on information given in the short story. This process is called evaluation. For example, you may be asked if you agree with a statement, or to discuss a character's motive for doing something.
- Your ability to respond to the characters in the short story and how it is written on an emotional level. This is called appreciation. For example, you may be asked how you think a certain character feels, or what you would have done if you were in their situation. You may be asked to discuss how the writer's style helps to describe what a character is feeling.

Question words

Here are examples of question types found in the exam.

Question type	What you need to do
Literal: Questions about information that is clearly given in the text or extract from the text	
Name characters/places/things ...	Write the specific names of characters, places, etc.
State the facts/reasons/ideas ...	Write down the information without any discussion or comments.
Give two reasons for/why ...	Write two reasons (this means the same as 'state').
Identify the character/reasons/theme ...	Write down the character's name, state the reasons.
Describe the place/character/what happens when ...	Write the main characteristics of something, for example: What does a place look/feel/smell like? Is a particular character kind/rude/aggressive ...
What does character x do when ...	Write what happened – what the character did.
Why did character x do ...	Given reasons for the character's action according to your knowledge of the plot.
Who is/did ...	Write the name of the character.
To whom does xx refer ...	Write the name of the relevant character/person.
Reorganisation: Questions that need you to bring together different pieces of information in an organised way.	
Summarise the main points/ideas ...	Write the main points, without a lot of detail.
Group the common elements ...	Join the same things together.
Give an outline of	Write the main points, without a lot of detail.
Inference Questions that need you to interpret (make meaning of) the text using information that may not be clearly stated. This process involves thinking about what happened in different parts of the text; looking for clues that tell you more about a character, theme or symbol; and using your own knowledge to help you understand the text.	
Explain how this idea links with the theme x ...	Identify the links to the theme.
Compare the attitudes/actions of character x with character y ...	Point out the similarities and differences.
What do the words ... suggest/reveal about /what does this situation tell you about ...	State what you think the meaning is, based on your understanding of the text.
How does character x react when ... Describe how something affected ... State how you know that character x is ...	Write down the character's reaction/ what the character did/felt.
What did character x mean by the expression ...	Explain why the character used those particular words.

Is the following statement true or false ?	Write 'true' or 'false' next to the question number. You must give a reason for your answer.
Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence (multiple choice question).	A list of answers is given, labelled A–D. Write only the letter (A, B, C or D) next to the question number.
Complete the following sentence by filling in the missing words ...	Write the missing word next to the question number.
Quote a line from the extract to prove your answer.	Write the relevant line of text using the same words and punctuation you see in the extract. Put quotation marks (“ ” inverted commas) around the quote.
Evaluation Questions that require you to make a judgement based on your knowledge and understanding of the text and your own experience.	
Discuss your view/a character's feelings/a theme ...	Consider all the information and reach a conclusion.
Do you think that ...	There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer to these questions, but you must give a reason for your opinion based on information given in the text.
Do you agree with ...	
In your opinion, what ...	
Give your views on ...	
Appreciation Questions that ask about your emotional response to what happens, the characters and how it is written.	
How would you feel if you were character x when ...	There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer to these questions, but you must give a reason for your opinion based on information given in the text.
Discuss your response to ...	
Do you feel sorry for ...	
Discuss the use of the writer's style, diction and figurative language, dialogue ...	To answer this type of question, ask yourself: Does the style help me to feel/imagine what is happening/what a character is feeling? Why/why not? Give a reason for your answer.

Manhood

by John Wain

John Wain was born in England in 1925 and became a university lecturer before he became a writer. He wrote poetry, plays, short stories and novels. He mainly wrote about ordinary people and their problems. His criticism of society resulted in him being called one of the 'angry young men' of the 1950-60s. He died in 1994.

1. Summary

There are three characters in the story: Mr Willison, Mrs Willison and their thirteen-year-old son, Rob. Mr Willison is determined that Rob should become good at sports and develop his body, because he never had that chance when he was young. Mrs Willison doesn't agree with this plan.

The story begins when the father and son are going for a bike ride and the father pushes his son to cycle further, even though the boy is tired and wants to rest. He encourages the boy by saying there is a surprise waiting for him at home – he has bought a boxing “punch-ball” so that his son can practise boxing. The boy is exhausted when they return home. The mother is annoyed with the father as she feels that he is pushing the boy too hard.

The father wants Rob to train with the “punch-ball” so that he can get strong enough to be selected for the rugby team at school. Rob tells him that the team has already been chosen and he has not been selected. The father's disappointment is relieved when Rob says that he has been selected to box for the school instead. The mother is very angry that her husband wants the boy to box, as she feels that it is a dangerous sport. The father, however, is very happy about it and looks forward to the boxing tournament with great excitement. He puts all his energy into training his son every day.

On the day of the boxing tournament Rob complains of stomach pains. His mother wants to get a doctor but, instead of calling the doctor, the father phones one of Rob's teachers and discovers that the school does not do boxing. The story ends with Mr Willison realising that Rob has lied about the boxing tournament.



John Wain



2. Title

vocab

Manhood: The state of being an adult man, rather than a boy.

Masculinity: Having qualities traditionally associated with men.

The story title, *Manhood*, points to the main **theme** of the story – questioning what **manhood** and **masculinity** mean. Different versions of masculinity are offered in the story. On the one hand we have the father’s version, which sees manhood in terms of physical strength and skill. Contrasted with that is the version that the father was offered when he was young. This involved a man working hard and getting qualifications so that he could have a secure job. The mother, however, doesn’t mind that her husband is not “manly” and thinks that her son should not be pushed so hard physically as he is still only a boy.

3. Themes

Besides the theme of ‘**manhood**’, another theme is how people’s **failure to communicate** openly and clearly can lead to unfortunate events. The theme of lack of communication is evident when Mr Willison shows no insight into the fact that he should not force his own will on Rob and live his dreams through him.

Another main theme in the story is that the boy is **dominated by the power of his father**. But Rob is too young and immature to stand up to his father, so he tried to please him, even though he is deceitful in doing so.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The story starts with Mr Willison and Rob taking a bicycle ride in the country. This event shows how the father pushes his son beyond his physical limits. He forces Rob to continue riding even when the boy is exhausted. The rest of the story takes place in the home of the Willisons, where the tension between Mr and Mrs Willison rises.

4.2 Structure and plot development

From the start of the story it is clear that Mr Willison has an inferiority complex (feels that he is a failure) because of his lack of training in sports when he was young, and that he was not able to develop his physique (his physical body). He becomes obsessed with the idea that Rob will only become a man by being good at sports. With this in mind he constantly advises, instructs and encourages his son to do the things he never had the chance to do when he was young.

Mr Willison puts Rob under a lot of pressure to exercise and train. Rob is passive and does not stand up to his father, but Mrs Willison does not like it. She complains about it and tries to protect her son. This creates the **rising tension** in the story. The **complication** in the story is that Rob’s mother and father have opposing ideas about what is best for Rob. This creates **conflict** in the relationship between them. An example of this is when each of the parents talks of “my big night”. To the mother, “my big night” means the night her son was born, the most important event in her life. This **contrasts** with the father, whose “my big night” means the night his son will take part in a boxing tournament and make him proud. He feels he is getting a second chance to live his life again, through his son.

The **climax** of the story is the day of the tournament, when Rob complains of stomach pains just before the tournament. He and his mother think that he is suffering from appendicitis (infection of the appendix). Instead of getting the doctor the father phones one of Rob’s teachers only to discover that the school does not do boxing. Clearly, Rob has lied to his father.

There is no **resolution** to this story as we are not told what the father says to his son after finding out the truth about the boxing tournament. The story ends with an **anti-climax**, as the father “put down the telephone, hesitated, then turned and began slowly to climb the stairs”. The words “hesitated” and “slowly” tell us clearly of his disappointment when he realises that his son has been lying to him. It could also be that he realises why Rob lied to him and he climbed the stairs in a sad and accepting way. He was not angry with his son but is perhaps embarrassed for having forced his son to lie when Rob found himself in such a difficult situation.

4.3 Characterisation

There are three characters in the story:

Mr Willison is the **protagonist** in the story, as he is the central character and controls the actions that take place. Mrs Willison opposes his plans and actions, so she is the **antagonist** in the story, while Rob is caught in the middle between his parents.

Mr Willison wants the best for Rob, but his attitude causes Rob to resort to deceit and telling lies in the end, even though he tries to please his father. Rob is passive and submissive – he doesn’t stand up for himself but knows he will get support from his mother against his father’s plans. It could be argued that he is too scared and weak.

Mr Willison is strong-willed and obsessed with training Rob. This one-sided view stops him from realising that Rob is not interested in sport. If he was a more mature and sensitive father he might have understood his son better and not pushed and manipulated him. Perhaps then he would not have allowed such a situation to develop. His attitude could be said to have made the boy submissive and ultimately dishonest. Perhaps Mr Willison has missed the point, which is that being a man involves good sense as well as physical strength.

Throughout the story Mrs Willison is opposed to her husband’s behaviour towards and treatment of their son. It could be argued that Mrs Willison was being too protective of Rob and not allowing him to stand on his own feet.

4.4 Style

The main stylistic device that the writer uses to show us more about the characters is through their **dialogue** rather than through descriptions or the thoughts of the characters. An example of how the dialogue shows the tension between the characters is when Mr and Mrs Willison have a disagreement about what is best for Rob:

“What nonsense. You’re taller than I am and I’m –”

“No son of mine is going to grow up with the same wretched physical heritage that I –”

“No, he’ll just have heart disease through over-taxing his strength, because you haven’t got the common sense to –”

Notice how they don’t allow each other to finish their sentences, adding to the sense of tension and mis-communication between them.

4.5 Narrator and point of view

The narrator is not one of the characters in the story, so the **narrative** is told using the **third person**. The narrator refers to the characters as he, she or they. This third person point of view helps the reader see the story from a wider perspective than from only one character's view point.

The "narration" or "narrative" means the story. The "narrator" is the person telling the story, the story-teller.



4.6 Diction and figurative language

The words the writer uses and the way they are used also help to carry meaning in the story. For example, Mr Willison's enthusiasm for training Rob is shown in the way he orders Rob about:

"Don't lie there," said his father. "You'll catch cold."

"I'm all right. I'm warm."

"Come and sit on this. When you're overheated, that's just when you're prone to –"

"I'm all *right*, Dad. I want to lie here. My back aches."

"Your back needs strengthening, that's why it aches. It's a pity we don't live near a river where you could get some rowing."

And later, he forces Rob to punch the punch-ball:

"Take a punch at it," Mr Willison urged.

"Let's go and eat."

"Go on. One punch before you go in. I haven't seen you hit it yet."

Mr Willison's relationship with Rob is based on the son being forced to do what his father wants him to do, without being able to negotiate.

By his use of words the writer indicates that Rob is not completely happy and just puts up with all the good intentions of his father. The writer describes the boy: "falling silent"; Rob "lay like a sullen corpse" (simile); he "looked horribly like the victim of an accident" (simile); "A slender shadow". Rob never really tells his father honestly how he feels and this leads to further deception later.

Mrs Willison opposes Mr Willison's plans for Rob. The tension between them is shown by words such as: "glaring hot-eyed at each other"; and "her eyes brimming with angry tears".

At the end of the story Mr Willison comes to a realisation when he phones Rob's teacher. The use of the words: "With lead in his heart and ice on his fingers" help to emphasise his shock. He realises that Rob has lied to him, to them all – and that he may partly be to blame. He also realises that he has failed to fulfil his dream.

vocab

Diction: The choice of words a writer uses to create meaning.

4.7 Tone and mood

Throughout the story the writer makes us aware of how Mr Willison tries to keep Rob's coaching on track by the tone of his **upbeat** and **encouraging** advice (often from what he has read, not what he himself has experienced):

“When fatigue sets in, the thing to do is to keep going until it wears off. Then you get your second wind and your second endurance.”

“If you hit with your left hand and then catch it on the rebound with your right, it’s excellent ring training.”

“No boxer ever went into a big fight without spending an hour or two in bed, resting.”

However, ironically, his tone is not uplifting, but rather creates a note of **tension** in the story, as Rob does not respond positively to his father’s wishes. Rob is sullen, sulky, silent and mostly not as keen on his father’s plan as the father would like.

The **angry** and **worried** tone of Mrs Willison’s words to the father also adds to the unease and tension in the story:

Notice how the word ‘Boxing?’ is in italics. This is to emphasise the word.

Grace Willison put down the teapot, her lips compressed, and looked from one to the other. “*Boxing?*” she repeated.

“Boxing,” Mr Willison replied calmly.

“Over my dead body,” said Mrs Willison. “That’s one sport I’m definite that he’s never going in for.”

As the story proceeds she becomes very angry with Mr Willison and the reader realises that their relationship is at a crisis point:

“Go away, please,” said Mrs Willison, sinking back with closed eyes. “Just go right away and don’t come near me until it’s all over.”

“Grace!”

“Please. Please leave me alone. I can’t bear to look at you and I can’t bear to hear you.”

The tone of the last line of the story contrasts with how Mr Willison is characterised earlier in the story:

He put down the telephone, hesitated, then turned and began slowly to climb the stairs.

He is no longer full of energy and enthusiasm. The story ends with a **gloomy** tone.

Mood: How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? What are the reasons it makes you feel this way?



summary

Manhood

by John Wain

1. Title

- “Manhood” points to the question being asked: what is **manhood** and **masculinity**?

2. Themes

- The meaning of “**manhood**” and “**masculinity**”
- **Power of the father** in the family
- **Lack of communication** in the family

3. How is the story told?**3.1 Setting**

On a country road in Britain; and in the family’s house.

3.2 Structure and plot development

- **Rising tension:** Mr Willison puts Rob under pressure; Rob is passive; Mrs Willison resists
- **Complication and conflict:** The parents have conflicting ideas about what is best for Rob
- **Contrasts:** “My big night” – for Mrs Willison it’s the night she gave birth to Rob; for Mr Willison, the night of his son’s boxing tournament
- **Climax:** The day of the boxing tournament, when Rob complains of stomach pains
- **Resolution:** None – Rob’s lie about the boxing tournament is unresolved. The conflict between his parents is also unresolved.
- **Anti-climax:** Mr Willison “put down the telephone, hesitated, then turned and began slowly to climb the stairs”.

3.3 Characterisation

- **Protagonist:** Mr Willison (Rob’s father) controls the action in the story.
- **Antagonist:** Mrs Willison (Rob’s mother) opposes Mr Willison’s actions.
- **Caught in the middle:** Rob, the son of Mr and Mrs Willison.

3.4 Style

- **Dialogue:** Main stylistic device to establish character; unfinished sentences show lack of communication between them.

3.5 Narrator and point of view

- Third person

3.6 Diction and figurative language

- Rob lay like a sullen corpse
Simile
- He looked horribly like the victim of an accident
Simile

summary

- A slender shadow
Metaphor
- With lead in his heart and ice on his fingers
Imagery stressing Mr Willison's shock as he realises his dream has failed

3.7 Tone and mood

- **Tone:** Begins being upbeat and encouraging (although Rob appears quite defeated); unease and tension grow through the story; tone becomes angry when Mrs Willison confronts her husband on the night of the boxing tournament; ends with a gloomy tone.
- **Mood:** How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Give reasons for your answer.



Activity 1

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract A

"When do they pick the team?" Mr Willison asked. "I should have thought they'd have done it by now."

"They have done it," said Rob. He bent down to pick up his socks from under a chair.

"They have? And you —"

5

"I wasn't selected," said the boy, looking intently at the socks as if trying to detect minute differences in colour and weave.

Mr Willison opened his mouth, closed it again, and stood for a moment looking out of the window. Then he gently laid his hand on his son's shoulder. "Bad luck," he said quietly.

10

1. To which sports team is Mr Willison referring in line 1? (1)
2. Mr Willison opened his mouth, closed it again, and stood for a moment looking out of the window.
Choose the correct word to show Mr Willison's feelings when he says. 'Bad luck'.
A Pleased
B Disappointed
C Furious
D Disinterested (1)
3. Why does Mr Willison insist that his son train as a sportsman? (2)
Give two reasons for your answer.

[4]

Answers to Activity 1

1. The rugby team ✓ (1)
 2. B Disappointed ✓ (1)
 3. He wants his son to be a strong man. He wants his son to have a chance to build himself up physically because he never had that opportunity when he was young. ✓✓ (2)
- [4]**



Activity 2

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract B

Mrs Willison did not lift her eyes from the television set as he entered. "All ready now, Mother," said Mr Willison. "He's going to rest in bed now, and go along at about six o'clock." I'll go with him and wait till the doors open to be sure of a ringside seat." He sat down on the sofa beside his wife, and tried to put his arm round her. "Come on, love," he said coaxingly. "Don't spoil my big night." 5

She turned to him and he was startled to see her eyes brimming with angry tears. "What about my big night?" she asked, her voice harsh. "Fourteen years ago, remember? When he came into the world." 10

"Well, what about it?" Mr Willison parried, uneasily aware that the television set was quacking and signaling on the fringe of his attention, turning the scene from clumsy tragedy into a clumsier farce.

"Why didn't you tell me then?" she sobbed. "Why did you let me have a son if all you were interested in was having him punched to death by a lot of rough bullet-headed louts who —" 15

"Take a grip on yourself, Grace. A punch on the nose won't hurt him."

"You're an unnatural father," she keened. 20

1. Where are Mr Willison and his son planning to go at six o'clock? (1)
 2. Why does Mr Willison say it is his "big night"? Give TWO reasons for your answer. (2)
 3. What happened on Mrs Willison's big night? (1)
 4. What is Mrs Willison's attitude at this stage? Give a reason for your answer. (2)
 5. Whom do you think is right, the father or the mother? Give a reason for your answer?
 6. Answer TRUE or FALSE and give a reason for your answer:
Mr Willison's big night is successful. (2)
- [9]**

Answers to Activity 2

1. They are planning to go to the boxing tournament at his son's school. ✓ (1)
 2. He has been looking forward to watching his son take part in a sports tournament. ✓ He wants his son to be a good sportsman. ✓ (2)
 3. Her son Rob was born. ✓ (1)
 4. Mrs Willison does not want her son to box because she thinks it is dangerous. ✓✓ (2)
 5. The father is right because it is important for boys to do sports if they want to be proper men. ✓
OR
The mother is right because the father is forcing the child to do something dangerous. ✓ (1)
 6. FALSE – His son was lying as there is no boxing tournament. ✓✓ (2)
- [9]**

hint For question 5 give your own opinion and back it up with a reason. These answers are examples.

words to know

Definitions of words from the short story:

free-wheeling	riding without pedalling
haunches	thighs
fatigue	tiredness, exhaustion
endurance	stamina
sullen corpse	sulky, stubborn dead body
clambered	climbed
doggedly	with determination
physique	body
prone	likely
rebellion	defiance
simultaneously	happening at the same time
mittens	gloves
landmark	an important event
tournament	competition
trials	tests
acutest	sharpest, smartest
satchel	school bag
to limber up	loosen up, prepare
keened	wailed, said sadly
louts	thugs
compel	force
appendicitis	infection in the appendix, an organ in the body
jabbering	chattering, chatting
defensive	apologetic
queries	questions

The Luncheon

by W. Somerset Maugham

William Somerset Maugham was born in 1874 in Paris. His parents died when he was young and he was sent to live with an aunt in England. He travelled in Europe and eventually trained as a doctor. However, his first novel, *Liza of Lambeth*, was so successful that he took to writing full-time. He wrote many plays, short stories and novels. He was a very popular writer in his time and one of the most highly-paid writers during the 1930s. He travelled widely and later settled in the south of France. Many of his novels and stories, such as *Being Julia* and *The Painted Veil*, have been made into films. He died in 1965.



W. Somerset Maugham

1. Summary

When the story begins a writer is at the theatre one night where he meets a woman whom he has not seen for 20 years. At that time she had admired a novel he had just published. At the theatre she reminds him of their first meeting 20 years ago.

The writer thinks back to that time, when he was poor and he had to make very little money last for a whole month. The woman had sent him a letter complimenting him on his writing and inviting him to take her to lunch when she was in Paris, where the young writer lived. The luncheon took place at Foyot's, a very expensive restaurant. Nevertheless, he felt flattered that she wanted to meet him. When the menu came he was startled, as the prices were much higher than he had expected.

Therefore, he was relieved when his guest said that she only ever ate one thing for luncheon. Unfortunately, she went on to order some of the most expensive things on the menu – caviare, salmon, asparagus, peaches, ice cream and champagne. The more food she ordered, the more the writer got into a panic. He tried to economise by only ordering a mutton chop for himself.

As the meal proceeded he began to imagine how he would react if the bill was too large for him to pay. First he thought of claiming that someone had picked his pocket. Then he thought that he would leave his watch at the restaurant and come back later and pay. Finally, when the bill arrived and he paid it, he realised that he had no more money to live off for the rest of the month.

Now, 20 years later, the writer tells us that he had “revenge at last” because the woman now weighs 21 stone (the equivalent of 136 kilograms).



2. Title

The story title, *The Luncheon* highlights the importance of that particular event for the writer. It was a very stressful occasion for him, and ended with him having no money to live on for the rest of the month. By remembering this luncheon the writer remembers how young and immature he was at that time. He remembers how flattered he was that the woman showed so much interest in him; and how he agreed to everything she requested – her choice of restaurant, her choice of food – as he was too immature to oppose her.

A luncheon is defined as a formal meal, but it is usually a small one. The woman's huge meal contrasts with the tiny meal the writer had.

3. Themes

The main themes of story of *The Luncheon* are the **conflict between truth and lies** and the **contrast between appearance and reality**. At the restaurant the woman repeatedly says that she only eats one thing for lunch, but she contradicts herself by ordering more food. At their meeting 20 years later the

woman tells the writer: “You asked me to luncheon”. The reality is that she had suggested that the writer “give her a little luncheon at Foyot’s”.

Twenty years ago the writer may have pretended to be more successful than he really was; but he was too proud to let the woman know that he could not afford the meal, so he kept up appearances. He even lied about never drinking champagne, so that he could save some money.

vocab

Keeping up appearances:
Pretending to be something you are not; giving an appearance or illusion.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The main story takes place at Foyot’s, a very expensive restaurant in Paris where French senators dined, and where the writer knew that he would struggle to pay for the meal.

4.2 Structure and plot development

The writer uses the present tense to begin the story, but then takes us back in time to the memory of the earlier meeting with the woman. This literary device is known as a **flashback**. The main action or plot of the story takes place in the flashback to a past event – the luncheon. The story is structured so that only the beginning and end of the story are told in the present tense.

At that time, 20 years before, the young writer knew the restaurant was too expensive for him, which was confirmed when he saw the prices on the menu. The woman, however, kept ordering expensive things to eat, creating the **rising tension** in the story as the young man became more stressed. The **complication** is that the young writer was too afraid to stop the woman ordering more food, even though he knew he could not afford it.

The **conflict** in the story is created by the tension between the writer’s panic and embarrassment and the woman’s greedy desire to enjoy her meal at his expense.

The writer experienced a great deal of anxiety and panic about how he would pay the huge bill at the end of the meal. As the meal proceeded he began to imagine how he would react if the bill was too large for him to pay. First he thought of claiming that someone had picked his pocket, then he thought that he would leave his watch at the restaurant and pay later to get it back. The **climax** of the story occurs when the bill finally arrives. He found that he could manage to pay it, but would have no more money left for the rest of the month.

Now, 20 years later, the story finally reaches a **resolution** as it ends with an ironic **‘twist in the tale’**. The narrator tells us that he had “revenge at last” because the woman was now very overweight.

hint A **flashback** allows the writer to show events that happened before the time of the present narration.

A “**twist in the tale**” is also known as an **ironic twist** or a **plot twist**. It is an **unexpected change in the outcome or ending of a story**.



4.3 Characterisation

There are three characters in the story – the **young writer**, the **woman** he takes to lunch and the **waiter** at the restaurant. The writer is the **protagonist**, the main character. The woman is the **antagonist**, as she stands in opposition to him and creates the tension in the story. The young writer is very scared of the forty-year-old woman so he allows himself to be manipulated into buying her an expensive meal. He is too proud to tell her that he cannot afford the restaurant, being a young, inexperienced and upcoming writer. His youth and inexperience **contrast** with the woman's ruthless, selfish behaviour. He admits that he is flattered that she had admired his writing:

“she seemed inclined to talk about me”

The writer says he was “prepared to be an attentive listener”. This shows how he is easily seduced by **flattery**.

In the story we only see the woman from the writer's point of view. He describes the woman in unpleasant terms:

“She was not so young as I expected and in appearance imposing rather than attractive.”

She seemed to have a big mouth and more teeth than she needed and he is repulsed by the sight of her eating the asparagus:

“I watched the abandoned woman thrust them down her throat in large voluptuous mouthfuls”

Apart from the fact that the woman is not truthful, she is also bossy, as she constantly tells him that he is wrong to eat what she refers to as a “heavy luncheon” and to fill his stomach with “a lot of meat”. She has no sensitivity, as she does not see that one chop is not a “heavy luncheon”, in **contrast** to what she has eaten.

The woman has no understanding of or insight into the writer's dilemma. When he leaves only a small tip for the waiter (which is the only money he has left), she thinks he is mean. At the end of the luncheon she does not understand that the writer is telling the truth when he says he will “eat nothing for dinner”. It appears to her that he is joking and she, therefore, calls him a “humorist”. At the end of the story we see that the woman has never admitted the truth to herself about her eating habits, because after 20 years of excessive eating she is now **obese**.

At the end of the story we see how, 20 years later, the writer has changed and feels differently about the woman's behaviour. He is not, as he admits a “vindictive” man, as he did not do anything to her, or say anything to show how unfairly she had treated him. However, he is comforted that circumstances (“the immortal gods”) made her pay for her greedy self-indulgence. Now he can look at her without fear or anger, but with “complacency” (self-satisfaction), because clearly years of eating so much have resulted in her being very overweight.

The only other character mentioned in the story is the **waiter**. The writer feels that he is “ingratiating” and “false”, which makes him seem as if he only wants to please the woman. The waiter has a “priest-like face”, which gives the appearance that he is very serious, and perhaps also

vocab

Flattery: Excessive and insincere praise.

vocab

Obese: Extremely fat.

intimidating to the young man. It seems that the young man was in such a panic about paying the bill that he thought the waiter was working against him by encouraging the woman to order expensive food. In reality, he was perhaps simply being a good, attentive waiter.

4.4 Style

In the story the writer emphasises how the woman **contradicts** herself by saying one thing but doing another. The **repetition** of her words: “I never eat more than one thing” or “I never eat anything for luncheon” are used each time just before she decides she wants to order something else to eat. The narrator does this to indicate how the meal progressed. The more food she ordered, the more he began to panic.

In **contrast**, the writer only orders a mutton chop and drinks water instead of champagne. The contrast between the two characters and what they eat highlights the differences in their experience of the meal. Both were **not being truthful**, but for different reasons: the woman was not telling the truth because she was pretending she was not greedy and the writer was not telling the truth because he was too proud and afraid to tell her that he did not have much money.

The more food the woman orders the more anxious the writer becomes. The **tension** builds in the story very effectively so that the reader also starts feeling anxious, until the point in the story when the bill finally arrives.



4.5 Narrator and point of view

The story is narrated from a **first person** perspective. The narrator is the older writer, remembering an event that took place 20 years before. He is able to see how young and immature he was at the time; and how manipulated he was by the woman.

The writer uses “I” to indicate the first person point of view.

4.6 Diction and figurative language

Some examples of **figures of speech** in the story include:

- **Irony**

The writer makes use of irony a great deal in the story. Irony is when the narrator suggests that the situation appears to be the opposite of what it really is. For example, it is ironic that the woman often repeats that she does not eat much even when she orders many dishes and certainly eats much more than “one thing”.

She goes on to criticise the writer for filling himself up on meat even though all he ate was one chop.

At the end of the luncheon the writer tells her that he will not eat again that day. Ironically, this is one time when he is telling the truth, but she thinks he is joking.

- **Similes**

The descriptions of the food in the story are very vivid because of the figurative language used.

In one effective simile the writer compares the effect of the smell of



the asparagus on him to the effect of the delicious smell of temple sacrifices to God made by the Jews in ancient times:

The smell of the melted butter tickled my nostrils as the nostrils of Jehovah were tickled by the burned offerings of the virtuous Semites.

- **Metaphor**

One effective **metaphor** is the comparison of peaches to the rosy skin of a young girl, or to the colour found in an Italian landscape: “They had the blush of an innocent girl; they had the rich tone of an Italian landscape.”

- **Cliché**

A cliché is an expression that is unoriginal and is so often repeated that its original effect is lost. Clichés, however, are expressions which tell a truth. In this story they are used effectively to express the writer’s emotional state during the luncheon. Here are some examples of clichés from the story:

- “How time does fly.”
- “I was earning barely enough money to keep body and soul together.”
- The prices were “beyond my means”.
- My mouth “watered”.
- “My heart sank”

4.7 Tone and mood

At the beginning of the luncheon the tone is **friendly** and **polite**. The narrator is feeling generous and encourages the woman to order food at the restaurant. As the story progresses he becomes more depressed and the tone becomes **anxious**, as reflected in these words:

“My heart sank a little.”

“I fancy I turned a trifle pale.”

“Panic seized me.”

The tone lifts again in the last paragraph of the story when the narrator tells us that the woman, 20 years later, has become very overweight. This ‘twist in the tale’ is told in a **light-hearted** way that contrasts with his anxiety in the rest of the story.

Mood: How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? What are the reasons it makes you feel this way?

summary

The Luncheon

by W. Somerset Maugham

1. Title

- By calling it *The Luncheon* the author highlights the importance to him of that lunch date.

2. Themes

- Conflict between **truth** and **lies**
- Contrast between **appearance** and **reality**

3. How is the story told?**3.1 Setting**

- Mainly in Foyot's the expensive restaurant in Paris

3.2 Structure and plot development

- **Flashback:** From the present to a past event
- **Rising tension:** The woman ordering expensive things to eat
- **Complication:** The young writer is too afraid to stop the woman ordering more food
- **Conflict:** Tension between the writer's panic and embarrassment and the woman's greed
- **Climax:** The arrival of the bill
- **Resolution:** The ironic 'twist in the tale' when the writer sees the obese woman 20 years later

3.3 Characterisation

- **Protagonist:** The writer is the main character.
- **Antagonist:** The woman stands in opposition to him.
- **The waiter:** Serious and "false"

3.4 Style

- **Repetition:** The woman's words, "I never eat more than one thing".
- **Contradiction:** Her words (above) contradict her actions.
- **Tension:** This contradiction builds the tension in the story.

3.5 Narrator and point of view

- **First person**

3.6 Diction and figurative language

- "I'll eat nothing for dinner tonight."
Irony
- "The smell of the melted butter tickled my nostrils as the nostrils of Jehovah were tickled by the burned offerings of the virtuous Semites."
Simile
- "They had the blush of an innocent girl; they had the rich tone of an Italian landscape."
Metaphor
- "How time does fly"; The prices were "beyond my means".
Clichés

summary

3.7 Tone and mood

Tone: Begins with a **friendly** and **polite** tone; becomes **anxious** as tension mounts; and ends with a **light-hearted** tone.

Mood: How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Give reasons for your answer.



Activity 3

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract A

[The narrator and his guest are about to order their meals.]

I was startled when the bill of fare was brought, for the prices were beyond my means. But she reassured me.

“I never eat anything for luncheon,” she said.

“Oh, don’t say that!” I answered generously.

“I never eat more than one thing. I think people eat far too much nowadays. A little fish, perhaps. I wonder if they have any salmon.”

5

Well, it was early in the year for salmon and it was not on the bill of fare, but I asked the waiter if there was any. Yes, a beautiful salmon had just come in, it was the first they had had. I ordered it for my guest. The waiter asked her if she would have something while it was being cooked.

10

“No,” she answered, “I never eat more than one thing. Unless you have a little caviare. I never mind caviare.”

My heart sank a little. I knew I could not afford caviare, but I could not very well tell her that. I told the waiter by all means to bring caviare. For myself I chose the cheapest dish on the menu and that was a mutton chop.

15

1. Describe the events that lead to the narrator and his guest having lunch together. (2)
2. Refer to lines 1–2 (“I was startled ... I had anticipated.”).
 - a) Explain what the word “startled” suggests about the kind of restaurants the narrator usually visits. (2)
 - b) Write down the more commonly used word for “bill of fare”. (1)
 - c) Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence:
The real reason that the narrator agrees to take the guest out for lunch is because he is ...
A flattered.
B forced.
C intimidated.
D kind. (1)



NB

Answer questions in your own words unless you are asked to quote.

3. Refer to the following sentence in line 2: "But she reassured me."
From your knowledge of the story as a whole, explain why the guest is NOT reassuring. (2)
4. Complete the following sentences by using the words provided in the list below.

sensitive; polite; sincere; manipulative

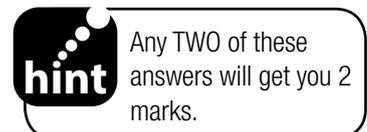
- The narrator and his guest are different in character. The narrator is a) ... while his guest is b) ... (2)
5. Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Using your own words, give a reason for your answer.
The narrator does not order asparagus for himself because he hates it. (2)
6. Refer to line 13 ("My heart sank a little").
a) Identify the figure of speech used here. (1)
b) Explain why the narrator has used this figure of speech. (2)
7. Consider the story as a whole.
If you were the narrator, what would you have done in this situation? (2)

[17]

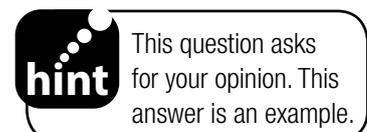
Answers to Activity 3

1. The guest said that she had read his book and wanted to discuss it. ✓ She suggested he take her to lunch at Foyot's. ✓ (2)
2. a) The narrator never visits any restaurant because he cannot afford to. ✓✓
OR
The narrator goes to cheaper restaurants because that is what he can afford. ✓✓
OR
The narrator hardly ever goes to such expensive restaurants because he cannot afford them. ✓✓ (2)
b) Menu/price list ✓ (1)
c) A/flattered ✓ (1)
3. She keeps ordering more expensive dishes causing the narrator to become more anxious. ✓✓ (2)
4. a) polite ✓ (1)
b) manipulative ✓ (2)
5. False. (He loves it but) he cannot afford it. ✓/He will need his money to pay for her meal. ✓ (2)
6. a) metaphor ✓ (1)
b) The writer shows that the fear/panic the narrator experiences is similar to a sinking man/ship. ✓✓ (2)
7. I would politely tell her that I do not have enough money and that she can only order certain dishes. ✓✓ (2)

[17]



Always give a reason for answering true or false or you will get no marks.





Activity 4

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract B

[The narrator and his guest are finishing their meal.]

“You see, you’ve filled your stomach with a lot of meat” – my one miserable little chop – “and you can’t eat any more. But I’ve just had a snack and I shall enjoy a peach.”

The bill came and when I paid it I found that I had only enough for a quite inadequate tip. Her eyes rested for an instant on the three francs I left for the waiter and I knew that she thought me mean. But when I walked out of the restaurant I had the whole month before me and not a penny in my pocket.

“Follow my example,” she said as we shook hands, “and never eat more than one thing for luncheon.”

“I’ll do better than that,” I retorted. “I’ll eat nothing for dinner tonight.”

“Humorist!” she cried gaily, jumping into a cab. “You’re quite a humorist!”

But I have had my revenge at last. I do not believe that I am a vindictive man, but when the immortal gods take a hand in the matter it is pardonable to observe the result with complacency. Today she weighs twenty-one stone.

1. Refer to paragraph 1.
Quote ONE word to show that the narrator has not enjoyed his meal. (1)
2. Consider the story as a whole.
Is the guest telling the truth when she says, “But I’ve just had a snack...”? Explain your answer. (2)
3. Refer to paragraph 1.
Why does the narrator become even more anxious when his guest takes a peach, in particular? State TWO points. (2)
4. Why does the narrator feel the tip he leaves for the waiter is “inadequate”? (1)
5. Refer to line 9 (“Follow my example ...”).
Explain why it would not be good to follow the guest’s example. State TWO points. (2)
6. Refer to line 11 (“I’ll eat nothing for dinner tonight.”).
Using your own words, explain the following:
 - a) How the guest understands these words (1)
 - b) What the narrator means (1)
7. Refer to the last paragraph (lines 15–18).
 - a) Write down ONE word to describe how the narrator feels. (1)
 - b) Explain why the narrator’s desire for revenge is “pardonable”. (2)

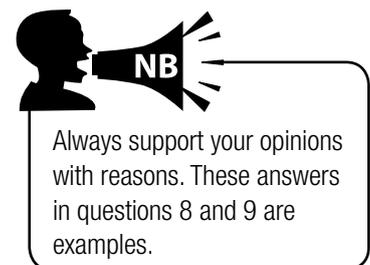
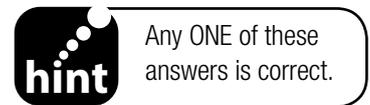
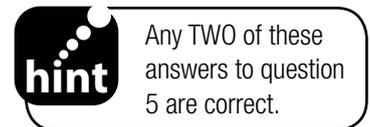
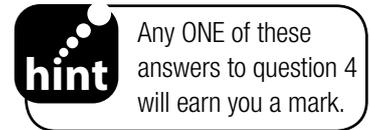
8. From your knowledge of the story as a whole, do you think the narrator is a “mean” person? Explain your answer. (2)
9. The narrator is to blame for what happens at the restaurant. Do you agree? Discuss your view. (2)
10. Explain why the title *The Luncheon* is suitable. (1)

[18]

Answers to Activity 4

1. “miserable” ✓ (1)
2. No. She orders salmon, caviar, giant asparagus, champagne, a peach, ice cream and coffee, amounting to a full meal. ✓✓ (2)
3. Peaches are not in season and, therefore, very expensive. ✓✓ (2)
4. It is only three francs. ✓/The amount is very small. ✓
/She glances at it suggesting that it is inadequate. ✓ (1)
5. The guest contradicts herself. ✓
She goes against what she says. ✓
She becomes fat. ✓
She suffers from obesity because she followed her own example. ✓
Her example is not worthy of being followed. ✓ (2)
6. a) She thinks he is being funny/joking. ✓ (1)
b) He has no money left/cannot afford food/he has spent all his money on her. ✓ (1)
7. a) Smug/satisfied/complacent/triumphant/victorious. ✓ (1)
b) He was not responsible for her weight gain/for what happened to her. ✓
She brought it upon herself/the immortal gods had a hand in it/it was fate. ✓ (2)
8. Yes. He should not punish the waiter for his guest’s behaviour, he should have returned with a better tip.
OR
No. He really did not have enough money to give the waiter a better tip. ✓✓ (2)
9. Yes. He is trying to impress his guest by pretending to be rich. ✓✓
OR
No. He was trying to be polite to his guest by not stopping her from ordering all the expensive dishes. ✓✓ (2)
10. The title is suitable because the entire story is about the luncheon.
/It is suitable because the word “luncheon” refers to a formal lunch and this is what the story is about. ✓ (1)

[18]



words to know

Definitions of words from the short story:

bill of fare	menu, price list
caviare	expensive fish eggs
effusive	enthusiastic
airy gesture	light-hearted wave of the hand
mortifying	humiliating, make feel ashamed
succulent	juicy
voluptuous	self-indulgent
discoursed	discussed, talked
ingratiating	trying to please
intimidating	scary, frightening
contradict	go against, oppose
manipulative	influence, control
flattered	feeling pleased after being complimented
humorist	joker

The Soft Voice of the Serpent

by Nadine Gordimer

Nadine Gordimer (1923–2014) was a South African writer who wrote many short stories and novels. Most of her work concerns the political situation in South Africa. She often spoke out against apartheid and censorship. *The Soft Voice of the Serpent* comes from her first collection of short stories, published in 1952. She won many international prizes for her work. In 1991 she won the most important prize a writer can win, the Nobel Prize for Literature.



Nadine Gordimer

1. Summary

A 26-year-old man has lost his leg. While he is trying to get used to this situation, his wife often wheels him into the garden. As he sits in the garden he thinks about his missing leg. He hopes that one day he will be so used to the loss of his leg that it will feel like it has always been gone.

In the garden one morning, when his wife gets up to fetch some tea, she accidentally knocks a locust. The young man watches the locust try to move, and he notices that it has lost a leg. He feels that he and the locust are experiencing the same situation – they both have to cope without a leg. The realisation that he is not alone makes him feel much happier.

When his wife returns with the tea, he shows her the locust and jokes about the fact that they both have a leg missing. The wife tries to touch the locust with a stick and causes it to suddenly fly away. The man realises that he had forgotten that, unlike him, locusts can fly. Once again he feels alone.



2. Title

The title of the story brings to mind the biblical story about Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In the Bible story the serpent tempts Eve to do what she has been told not to do, with the result that she and Adam are thrown out of Eden. The use of **alliteration** in the title (the repetition of “s”) reminds us of the hissing sound that snakes make.

In Gordimer’s story the locust is like the serpent. It tempts the man in the story into feeling that he can cope with his situation. Just as Adam makes a mistake by believing in the serpent, so the man makes a mistake in believing that the locust can help him cope.

These biblical references indicate that the story is an **allegory**.

vocab

Allegory: A story in which the characters and events are to be understood as representing other things; they become symbols.

In an allegory the characters and events become **symbols** because they also express a deeper, often spiritual or moral, meaning. The symbolism of the locust and garden is moral. The garden in which the man sits is like Eden as it is a peaceful, beautiful place where he can think and come to terms with his disability.

3. Themes

The man who has lost his leg is struggling to come to terms with his situation. He finds some comfort when he notices that the locust is also struggling to cope without one of its legs. At the end of the story the man realises that he must not depend on others, but must learn to cope on his own.

The themes in the story include:

- **Loss** and how we deal with it: The man in the story feels a connection with the locust when he realises they share the same loss.
- **Hope** and the **loss of hope**: The locust's struggle to walk and its persistence gives him hope. However, the sense of hope is lost again at the end of the story when the locust flies away.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The story is set in a garden, where the man's wife wheels him every day. The garden reminds us of Eden. Just as Adam was in Eden before entering the wider world, so the man can adjust before going out into the world with one leg:

Perhaps there was something in this of the old Eden idea; the tender human adjusting himself to himself in the soothing impersonal presence of trees and grass and earth, before going out into the stare of the world.

4.2 Structure and plot development

At the start of the story we learn what the **complication** is: the man has to get used to having only one leg. Sitting out in the garden in a wheelchair every day gives him a lot of time to think about his missing leg. He reads a book in order to distract himself and not to feel overwhelmed by his loss.

The **tension** rises in the story through the man's mental struggle to get used to the loss of his leg. This is mirrored by his wife's reaction to the sudden arrival of a locust. She is afraid of it and jumps up, knocking it away. When she goes inside, the man notices that the locust has lost a leg and is struggling to walk. He immediately identifies with the locust's **physical** defect. In some ways, his identification with the insect **contrasts** with his relationship with his wife. She caused the locust to lose its leg, and so he uses the locust's dilemma to make fun of her. He teases her by saying:

"Don't encourage it to self-pity"

The **climax** of the story takes place when the locust suddenly flies away. The situation does not have a happy **resolution** because the man feels foolish and let down when he remembers that locusts can fly and he can't. Perhaps he also realises that he has to face his situation alone.

4.3 Characterisation

The main characters in the story are the man and his wife.

The man is the main character or **protagonist** in the story. He has recently lost his leg and is having to face a new life without it. Mostly, he shares little about his internal emotional and mental conflict with his wife.

The wife is the **antagonist** in the story. She tries to support her husband by taking him into the garden and looking after him. She does not speak to her husband directly about the loss of his leg. She is, however, the cause of the locust losing its leg; and of the locust flying away. By doing so, she deprives him of hope and some comfort through a sense of shared experience with the locust. He has to face his loss alone again.

The **locust** is also a character in the story. The writer emphasises this by the way the other characters refer to the locust:

It looked like some little person out of a Disney cartoon.

“isn't he a funny old man?”

“The poor old thing”

The man identifies strongly with the insect. He studies it very closely. It comes to represent his own suffering and challenges. By talking about the locust the man and his wife are able to talk indirectly about the man's loss.

4.4 Style

The writer does not give the characters names or describe what they look like, because the main focus is on the complication – the man trying to cope with the loss of his leg. Neither the man nor the woman makes direct references to the lost leg; in fact, at the beginning of the story, they hardly talk at all. The man's distress is **internal** – he tries to come to terms with his condition in his mind. Although he feels very fearful and powerless he does not talk about it to his wife.

After a couple of weeks the man starts to take more notice of his surroundings in the garden: the trees, the birds. Then he studies a locust very closely. The **description** of the locust in the story is very detailed. The writer does this to help the reader feel **empathy** for the locust, just as the man has empathy for it when he realises it, too, has lost a leg.

The only **dialogue** between the man and his wife is about the locust. The locust becomes a **symbol** of what the man is experiencing – his anxiety, his need to cope and become independent, and his hopefulness when he sees how well the locust is coping without a leg. Their identification with the locust is shown in the way they talk about the locust. The man says:

“I've been watching it, and honestly, it's uncanny. I can see it feels just like I do!”

vocab

Empathy: To identify with, have sympathy for.

“Funny thing is, it’s even the same leg, the left one.” She looked round at him and smiled.

“I know,” he nodded, laughing. “The two of us ...” And then he shook his head and, smiling, said it again: “The two of us.”

The writer emphasises the link between the man and the locust by repeating the line “The two of us.”

4.5 Narrator and point of view

The **narrator** is not one of the characters in the story. The narrative is told using the **third person**. The narrator refers to the characters as “he”, “she” or “they”.

4.6 Diction and figurative language

The writer uses **descriptions of nature** to show the man’s internal feelings. The man remembers when he was a young carefree boy, swinging in a tree, and this memory gives him hope:

A first slight wind lifted again in the slack, furred sail of himself; he felt it belly gently, so gently he could just feel it, lifting inside him.

Here, the writer uses the **metaphor** of a sail on a boat opening in the wind, to describe his feeling of hope.

The writer uses figurative imagery in the description of the locust. Its body is compared to an aeroplane in this **simile**:

flimsy paper stretched over a frame of matchstick, like a small boy’s home-made aeroplane.

The locust’s movements are compared to a man’s in another **simile**:

Just as a man might take out a handkerchief and pass it over his brow.

The woman compares the locust to an old man in an extended use of **personification**:

“Shame, isn’t he a funny old man”

“The poor old thing”

The woman does not realise that her pity for the locust is an extension of her unspoken pity for her husband. He does not want her pity and his irritation becomes clear in his use of **sarcasm** in response to her comments about the locust :

“Don’t encourage it to self-pity”

“Get another little chair made for him and you can wheel him out here with me.”

“Or maybe he could be taught to use crutches.”

vocab

Sarcasm: An ironic expression or tone of voice which is used to be unkind to or make fun of someone.

4.7 Tone and mood

At the beginning of the story the tone is **gentle** and **calm**. The garden is seen as a good place for the man to recover:

the tender human adjusting himself to himself in the soothing impersonal presence of trees and grass and earth

However, the tone changes slightly when the writer describes how difficult it is for the wife to push the man's wheelchair into the garden, indicating that she is also having difficulty adjusting to his situation. As we witness the mental and emotional struggle the man faces, the tone becomes **gloomy**.

Later, the wife causes the locust to lose its leg. When the man watches the locust struggling to cope without its leg he gains a sense of hope that he, too, will overcome his loss. His tone of speech becomes more **hopeful**.

However, when his wife begins to express sympathy with the locust, the man becomes irritable and sarcastic. This tension rises until, at the end of the story, the locust flies off and there is a pause:

There was a moment of silence.

The tone changes here and becomes **hopeless** again, as the man is left again with a feeling of loss and he says to her in a **harsh** tone: Don't be a fool.

Mood: How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? What are the reasons it makes you feel this way?

summary

The Soft Voice of the Serpent

by Nadine Gordimer

1. Title

- **Allegory:** the biblical reference changes characters and events into symbols of morality.
- **Alliteration:** The repetition of "s" sound reminds us of a snake.

2. Themes

- **Loss** and how we deal with it
- **Hope** and the **loss of hope**

3. How is the story told?

3.1 Setting

- In a garden, which reminds us of the Bible's Garden of Eden

3.2 Structure and plot development

- **Complication:** The man getting used to having only one leg
- **Tension:** The man's mental struggle to deal with his loss
- **Contrast:** The man's identification with the locust in contrast to his distance from his wife

summary

- **Climax:** The locust flying away
- **Resolution:** The man realising he can't fly and feeling alone with his loss again

3.3 Characterisation

- **Protagonist:** The man is the main character in the story.
- **Antagonist:** The wife, who cannot connect with her husband and hurts the locust.
- **The locust:** Represents the suffering of the man

3.4 Style

- **Internal thoughts and feelings of the man:** His silent thoughts and feelings
- **Dialogue:** The only dialogue between the man and his wife is about the locust.

3.5 Narrator and point of view

- **Third person**

3.6 Diction and figurative language

- "A first slight wind lifted again in the slack, furred sail of himself"
Metaphor
- "flimsy paper stretched over a frame of matchstick, like a small boy's home-made aeroplane."
Simile
- "Just as a man might take out a handkerchief and pass it over his brow."
Simile
- "Shame, isn't he a funny old man"; "The poor old thing"
Personification
- "Or maybe he could be taught to use crutches."
Sarcasm

3.7 Tone and mood

- **Tone:** Begins with a **gentle** and **calm** tone; changes to a **gloomy** tone as the man struggles with his loss; becomes **hopeful** when the man sees the locust; ends with a **hopeless** and **harsh** tone when the locust flies away.
- **Mood:** How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Give reasons for your answer.



Activity 5

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract A

[The lady wheels the man into the garden.]

A first slight wind lifted again in the slack, furred sail of himself; he felt it belly gently, so gently he could just feel it, lifting inside him.

So she wheeled him along, pushing hard and not particularly well with her thin pretty arms – but he would not for anything complain of the way she did it or suggest that the nurse might do better, for he knew that would hurt her – and when they came to a spot that he liked, she put the brake on the chair and settled him there for the morning. That was the first time and now he sat there every day. He read a lot, but his attention was arrested sometimes, quite suddenly and compellingly, by the sunken place under the rug where his leg used to be. There was his one leg, and next to it, the rug flapped loose. Then looking, he felt his leg not there; he felt it go, slowly, from the toe to the thigh. He felt that he had no leg. After a few minutes he went back to his book. He never let the realisation quite reach him; he let himself realise it physically, but he never quite let it get at *him*. He felt it pressing up, coming, coming, dark, crushing, ready to burst – but he always turned away, just in time, back to his book.

5

10

15

- Complete the following sentences by filling in the missing words. Write down only the word(s) next to the question number (1(a) – 1(d)).
The man is being pushed in a (a) ... by his (b) ... He spends much time (c) ... in the garden. Sometimes he thinks about the (d) ... he lost. (4)
- Refer to “slack, furred sail of himself” (line 1).
(a) Identify the figure of speech used here. (1)
(b) Explain why the writer has used this figure of speech. (2)
- How do you know that the woman is not good at pushing the man? (1)
- The man does not complain about how the woman pushes him. What does this tell you about him? State TWO points. (2)
- Using your own words, briefly describe how the man feels about his loss. State TWO points. (2)
- Refer to lines 14–15. (“He felt it ... ready to burst.”)
What does the use of the word “crushing” tell you about the man’s feelings? (2)
- In your view, should the man keep quiet about how he feels about his loss? Give a reason for your answer. (2)

[16]

Answers to Activity 5

1. (a) wheelchair ✓
 (b) wife ✓
 (c) reading ✓
 (d) leg ✓ (4)
2. (a) metaphor ✓ (1)
 (b) To show that he feels just like a sail that has lost its air. ✓✓ (2)
3. She has to push hard. ✓/She is not doing particularly well. ✓/Her arms are thin. ✓/The man actually thinks that the nurse may do better. ✓ (1)
4. He is sensitive. ✓
 He is tolerant. ✓
 He is patient. ✓ (2)
5. Emotionally he has not come to terms with his loss and he feels a sense of helplessness/sadness/hopelessness. ✓✓ (2)
6. It emphasises the impact the loss has on him. ✓
 He feels devastated. ✓
 He is extremely hurt. ✓ (2)
7. No. It is better for him to share his feelings. It helps with the healing process. ✓✓
 OR
 Yes. He needs to come to terms with his loss./He must accept his loss before anybody else can help him. ✓✓ (2)

[16]

Any of these answers to questions 3 will earn you 1 mark.



Any TWO of these answers to questions 4 and 6 will earn you 2 marks.

**Activity 6**

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract B

[They talk about the locust.]

“Get another little chair made for him and you can wheel him out here with me.”

“Yes,” she laughed. “Only for him it would have to be a kind of little cart, with wheels.”

“Or maybe he could be taught to use crutches. I’m sure the farmers would like to know that he was being kept active.” 5

“The poor old thing,” she said, bending over the locust again. And reaching back somewhere into an inquisitive childhood she picked up a thin wand of twig and prodded the locust, very gently. “Funny thing is, it’s even the same leg, the left one.” She looked round at him and smiled. 10

<p>“I know,” he nodded, laughing. “The two of us ...” And then he shook his head and, smiling, said it again: “The two of us.”</p> <p>She was laughing and just then she flicked the twig more sharply than she meant to and at the touch of it there was a sudden flurried papery whirr, and the locust flew away.</p> <p>She stood there with the stick in her hand, half afraid of the creature again, and appealed, unnerved as a child, “What happened. What happened.”</p> <p>There was a moment of silence.</p> <p>“Don’t be a fool,” he said irritably.</p> <p>They had forgotten that locusts can fly.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>20</p>
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1. In line 1 the man says that the locust needs a “little chair”.
 - (a) Why does the locust need a chair? (1)
 - (b) Who does the man think is responsible for the locust’s injury? (1)
 - (c) Do you think he is being serious when he suggests that the woman should wheel the locust around? Explain your answer. (2)
2. What point is the man making in his statement in lines 5–6 when he says, “I’m sure the ... being kept active”. (2)
3. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence: When the man refers to “The two of us” in line 12, he means the ...
 - A man and the locust.
 - B woman and the locust.
 - C man and the woman.
 - D man and his nurse. (1)
4. At the end of the story the locust flies off.
 - (a) Explain how the man’s mood changes. (2)
 - (b) Why does his mood change in this way? (2)
5. Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Give a reason for your answer.

In the title of the story the serpent refers to a real snake in the garden. (2)
6. Consider the story as a whole. The woman experiences mixed feelings towards the locust. What are these feelings? (2)
7. Do you admire the woman? Discuss your view. (2)
8. The main theme of the story is about coming to terms with one’s disability. How can disabled people be helped to come to terms with their loss? Discuss your view stating at least TWO points. (2)

[17]

Answers to Activity 6

1. (a) The locust has lost its leg. ✓
 (b) The woman / his wife. ✓
 (c) No. He is merely making a joke. He knows very well that it is not possible. ✓✓
 OR
 Yes. He is using the locust to point out/emphasise his own disability/difficulty in moving around. ✓✓ (2)
2. Locusts are pests (that destroy crops). The farmers would be happy that the locust was kept busy elsewhere. ✓✓ (2)
3. A /the man and the locust. ✓ (1)
4. (a) His mood changes from happiness to irritation. ✓
 He was joking at first but he later became nasty/angry. ✓
 He was happy but once the locust flew off he became unhappy. ✓ (2)
 (b) He realises that the locust is able to fly. ✓
 The locust is able to move but he cannot. ✓
 Although the has locust lost a leg just like he has, the locust can fly away but he is still stuck in the wheelchair. ✓ (2)
5. False. The serpent refers to the locust. ✓
 It refers to the temptation in the Garden of Eden. ✓
 It refers to the temptation that there is hope in end. ✓
 (False hope for the man). ✓
 Everything can be fixed in the end. ✓ (2)
6. At first she is afraid of the locust and then she feels sorry for the locust. ✓
 She feels sorry for the locust and then becomes afraid of the locust. ✓ (2)
7. Yes. She takes good care of her husband. /She is patient / tolerant. ✓✓
 OR
 No. ✓ It is her duty to take care of him even if he is disabled. ✓✓ (2)
8. They should be helped. ✓
 They should be helped to become independent. ✓
 They should be counselled. ✓
 They should not be treated like outcasts. ✓ (2)

[17]

Any TWO of these answers to questions 4a), b), and 8 will earn you 2 marks.



Questions 7 and 8 ask for your opinion. Back up your view with reasons. These answers are examples.

words to know

Definitions of words from the short story:

fervently	eagerly
furled sail	sail that is folded up
arrested	stopped, put on hold
compellingly	forcefully, powerfully
unobtrusive	not noticed, not obvious
annealment	strengthening, healing
lugubrious	sad
hypnotic	making somebody feel controlled, unable to get away or look away
dread	fear
armour	metal clothing worn in battle
kinship	connection, similarity
pulsations of a heart	beating of a heart
effaced	withdrawn
aperture	hole, opening
reproachfully	disapprovingly
loathed	hated
compassion	sympathy, pity
solemn	serious
inquisitive	curious
unnerved	afraid

Relatives

by Chris van Wyk

Christopher van Wyk (1957–2014) wrote poetry, stories and autobiographical works. He is best known for his autobiographical novels *Shirley, Goodness and Mercy* and *Eggs to Lay and Chickens to Hatch*, as well as a children's illustrated version of Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*. As in *Relatives*, many of Van Wyk's stories are based on family relationships and the community he came from. In 1996 he won the Sanlam Literary Award for this short story.



Chris Van Wyk

1. Summary

In the story a 21-year-old writer goes down to the Cape. He spends a week in Cape Town, then visits his family in Carnarvon. After two weeks he gets bored and decides to return by train to Johannesburg.

In a train compartment he meets three friendly men and they exchange stories. When they leave the train the writer is left in the compartment with two brothers who are not friendly. As time passes the writer realises that the brothers are **juvenile delinquents** (boys from a **reformatory**). The writer is afraid of them as they discuss how they will kill their brother's murderer when they get to Johannesburg.

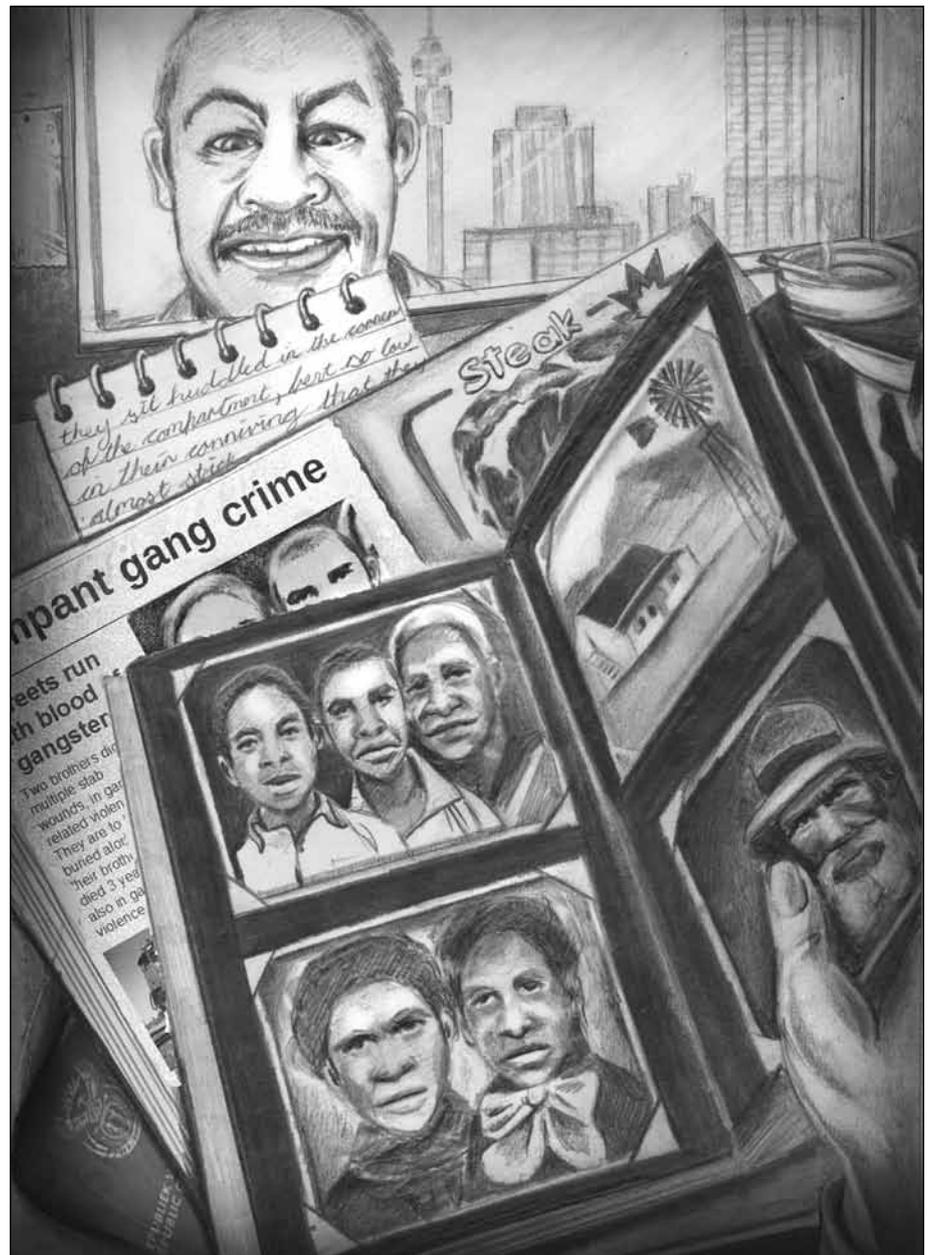
While the writer is thinking about how to get away from the brothers and find another compartment to sleep in one of the brothers asks him about his grandmother. They tell him that he is related to them. The writer is very relieved, as they no longer pose a threat to him.

Three years later the writer reads in the newspaper that the brothers have died in gang-related violence, just like their elder brother.

vocab

Juvenile delinquent:

A young criminal. A **reformatory** is a prison-like school where juvenile delinquents are kept away from society.



The title also makes us think about what would have happened to him if he had not been related to the boys!



2. Title

The title “Relatives” shows that the story is about what family means to people. At first, the writer was afraid of the two boys, who were strangers to him. When he finds out that they are relatives, as their grandmothers were sisters, he loses his fear of them. They no longer seem like enemies to him, as he has a connection to them.

3. Themes

The main themes of the story are:

- **The importance of memories and family:** The writer tells us that in Carnarvon his relatives spend a lot of time together, having long meals and discussions about family history. Note how the fear that

the writer feels disappears as soon as he discovers that the two brothers on the train are his relatives, and therefore, they cannot be a threat.

- **The power of stories** to entertain and teach us about life. The story also has stories within it, for example, the story of Georgie that the writer relates.
- **Coincidences:** The first is that both stories (Georgie's story and the brothers' story) that are told on the train concern murder. The next is that the gangster brothers have family ties with the writer, so they are his relatives.
- **Crime and gang violence:** The brothers are clearly already involved in crime as they are in a reformatory. They want to take revenge for the death of their brother by killing their brother's murderer. The cycle of gang violence tragically results in their own death.

Note the irony that the young writer visited Cape relatives for material for a story. But it is the unplanned meeting with the gangster brothers, his distant relatives, that this story is really about.



4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The main setting is a compartment on a train travelling between Johannesburg and Cape Town where the young writer chats to people.

4.2 Structure and plot development

We are introduced to the writer, who is an aspiring (inexperienced) 21-year-old writer who decides to visit his family in Carnarvon in the Northern Cape to get information about his roots. He wants to write a "family saga" (history of his family).

After two weeks he becomes bored with the dry, dusty place and conversations that are repeated over and over and decides to return home to Johannesburg.

On the train back to Johannesburg he meets:

- Three friendly carpenters or builders, laughing and drinking beer ("their conversation was full of the hammers and nails of their profession"); and
- Two quiet brothers who sit huddled in a corner and refuse to join in the conversation.

The three friendly young men ask him about his journey to the Cape, and he tells them a story about it which he had already told his relatives in Carnarvon. He believes that the story is excellent because he feels that it has all the necessary basic features of a good story, passing what he calls his **litmus test**.

The writer tells them the story of Georgie, whom he met on the way from Johannesburg to Cape Town. Georgie told him a story about how he had killed a man (**the story within the story**), as a warning to the writer not to try to steal his luggage.

The **comic ending** and **anti-climax** of this story (Georgie is publicly slapped in the face by his wife) is thoroughly enjoyed by the young men.

Up until this point the writer is relaxed and enjoying the journey and the company. Then there is a **complication**. As the writer puts it:

vocab

Litmus test: A test that definitely proves whether something works well or does not work well.

But then my journey took an unexpected turn.

Quite suddenly, and without much warning, the three friendly men leave the train. The writer is left in the compartment with the two unfriendly brothers.

The **rising tension** in the story begins when the writer looks at the brothers more closely and realises that they are wearing the khaki uniforms worn by juvenile delinquents. He also realises they do not have a guard with them. Suddenly their behaviour changes and they begin to act aggressively – they start talking loudly, swearing, spreading their luggage all over the compartment and littering.

Then they start discussing their brother, who was killed by a gang in Coronationville, Johannesburg. They are on their way to attend his funeral and swear to take revenge on his killer. The brutal and violent way they plan to take revenge scares the writer terribly.

The **conflict** in the story grows:

- The writer is now scared to be alone with the brothers.
- They start looking at him straight in the eye, scaring him even more.
- He thinks about asking for a transfer to another compartment, but is too afraid to leave his luggage behind.

The **tension** within the writer is now so great he cannot even eat.

The story reaches an amazing **climax** when one of the brothers recognises him as “that clever boy who used to read books and write stuff”. Their grandmothers were sisters, so in fact the writer and the two brothers are relatives. From then on he begins to relax and enjoy the journey.

The **resolution** to the main story and the story told by the brothers comes three years later, when the narrator reads in the newspaper about “rampant gang crime in the streets of Western Township and adjacent Coronationville”. The two brothers who had “never reached twenty-one” had been stabbed to death in the violence, and were now “in the same graveyard as their brother, killed three years ago”.



4.3 Characterisation

The narrator is the writer. He is the **protagonist**, as he is the main character. The two brothers, his relatives, are the **antagonists** in the story.

The brothers contrast with the writer in every way. For example, while the writer tells a funny story about a man who pretended to be a murderer, the brothers are plotting a murder in real life.

In a train compartment (which is the main setting for the story) the different passengers also form a contrast to one another.

The three young men who are carpenters or builders are very friendly to the young writer. It is to them the writer tells the story about Georgie.

4.4 Style

The story makes use of the stylistic device of “**a story within a story**”. The bigger story is of the young writer visiting his relatives in Carnarvon to write a family saga. This is the outer frame of the story. His experiences with the people in his compartment on the train back to Johannesburg form the

inner frame of the story. The centre frame is the story of Georgie, which the writer tells to his companions as **comic relief**.

4.5 Narrator and point of view

The **narrator** is the main character in the story. The story is told from the first person point of view (“I”).

4.6 Diction and figurative language

The way the writer uses language conveys meaning in the story. For example, at the beginning, when the narrator is visiting his elderly uncle, the description of the old men emphasises the slow pace of their lives:

conversations consisting of long, trailing life histories that made the old men in their elbow patches stammer and squint into the past from behind their thick spectacles

The conversational, chatty tone of the characters when telling their stories together with the use of **dialect** is very effective. For example, in the story of Georgie, his wife greets him by saying: “Ses *maande en djy skryf niks*, phone *niks*, not a blerry word *van djou*.” The Cape Coloured use of a combination of English and Afrikaans is very effective, as it gives us a sense of the rhythms and pronunciation of this speech.

The narrator’s fear is conveyed not only through his thoughts, but also by using many **short sentences**, which are very dramatic. For example:

I began to worry

He knows what I’m thinking, I thought.

My companions glared at me again.

I had no appetite.

The final sentence of the story, in particular, is very clear in its message about the unfortunate effect of gang crime: “They had never reached twenty-one.”

The reader is given insight into the characters through the vivid descriptions of their appearance. For example, the two brothers are described as having “sandy hair that had been cut so short that the hairs grew in sharp italic spikes”. Here, a **metaphor** is used to compare the short, bristly quality of their hair to italic writing.

In the line, “When the train slithered out...”, a **metaphor** is used to compare the train to a snake sliding along the ground.

4.7 Tone and mood

In the story the writer uses dialogue and descriptions to show how the **tone** changes in the story. For example, when the narrator meets the young men on the train the tone of their conversation is **friendly** and **happy**:

their conversation was ... punctuated with laughter and inane arguments.

vocab

Comic relief: Humour used to lighten the tone of a serious or frightening story.

vocab

Dialect: A form of speech which comes from a particular region and community.

In contrast, the two brothers' conversation has a **dark** tone – it is full of swearing and details about how they will murder their brother's killer:

They no longer muttered but spoke loudly, spicing their conversation with vulgarities.

The **light-hearted** tone at the beginning of the story changes to a **dark** and **sombre** tone as the story goes on. The story ends on a note of **sadness**, as it brings to mind the theme of the tragedy of gang crime. The death of the young brothers highlights the tragic waste of life that is the result of gang violence.

Mood: How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? What are the reasons it makes you feel this way?

summary

Relatives

by Chris van Wyk

1. Title

- The writer no longer feels threatened once he knows he's related to the juvenile delinquents.

2. Themes

- The importance of **memories** and **family**
- The **power** of stories to entertain and teach
- **Coincidences**
- **Crime** and **gang violence**

3. How is the story told?

3.1 Setting

- Mainly the compartment of a train

3.2 Structure and plot development

- **“Georgie’s” story:** Story within a story, with a **comic ending** and **anti-climax**
- **Complication:** The three friendly men leaving the train unexpectedly
- **Rising tension:** The writer realises that the two brothers are juvenile delinquents.
- **Conflict:** The increasingly vulgar and loud behaviour of the two brothers
- **Tension:** The writer becomes so anxious he cannot even eat.
- **Climax:** One of the brothers recognises the writer as a relative.
- **Resolution:** Newspaper article about the death of the two brothers in gang crime

3.3 Characterisation

- **Protagonist:** The narrator is the writer and the main character.
- **Antagonists:** The two brothers (the relatives)
- **The three young men:** Their friendliness contrasts with the behaviour of the brothers.

summary

3.4 Style

- **Stories within a story:** The **outer frame** of the story is the trip to Carnarvon.
- The **inner frame** is the writer's experiences in the train compartment coming home to Johannesburg.
- The **centre frame** is Georgie's story.

3.5 Narrator and point of view

- **First person**

3.6 Diction and figurative language

- *"Ses maande en djy skryf niks, phone niks, not a blerry word van djou"*

Dialect

- "I began to worry"; "I had no appetite"; "They had never reached twenty-one."

Short sentences for dramatic effect

- "sandy hair that had been cut so short that the hairs grew in sharp italic spikes"

Metaphor

- "the train slithered out"

Metaphor

3.7 Tone and mood

- **Tone:** Starts off **friendly** and **happy** but becomes **darker** as the two brothers get louder; ends with a **gloomy** and **sad** tone.
- **Mood:** How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Give reasons for your answer.



Activity 7

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract A

[The narrator is remembering his journey.]

Then followed an hour's drive to Carnarvon by way of long, hot, dusty, potholed roads past waving, poor people on foot or pushing bicycles, and carrying bundles of wood or things wrapped in newspaper.

Carnarvon was a place in the middle of nowhere where nothing happened. Simple breakfasts, lunches and suppers were linked together by chains of cigarettes and conversations consisting of long, trailing life histories that made the old men in their elbow patches stammer and squint into the past from behind their thick spectacles, as they dredged up anecdotes from the dry riverbeds of history. 5 10

Oh, how wonderful it was listening to those minutely detailed sagas. But after two weeks I was bored out of my wits. The novel could wait, I decided as I packed up and was driven back to Hutchinson Station. The train from Cape Town – the very same one that had brought me there two weeks before – slid into the station. I bade Uncle Henkie goodbye with a promise that I would feature him prominently and truthfully in my novel. 15

When the train slithered out, I turned to the passengers in the compartment with whom I was going to spend the next sixteen hours or so on the way to Johannesburg. 20

- Read the following statement and complete the sentences by filling in the missing words. Write only the words next to the question number (1(a) and 1(b)).
The narrator (person who is telling the story) is visiting Carnarvon because he wants to write a novel about his family (a) ... Before going to Carnarvon, he spends a week in (b) ... (2)
- What are "chains of cigarettes" in line 7? (1)
- In lines 10–11, "the dry riverbeds of history" are mentioned.
a) Identify the figure of speech used here. (1)
b) Explain why the writer has used this figure of speech. (2)
- The narrator is surprised and pleased by the way the three big men in the compartment treat him. State TWO ways in which these men make him feel like an old friend. (2)
- Explain how the narrator feels about the other two passengers in the compartment at this point in the story. State TWO points. (2)
- When the three men leave, the behaviour of the two boys changes.
Give TWO reasons for the change in the boys' behaviour. (2)
- Give TWO reasons why the narrator decides not to ask the conductor to move him to another compartment. (2)

8. Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Write “true” or “false” and give a reason for your answer.
 Before they tell him, the narrator is certain that the two boys are brothers. (2)
9. The narrator in this story researches his family history. Do you think it is a good idea for one to do this? Discuss your view. (2)
- [18]

Answers to Activity 7

1. a) history/roots/background/saga ✓
 b) Cape Town ✓ (2)
2. Cigarettes smoked immediately after one another/in close succession. ✓ (1)
3. a) Metaphor ✓ (1)
 b) Historical facts are hard to find, just like water is hard to find in a dry riverbed. ✓
 OR
 History is as boring as a dry riverbed is dry and lifeless. ✓
 OR
 He wanted to convey/emphasise/show that historical facts are hard to find/boring ✓ (2)
4. They smile at him. ✓
 They ask him about his visit/journey to Cape Town. ✓
 They listen to his conversation with real interest. ✓
 One of them offers him a beer. ✓
 They laugh at his story (about Georgie Abrahams). ✓
 When they leave, they shake his hand/slap his back. ✓ (2)
5. He is scared of them. ✓
 They are not to be trusted. ✓
 He is worried that they might harm him. ✓
 He is afraid that they might steal his luggage. ✓
 He feels indifferent. ✓ (2)
6. They are no longer outnumbered. ✓
 They realise the narrator is scared. ✓
 The narrator is, more or less, the same age as the boys. ✓
 They are bullies, exploiting the fact that he is young and scared. ✓ (2)
7. He is afraid that they will steal his luggage while he is out. ✓
 He is afraid that they will know why he is going to the conductor. ✓ (2)
8. True. They look exactly alike/identical./They have identical lips and eyes/features. ✓✓ (2)
9. Yes. It is good to know one’s background/heritage. You might come across family members you never knew. ✓✓ (2)
 OR
 No. You may discover some disturbing facts. It is better to leave the past alone and start afresh. ✓✓ (2)

[18]



Many of these questions only ask for TWO reasons for 2 marks. These are examples of correct answers.



Always support your opinions with reasons. The answers to question 9 are examples.



Activity 8

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract B

[The narrator tells his fellow passengers about Georgie Abrahams.]

He threw the remains of the dead man out of the window in the dead of night, and wiped the blood carefully from the windowpane, the green leather seat, the floor. When the conductor questioned the whereabouts of the missing man, Georgie merely shrugged and uttered a melodious “How should I know? Nobody asked me to take care of him.” 5

But even as Georgie was relating this tale of theft and murder in all its horrific detail, I knew it was a lie, simply a more elaborate version of my mother’s dire warnings to yours truly at seven, “If you eat in bed you’ll grow horns”, or the more convincing “Go to bed with wet hair and you’ll suffer from a smelly nose for the rest of your life”. Georgie was in fact warning me to stay clear of his luggage! And the story had quite an amusing ending. When we reached Cape Town Station, a toothless woman in a lopsided jersey, stretched to twice its original size (which used to be XL) welcomed the murderer home with an unceremonious slap across his face, while I looked on together with a brood of his startled children who didn’t know if they should laugh with delight at their papa’s homecoming, or cry for the humiliating onslaught he was being subjected to. 10 15

“*Ses maande en djy skryf niks, phone niks, not a blerry word van djou!*” 20

1. Why was Georgie’s wife angry with him when she met him at the station? State TWO points. (2)
2. Does the writer want his readers to believe that Georgie killed the man? Give a reason for your answer. (2)
3. After listening to the story of Georgie Abrahams the people in the compartment have different reactions. Describe the different reactions the friendly men and the two boys have. (2)
Why is the narrator not surprised by the boys’ reaction? (1)
4. Read the following statement and complete the sentences by filling in the missing words. Write only the words next to the question number (4(a) and 4(b)).
The two boys are on their way to their a) ... funeral. He was a b) ... leader in Coronationville. (2)
5. The narrator discovers that he is related to the two boys.
 - a) How does this fact change his feelings towards them?
 - b) How does the boys’ behaviour change because of this new-found relationship? (2)
6. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence. Write only the answer (A–D). (1)

One of the themes in this story is ...

- A romantic love. (1)
- B sibling rivalry. (2)
- C fear. (1)
- D greed. (2)

7. Explain what makes the ending of the story sad. (2)

8. Discuss your views on the following statement:
Family background does not determine what you will become in life. (2)

[17]

Answers to Activity 8

1. He had been away from home for 6 months/a long time. ✓
He never wrote or phoned/made contact./She never heard from him. ✓ (2)
2. No. He tells the story of Georgie's wife slapping him in public - something a cold-blooded murderer would not allow. ✓✓
OR
No. The narrator states that he knew it was a lie/just a warning to him to leave Georgie's luggage alone. ✓✓ (2)
3. The friendly men laugh/chuckle/enjoy the story/his accent. ✓
The boys refuse to laugh (although they listen to the story). ✓ (2)
The young writer is actually telling the story to the other three/is trying to ignore the boys. ✓ (1)
- 4 a) brother's ✓ (1)
b) gang ✓ (1)
- 5 a) He is no longer afraid of the boys./He becomes more relaxed/ at ease./His appetite returns. ✓ (1)
b) They invite him to share their supper/meal. ✓
They strike up a conversation with him. ✓
They recognise him as aunty Ria's grandchild/clever boy. ✓
They become friendly. ✓ (2)
6. C/fear ✓ (1)
7. Both boys are killed. ✓
They are still very young/not even 21. ✓
OR
They die a violent death at a young age. ✓ (2)
8. The support of family strengthens one and often makes success easier to achieve. The three characters in this story come from the same family yet they all turn out differently. ✓
OR
Your background does not necessarily determine your success or failure in life. People can rise above their circumstances. ✓ (2)

[17]

hint Any TWO of these reasons will earn you 2 marks.

hint Question 8 asks for your opinion. The answers given here are examples of correct responses.

words to know**Definitions of words from the short story:**

family saga	family history
meandering	rambling, winding
dredged up anecdotes	remembered old stories
prominently	importantly
exuberant	energetic, full of life
inane	foolish, silly
supercilious	arrogant, proud
undertones	quiet talk
conniving	plotting, scheming
fugitives	people running away from the law
flamboyant	vivid, colourful
elementary	basic
vulgarities	swear words
juvenile delinquents	young criminals
caterer	person who serves food
rampant	out of control
futility	uselessness

The Coffee-cart Girl

by Es'kia Mphahlele

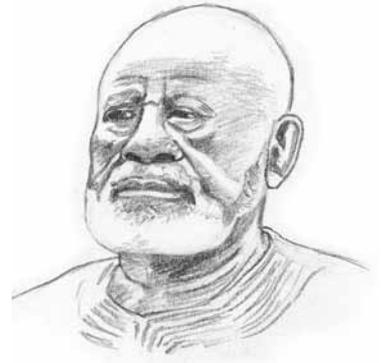
Es'kia Mphahlele (1919 – 2008) was born in the slums of Pretoria and went on to become a world famous writer, educationist, artist and activist.

He only began attending school regularly when he was 15 and went on to finish high school by private study. In 1945 he taught at Orlando High School in Soweto. As a result of his protests against Bantu Education he was fired from his teaching post. He eventually joined *Drum* magazine in 1955, where he made a name for himself as a serious writer.

In 1957 Mphahlele went into exile, at first in Nigeria. Here he completed his first autobiography, *Down Second Avenue* (1959), which was banned in South Africa.

Mphahlele went on to get his doctorate from the University of Denver, USA, in 1968 and was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969.

He finally returned home from exile in 1977, where he went on to found the University of the Witwatersrand's African Literature Department – the first department of African Literature in the country – in 1983. He is widely celebrated as being the Father of African Humanism.



Es'kia Mphahlele

Did you know?

The Es'kia Institute was established in 2002. It develops and supports community artistic and cultural projects. Website: www.eskia.org.za

1. Summary

The story takes place in the industrial part of a city during apartheid, where a young woman called Zodwa works at a coffee-cart. She sells coffee and pancakes to the workers who pass by. One day there is a strike at the nearby Metropolitan Steel Windows Ltd factory. The striking workers march in the street where Zodwa's coffee-cart stands. She is so absorbed in the strike that she doesn't realise that the marching crowd is getting bigger and more restless. There is conflict between the apartheid police and the black people who are striking.



vocab

Cheapjack: A seller of cheap goods.

One of the strikers, a young man named Ruben (whose nickname is China), helps to move Zodwa's coffee-cart away from danger of the crowd. Zodwa is very grateful to him and offers him coffee and food. This is the start of the friendship between Zodwa and Ruben. After the strike China loses his job. As their relationship develops, China gives Zodwa the nickname Pinkie, because her skin is peach-coloured. China finds another job at a shoe factory. When he gets paid by his new employer China takes Pinkie to choose a gift from a **cheapjack's** shop. The cheapjack is a man named Naidoo. Naidoo clearly likes Pinkie and he starts coming to her cart for coffee. One day when he cannot pay he gives Pinkie a ring in exchange for coffee and cakes. When China sees the ring on Pinkie's finger he gets very jealous and accuses Pinkie of being in love with Naidoo.

China pulls out a knife and points it at Pinkie's throat. She thinks he is going to kill her. But then China realises that he is frightening Pinkie. He

apologises to her and leaves. He never sees Pinkie again, as three days after this, Pinkie and all the coffee sellers are chased away from the area by the police. When China comes back to visit her she is gone. All he can do is hope that one day they will meet again.

2. Title

The story is focused on Pinkie, the coffee-cart girl in the title of the story. Although the title is about Pinkie, everything that happens to her is caused by the realities of the apartheid system. For example, she is caught up in the conflict between the apartheid police and the oppressed black workers, and it is only because of China that she is not hurt. Later in the story she is forced by apartheid laws to move to another place to sell her coffee and pancakes.

3. Themes

The main themes are:

- **Life affected by apartheid:** The strike takes place because of the political situation where white-owned businesses and apartheid laws work together to oppress and **impoverish** black people. It is because of the strike that the two young people meet. If it had not been for the difficult working conditions China would not have met Pinkie. At the end of the story the political situation interferes again in their lives by forcing Pinkie to work elsewhere, preventing them from meeting again.
- **Violence against women/women's powerlessness:** Pinkie is the only female character. The story shows her to be very **vulnerable** both to the general violence of the strike and to personal violence from China. She has no control over her own life and is pushed around by individuals like China, and by the apartheid state.
- **Love:** A young man meets a young woman and a bond is established between them.
- **Jealousy:** When another man, Naidoo, shows an interest in Pinkie, China becomes violently jealous. China's uncontrolled emotion becomes an obstacle in his relationship with Pinkie.
- **Loss:** China loses his job and he loses Pinkie. We lose Pinkie at the end of the story, because she is chased away by the police. Like China, we don't know what happens to her.

vocab

Impoverished: Made poor.

vocab

Vulnerable: Helpless to defend oneself.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The story is set in an industrial area in a city during apartheid. Throughout the story the harshness of apartheid shapes the lives of the characters. We are constantly aware of the poverty in the city and the fact that the lives of the people are worth little. Pinkie tells China that unless he accepts her coffee and buns he will "starve to death in this cruel city".

4.2 Structure and plot development

The story starts with the strikers marching. The writer's description of the march already gives a sense of tension. In the middle of the chaos is Zodwa, who seems calm as she watches the marchers from her coffee-cart. It is only when one of the coffee-carts gets knocked over that she reacts. "She climbed down from her cart, looking like a bird frightened out of its nest." China helps to move Pinkie's coffee-cart before it gets damaged.

Against the background of the strike and unrest China and Pinkie start a quiet friendship. When China finds another job he promises to buy Pinkie a gift. They go to a cheapjack's shop to choose the gift. Naidoo, the cheapjack, takes a liking to Pinkie and starts to visit her to buy coffee. The complication in the story is that Pinkie has two admirers: China and Naidoo. China is shy and is not able openly to tell Pinkie that he loves her. Naidoo is more direct and able to chat and joke with Pinkie more easily.

China's jealousy of Naidoo creates the rising tension in the story. One day China notices that Pinkie is wearing a ring. She says Naidoo gave it to her to pay for three days' worth of coffee and cake. China's jealousy becomes so great that he accuses Pinkie of being in love with Naidoo and threatens her with a knife. This is the climax or crisis point in the story.

China then realises that he is scaring Pinkie, and he apologises to her. He leaves.

The story does not have a clear resolution as Pinkie is forced by apartheid laws to leave the area three days later. When China comes back some days later she is gone and he is left with his dreams of how things might have been.

4.3 Characterisation

The main characters in the story are Pinkie, China and Naidoo.

Pinkie is the main character or protagonist in the story. She is called "Pinkie" by China because she has a "peach-coloured face". This is ironic, because apartheid oppressed black people on the basis of the colour of their skin, and yet here is a black woman with light-coloured skin. It points to how unworkable the system of racial oppression really was.

Pinkie is a shy and gentle woman and seems to accept the harshness of her life. She is small and seems fragile. The writer uses descriptions of small creatures when describing her:

looking like a bird frightened out of its nest

She panted like a timid little mouse cornered by a cat.

China is the antagonist in the story. He too has had a hard life. In the past he was in jail. He is not able to express his emotions well with words. Instead, he is quick to get angry and use violence. He seems to feel that he 'owns' Pinkie and is jealous of her having any other friends. His jealousy causes him to threaten Pinkie.

However, China is able to show some remorse for the way he treats Pinkie. He is sorry for frightening her and says to her:

“I pray you never in your life to think about this day.”

Both Pinkie and China have difficulty letting each other know how they feel about each other. This is mainly because of the cruelty and hardships of the apartheid city in which they live. It makes gentle emotions like love seem dangerous and they both “panicked at the thought of a love affair”.

From the start, Pinkie is a bit afraid of China – he attracts and repels (drives her away) her at the same time:

She felt “a repelling admiration”.

She felt he was the kind of man who could be attractive as long as he remained more than a touch away from the contemplator;

China also carried on “a dumb show”, by not telling Pinkie that he loved her:

Pinkie and China panicked at the thought of a love affair and remained **dumb**.

The seriousness of China and Pinkie’s relationship is contrasted with Naidoo’s ability to chat easily and joke with Pinkie. His anecdotes “sent Pinkie off into peals of laughter”. Naidoo’s relationship is a source of jealousy for China. He suspects that Naidoo likes Pinkie and thinks that Pinkie is in love with Naidoo.

Naidoo also gives some comic relief to the story, as he mispronounces words for comic effect.

vocab

Dumb: Speechless; unable to speak.

4.4 Style

The relationship between Pinkie and China is explored through the use of **dialogue** and **descriptions**.

Dialogue works to give us an immediate idea of the characters’ thoughts, feelings and attitudes. Another technique that the writer makes use of is contrasts. For example, the love of China and Pinkie contrasts with the harshness of their world.

In addition, the writer also contrasts aspects of their personalities. For example, at first China seems frightening to Pinkie:

There was something sly in those soft, moist, slit eyes, but the modest stoop at the shoulders gave him a benign appearance; otherwise he would have looked twisted and rather fiendish. There was something she felt in his presence: a repelling admiration.

The violence of China as opposed to the sweetness of Pinkie is shown right at the beginning of the story when, even though he helps Pinkie, China is seen as one of the violent strikers:

Almost rudely he pushed her into the street, took the cart by the stump of a shaft and wheeled it across the street,

When China first looks carefully at Pinkie he notices her fragility:

His eyes travelled from her small tender fingers as she washed a few things, to her man’s jersey which was a faded green and too

big for her, her thin frock, and then to her peach-coloured face, not well fed, but well framed and compelling

Another **contrast** between China and Pinkie is when China takes her to choose a gift for herself. It is typical of her character that she would buy something pretty such as “a beautiful long bodkin, a brooch, and a pair of bangles”. It is also in character for China to buy something harsher for himself such as “a knife, dangling from a fashionable chain”.

Note the **contrasting images** and **personification** in the description which follows, which shows the many emotions China and Pinkie feel for each other:

Within, heaven and earth thundered and rocked, striving to meet; sunshine and rain mingled; milk and gall pretended friendship; fire and water went hand in hand; tears and laughter hugged each other in a fit of hysterics; the screeching of the hang-bird started off with the descant of a dove’s cooing; devils waved torches before a chorus of angels.

vocab

Ellipsis: The use of three dots... either at the end of a sentence to show that the situation is incomplete or in the middle of a quotation to show that words have been left out.

At the end of the story the writer uses **ellipsis** twice to emphasise the incompleteness of the story:

- “I’ll tell her all about myself, all about my wicked past; she’ll get used to me, not be afraid of me any more ...” Here the ellipsis indicates that we will never know whether this wish of China comes true.
- “And still he sat in the coffee-cart which was once Pinkie’s all through the lunch hour ...” Here the ellipsis emphasises that we, like China, do not know whether they will ever see each other again.

4.5 Narrator and point of view

The writer uses a third person point of view to tell the story. This approach allows the reader to learn about the characters from what they say and do. It also allows us to appreciate how the political setting explains so much about them.

4.6 Diction and figurative language

The way the writer uses words and descriptions helps to convey meaning in the story. For example, the writer uses many figures of speech and sound devices in the story:

- **Similes and metaphors**

In the first line of the story the writer uses two similes to describe the striking marchers: “The crowd moved like one mighty being, and swayed and swung like the sea.”

Pinkie is described as having “a peach-coloured face” (a metaphor is used to compare her face to a peach).

Later, Pinkie realises that China is angry:

“She sensed a gathering storm” (in this metaphor, China’s anger is compared to a coming storm).

When China threatens Pinkie with a knife a simile is used to compare Pinkie to a frightened mouse being hunted by a cat:

“She panted like a timid little mouse cornered by a cat.”

vocab

Oxymoron: Two opposing ideas are placed next to each other.

- **Personification**

One example of personification used in the story is “the law was brandishing batons”. This image of the law being armed shows that apartheid laws were not about justice or equality, but about violence and oppression.

- **Oxymoron**

The writer uses oxymorons for effect in the writing, especially when writing about the confused feelings that China and Pinkie have for each other. Pinkie is described as having “a repelling admiration” for China. ‘Repelling’ means something that is distasteful or repulsive, while ‘admiration’ means something to respect and approve of.

4.7 Tone and mood

Right from the beginning of the story we are made aware of the harshness of life.

The tone created by the strike is one of confusion and danger:

The crowd moved like one mighty being, and swayed and swung like the sea.

Grimy, oily, greasy, sweating black bodies squeezed and chafed and grated.

We are constantly aware of the poverty and grime in this part of the city. The tone of the words the writer uses to describe the area and the people is despairing:

A dreary smoky mist lingered in suspension, or clung to the walls; black sooty chimneys shot up malignantly

The old shopkeepers are described as having:

a vague grimace on their faces, seeming to sneer at the world in general

Later in the story the tone of fear is emphasised by the writer’s description of China threatening Pinkie with a knife:

At that very moment she realised fully the ghastliness of a man’s jealousy, which gleamed and glanced on the blade and seemed to have raised a film which steadied the slit eyes.

At the end of the story the coffee-carts are empty and deserted. Their emptiness emphasises China’s loss of Pinkie. Yet the story ends on a hopeful tone as we read that China hopes that one day he will see Pinkie again:

We’ll meet in town some day, China thought. I’ll tell her all about myself, all about my wicked past; she’ll get used to me, not be afraid of me any more ...

Mood: How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? What are the reasons it makes you feel this way?

summary

The Coffee-cart Girl

by Es'kia Mphahlele

1. Title

- Focuses the story on Pinkie, the coffee-cart girl, surviving in apartheid South Africa

2. Themes

- **Life affected by apartheid**
- **Violence against women/women's powerlessness**
- **Love**
- **Jealousy**
- **Loss**

3. How is the story told?**3.1 Setting**

- An industrial area in a city during apartheid

3.2 Structure and plot development

- **Complication:** Pinkie has two admirers
- **Rising tension:** China's jealousy of Naidoo
- **Climax/crisis point:** China threatening Pinkie with a knife
- **Resolution:** None; the reader is left wondering what happens to the characters next.

3.3 Characterisation

- **Protagonist:** Pinkie is the main character
- **Antagonist:** China opposes her
- **Naidoo:** A source of tension (China's jealousy) and comic relief

3.4 Style

- **Dialogue and descriptions:** Used to explore Pinkie and China's relationship
- **Contrasts:** The love of Pinkie and China compared to their harsh world; China's violence compared to Pinkie's sweetness; China choosing a knife compared to the pretty things that Pinkie chooses from Naidoo's shop
- **Ellipsis:** Emphasises the incompleteness of the story

3.5 Narrator and point of view

- **Third person**

3.6 Diction and figurative language

- "peach-coloured face"
Metaphor
- "She sensed the gathering storm"
Metaphor
- "The crowd moved like one mighty being, and swayed and swung like the sea."
Two similes

summary

- “She panted like a timid little mouse cornered by a cat.”

Simile

- “repelling admiration”

Oxymoron

- “the law was brandishing batons”

Personification

- “fire and water went hand in hand”

Personification

3.7 Tone and mood

- **Tone:** Begins with a tone of **despair** and **danger** in the strike; tone of **fear** increases at the point of Pinkie being threatened by China; ends on a **hopeful** note as China imagines meeting up with Pinkie again
- **Mood:** How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Give reasons for your answer.



Activity 9

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract A

[China and Pinkie meet again after the violent strike.]

“Oh!” She gave a gasp and her hand went to her mouth. “You’re the good uncle who saved my cart!”

“Don’t uncle me, please. My name is Ruben Lemeko. The boys at the factory call me China. Yours?”

“Zodwa.”

5

His eyes travelled from her small tender fingers as she washed a few things, to her man’s jersey which was a faded green and too big for her, her thin frock, and then to her peach-coloured face, not well fed, but well framed and compelling under a soiled black beret. As he ate hungrily she shot a side-glance at him occasionally.

10

There was something sly in those soft, moist, slit eyes, but the modest stoop at the shoulders gave him a benign appearance; otherwise he would have looked twisted and rather fiendish. There was something she felt in his presence: a repelling admiration. She felt he was the kind of man who could be quite attractive so long as he remained more than a touch away from the contemplator; just like those wax figures she once saw in the chamber of horrors.

15

1. Describe the events that lead to China saving Pinkie’s cart. Give THREE points. (3)
2. Why does Pinkie refer to China as “uncle” in line 2 of extract A? (1)
3. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence. In line 3, China says: “Don’t uncle me, please.” His tone in this line is one of:

- A happiness.
 B satisfaction.
 C annoyance.
 D sadness. (1)

4. Refer to lines 6–9 of extract A (“His eyes travelled ... soiled black beret”). What do these lines show you about Pinkie’s circumstances? (1)
5. In lines 11–14 of extract A (“There was something sly... a repelling admiration”), Pinkie has mixed feelings about China. What are these feelings? (2)
6. Refer to lines 17 of extract A (“just like those ... chamber of horrors”).
 a) Identify the figure of speech in these lines. (1)
 b) In what way does China remind Pinkie of the wax figures? (1)
7. How is China affected by the strike? (1)
8. How are Pinkie and China victims of apartheid prejudice? (2)
9. Later, Pinkie gives China coffee and pancakes. What does this behaviour tell us about the kind of person Pinkie is? State TWO points. (2)
10. At the end of the story Pinkie disappears because the police no longer allow her to operate her coffee-cart on the street. In your opinion, is the action of the police justified? Discuss your view. (2)

[17]



For question 8 ONE answer must be about Pinkie and ONE about China in order to get 2 marks.

Answers to Activity 9

1. The strikers become violent. ✓ The strikers destroy some of the carts. ✓ China pulls Pinkie’s cart across the street. ✓ (3)
2. To show respect. ✓/He is older than Pinkie. ✓ (1)
3. C/annoyance ✓ (1)
4. She is poor. ✓/She appears to be undernourished. ✓ (1)
5. She finds him attractive yet repulsive. ✓ She is attracted to him but realises that he might be dangerous. ✓ (2)
6. a) simile ✓ (1)
 b) He is beautiful/scary/emotionless ✓ (1)
7. He loses his job. ✓ (1)
8. Pinkie leads a poor life. ✓/She cannot get a proper job. ✓/
 She is no longer allowed to operate her cart. ✓ China is underpaid. ✓/
 He loses his job when he participates in a protest strike. ✓/He has trouble finding a new job. ✓ (2)
9. She is compassionate. ✓/ She is caring. ✓ / She is sympathetic. ✓/
 She is unselfish. ✓ / She is grateful. ✓ (2)
10. The action of the police is not justified because the coffee-cart was how Pinkie made her living and now she would have no work. ✓
 OR
 The action of the police is justified because it was enforcing the laws of the city to keep it clean. ✓ (2)

[17]



Question 10 asks for your opinion. Back up your view with reasons. These answers are examples.



Activity 10

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract B

[China attacks Pinky in her coffee-cart.]

At that very moment she realised fully the ghastliness of a man's jealousy, which gleamed and glanced on the blade and seemed to have raised a film which steadied the slit eyes. Against the back wall she managed to speak.

"All right, China, maybe you've done this many times before. Go ahead and kill me; I won't cry for help, do what you like with me." 5

She panted like a timid little mouse cornered by a cat. He couldn't finish the job he had set out to do. Why? He had sent two men packing with a knife before. They had tried to fight, but this creature wasn't resisting at all. Why, why, why? He felt the heat pounding in his temples; the knife dropped, and he sank on to a stool and rested his head on the wall, his hands trembling. 10

After a moment he stood up, looking away from Pinkie. "I'm sorry, Pinkie, I pray you never in your life to think about this day."

She looked at him, mystified. 15

"Say you forgive me." She nodded twice.

Then she packed up for the day, much earlier than usual.

The following day China did not visit Pinkie; nor the next. He could not decide to go there. Things were all in a barbed wire tangle in his mind. But see her he must, he thought. He would just go and hug her; say nothing but just press her to himself because he felt too mean even to tell her not to be afraid of him any more. 20

1. Complete the following sentences by using the words in the list below.

jersey; guilty; ring; happy; compassionate; jealous; aggressive

China sees Pinkie wearing a (a) He is (b) ... because Naidoo gave it to her. China becomes (c) ... towards Pinkie. Later, he feels (d) ... about this behaviour. (4)

2. How does Naidoo make a living? (1)
3. Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Write "true" or "false" and give a reason for your answer.
Pinkie accepted the gift from Naidoo as a token of his love. (2)
4. Refer to line 6 of extract B ("She panted like ... by a cat"). Why does the writer compare Pinkie to a mouse and China to a cat? (2)
5. Refer to lines 7–8 of extract B ("He had sent ... a knife before"). What does this line show you about China's past behaviour? (1)

6. Refer to line 12 of extract B (“She looked at him, mystified”). Explain why Pinkie feels this way. (2)
7. Refer to the last paragraph of extract B (“The following day ... him any more”).
- a) Why does China’s behaviour change at this stage in the story? (1)
- b) In your opinion, is China being realistic when he hopes that Pinkie will not be afraid of him anymore? (2)
8. Does Pinkie really forgive China? Give a reason for your answer. (1)
9. Pinkie and China do not meet again. Is this an effective conclusion to this story? Discuss your view. (2)
- [18]

hint

In questions 4 any TWO of these answers will earn you 2 marks.

hint

Questions 7, 8 and 9 ask for your opinion. Back up your view with reasons. These answers are examples.

Answers to Activity 10

1. a) ring ✓
b) jealous ✓
c) aggressive ✓
d) guilty ✓ (4)
2. He is a cheapjack/hawker/vendor ✓ (1)
3. False. Naidoo gave her the ring as payment for the coffee and cakes. ✓✓ (2)
4. A cat is ferocious and a mouse is timid. ✓
OR
Just as a cat can overpower a mouse so, too, can China overpower Pinkie. ✓
OR
She has no chance against China, as he is much stronger than she is. ✓ (2)
5. He was aggressive ✓/violent ✓/He was a murderer. ✓ (1)
6. She is puzzled ✓/does not understand that his aggressive behaviour has changed to that of being apologetic. ✓ (2)
7. a) He realises that she is innocent. ✓/He still loves her. ✓ (1)
b) He is being realistic because she nods her head to say she forgives him and he knows he must never be violent with her again. ✓✓
OR
He is not being realistic. Now that she has seen for herself how violent China can be, she will never be able to trust him again. ✓✓ (2)
8. Yes, Pinkie forgives China. She shows this by nodding twice when he asks for her forgiveness. ✓
OR
No, Pinkie has not forgiven China. She may have nodded that she had forgiven him, but she packs up early to get away from him because she is afraid. ✓ (1)
9. It is an effective conclusion to the story because it shows how uncertain their lives are and keeps us guessing about what happens next. ✓✓
OR
It is not an effective conclusion to the story because it is dissatisfying to the reader not to know what happens next. The writer should have been clearer about the outcome. ✓✓ (2)

[18]

words to know**Definitions of words from the short story:**

chafed	rubbed against
brandishing	waving in a threatening way
malignantly	viciously
tremulous	shaky
contemptible	worthless
buddha	5th century Indian philosopher
grimace	scowl
resented	felt bitter about
artless	innocent
dumb show	action with no words
cheapjack	someone who sells goods that are very cheap
bodkin	an ornamental pin
rhapsodies	enthusiastic comments
elated	delighted
menacing	frightening, threatening
mystified	confused
ominous	threatening

6

Short Stories

The Dube Train

by Can Themba



Can Themba

Daniel Canadoce (“Can”) Themba (1924–1968) was born in Marabastad in Pretoria. He studied at Fort Hare University and later moved to Johannesburg, where he worked as a teacher and journalist on *Drum* magazine. Many of his stories are about the lives of the people in Sophiatown in Johannesburg where he lived. This was a mixed-race suburb which was very vibrant during the 1950s, but it was later destroyed by the apartheid government. In the early 1960s he moved to Swaziland, where he died a few years later.

1. Summary

The narrator is at Dube Station in Soweto on a cold Monday morning, waiting for the train to Johannesburg. All his descriptions of the station and people emphasise his depression, which he feels is shared by all the people around him.

When he gets onto the train he sits opposite a huge man. When the train gets to Phefeni Station a young woman enters the carriage and sits next to the narrator. Soon afterwards a *tsotsi* jumps onto the train and begins verbally harassing the girl. When the girl reaches her stop and wants to get off the train the *tsotsi* prevents her and slaps her. She tries to get away from him by jumping over the narrator but the *tsotsi* follows her.

No one dares to say anything to stop the *tsotsi*, until an older woman starts shouting at the men and calling them cowards. This causes the *tsotsi* to swear at the woman. This angers the huge man sitting opposite the narrator and he gets up and moves towards the *tsotsi*.

The *tsotsi* pulls out a knife and cuts the big man’s chest and arm. The big man is enraged and, in spite of his injuries, he grabs the *tsotsi* and lifts him up. He throws him out of the train window.

Everyone is shocked, but the incident soon becomes just another event on the morning Dube train.

Did you know?

Drum magazine was a popular magazine read by urban black people. Can Themba was one of the ‘Drum Boys’, many of whom were published writers. Other members of the ‘Drum Boys’ were Henry Nxumalo, Bloke Modisane (who wrote *Blame Me On History*), Todd Matshikiza (who wrote the music for the musical *King Kong*), and Nat Nakasa.



2. Title

The title focuses on the **train journey** rather than on any characters in the story. The writer intends us to see the train journey as a comment on the lives people experience. Even when bad things happen people just accept them. The incident on the train happens to people no one knows or is concerned about. It soon becomes:

Just an incident in the morning Dube train.

3. Themes

The main themes of this story are:

- **Violence, crime and gangsterism** in the townships; and
- People's **passive attitudes** to these issues.

vocab

Passive: To accept what happens or what others do without an active response.

The train passengers do not at first take action when they are faced with gangsterism and violence. Nobody stops the *tsotsi* from harassing the girl, or prevents the *tsotsi* from stabbing the big man, or stops the man from flinging the *tsotsi* out of the window. The large man who takes action against the *tsotsi* also behaves in a violent way, which is not a solution to the social problem of crime.

Perhaps the writer is saying that violence has become so common that people no longer see it as a problem:

too many passengers had seen too many tragedies to be rattled by this incident.

People have become so used to violence that they are not shocked by such incidents. They consider them as a break in their dull lives. Although the narrator is also guilty of not getting involved, the writer uses him to convey the message that the people are too used to crime and too passive to fight against it.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The story takes place at the Dube station and on the Dube train. It is on the train trip from Dube to Johannesburg that the events involving the girl, the *tsotsi* and the huge man take place.

The narrator links the train trip with life in general:

the prospect of congested trains filled with sour-smelling humanity, did not improve my impression of a hostile life directing its malevolence plumb at me.



4.2 Structure and plot development

At the beginning of the story the narrator gives a description of the environment at the station and the people who, like him, feel depressed on that Monday morning. The faceless, nameless people add to his feeling of despair.

When the narrator gets on to the train he describes the passengers more individually. The writer describes the huge man who sits opposite him, a young girl who gets on the train later and a *tsotsi* who sees the girl and comes to harass her.

The *tsotsi's* harassment of the girl is the **complication** in the story. It creates the **rising tension**, to the point where the huge man gets up to intervene, after the *tsotsi* insults a woman who yells at the men nearby to stop the *tsotsi*. When the *tsotsi* draws a knife it creates panic in the carriage:

the woman shrieked and men scampered on to seats.

The **climax** of the story occurs when the *tsotsi* stabs the big man who confronts him. The man then picks the *tsotsi* up and flings him out of the train window.

The story ends with a negative and disturbing **resolution** because, although the problem with the *tsotsi* has been dealt with, the violent action of the man is also a criminal act. The narrator of the story comments at the end of the story:

Odd, that no one expressed sympathy for the boy or the man.

4.3 Characterisation

The main characters in the story are people who are part of the crowd on the train:

- A **huge man** who sits opposite the narrator. He is described as “a hulk of a man; his hugeness was obtrusive to the sight when you saw him, and to the mind when you looked away”. His presence feels “obtrusive” because he is so large and it feels as if he is blocking the narrator’s view and he can’t see past him.
- A **young girl**, who is described as “pert, arrogant, live”. She is young but acts more mature than she is.
- A **young *tsotsi*** who jumps onto the train and starts to harass the girl.
- An **old lady** who shouts at the men in the carriage for not stopping the *tsotsi*.

The men in the carriage “winced. They said nothing, merely looked around at each other in shy embarrassment”. It is only when the *tsotsi* swears at the woman, that the huge man becomes offended and takes action. He does not react when the young girl is being harassed.

In the story the huge man, the girl and the shouting woman act as **protagonists**. The *tsotsi* is the **antagonist** as he is in opposition to them. It is the *tsotsi*’s actions that drive the events that take place on the train.

4.4 Style

The narrator of the story notices what is going on with the *tsotsi* and the girl, as well as all the details of the train journey. The events in the carriage are viewed between station stops. At one point the narrator gives a long **description** of a bridge and the view of the city skyline, which looks attractive after “the drab, chocolate-box houses of the township, monotonously identical row upon row”.

The writer uses township **slang** and **dialect** as ways to indicate the atmosphere of the life he is describing. “*Tsotsi*”, “*Sies*” and “*Hela, Tholo, my ma hears me, I want that ten-’n-six!*” are examples of slang. In the story slang is used by the *tsotsis* to communicate with each other. It sets the *tsotsis* apart from the other passengers. The narrator says of their exchange of words:

The gibberish exchange was all in exuberant superlatives.

4.5 Narrator and point of view

The **narrator** tells the story in the **first person**. He refers to himself as “I”.

Did you notice that it was an old woman who first stood up to the *tsotsi*? What do you think this says about the men who chose to be passive?



vocab

Slang: A type of informal language used by a particular group in society.

4.6 Diction and figurative language

The way the writer uses language in the story helps to express meaning.

For example, the **description** of the big man on the train is significant as it helps us build up a picture of him:

a hulk of a man ... The neck was thick and corded, and the enormous chest was a live barrel that heaved back and forth.

With this **metaphor** of the man's chest being an enormous live barrel we have an image of how huge he was and don't question his ability to lift up and throw the boy later.

The writer's **description** of the 'blue' Monday includes phrases such as "hostile life", "the grey aspect around me", "savagery of the crowd" and "all was wrong with the world", which give the impression of a dreary day which matches his depression.

The writer uses figurative language to describe the scene and the characters:

- **Simile**
For example, his description of the movement of the train leaving the station as making the platform look as though it is "a fast conveyor belt".
- **Metaphor**
The woman who shouted at the *tsotsi* used "barbed words" – her words are compared to barbs, which could mean insults or sharp thorns.
- **Oxymoron**
The narrator watches the *tsotsi* with "grim anticipation". "Anticipation" is usually associated with looking forward to something positive. Here it is paired with "grim", which means horrible, awful or unpleasant.

Can Themba uses language very powerfully to question whether humanity can remain caring in the "hostile life" of urban apartheid.



4.7 Tone and mood

From the start of the story the writer gives us a picture of a dreary Monday morning at the station. The narrator surveys the scene with displeasure; the tone of his thoughts conveys a feeling of **gloom**:

Despairing thoughts of every kind darted through my mind: the lateness of the trains, the shoving savagery of the crowd, the grey aspect around me.

The tone of gloom and **despair** is continued when the narrator is seated on the train:

the other passengers, looking Monday-bleared, had no enthusiasm about them. They were just like the lights of the carriage – dull, dreary, undramatic.

The writer emphasises how bored and **depressed** the passengers on the train usually are by contrasting this with how they behave at the end of the story:

[They] break out into a cacophony of chattering.

They were just greedily relishing the thrilling episode of the morning."

The writer emphasises the fact that people are so used to violence, that they are not so much shocked as excited by what happened on the train. This creates a tone of **excitement**.

Mood: How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? What are the reasons it makes you feel this way?

summary

The Dube Train

by Can Themba

1. Title

- Focuses on a train journey

2. Themes

- **Violence, crime** and **gangsterism**
- Peoples' **passive attitudes** to these issues

3. How is the story told?

3.1 Setting

- At the Dube Station and on the train

3.2 Structure and plot development

- **Complication:** The *tsotsi's* harassment of the girl
- **Rising tension:** The continued harassment of the girl
- **Climax:** The stabbing of the big man and the *tsotsi* being thrown out of the train window
- **Resolution:** Disturbing because the violence of the man against the *tsotsi* is also a criminal act

3.3 Characterisation

- **Protagonists:** The big man, the girl and the shouting woman
- **Antagonist:** The *tsotsi*

3.4 Style

- **Descriptions:** Of the township and the city
- **Slang/dialect:** For example, "*tsotsi*", "*sies*", "*hela*"

3.5 Narrator and point of view

- **First person**

3.6 Diction and figurative language

- "the enormous chest was a live barrel"

Metaphor

- "barbed words"

Metaphor

- "like a fast conveyor belt"

Simile

summary

- “grim anticipation”
Oxymoron

3.7 Tone and mood

- **Tone:** Mainly a **gloomy, despairing** and **depressed** tone; except when the violence breaks out, when the tone becomes **excited**
- **Mood:** How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Give reasons for your answer.



Activity 11

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract A

[The narrator describes a typical Monday morning.]

The morning was too cold for a summer morning, at least to me, a child of the sun. But then on all Monday mornings I feel rotten and shivering, with a clogged feeling in the chest and a nauseous churning in the stomach. It debilitates my interest in the whole world around me. 5

The Dube Station, with the prospect of congested trains filled with sour-smelling humanity, did not improve my impression of a hostile life directing its malevolence plumb at me. Despairing thoughts of every kind darted through my mind: the lateness of the trains, the shoving savagery of the crowds, the grey aspect around me. Even the announcer over the loudspeaker gave confusing directions. I suppose it had something to do with the peculiar chemistry of the body on Monday morning. But for me all was wrong with the world. 10

Yet, by one of those flukes that occur in all routines, the train I caught was not full when it came. I usually try to avoid seats next to the door, but sometimes it cannot be helped. So it was on that Monday morning when I hopped into the Third Class carriage. 15

1. Read the following statement and complete the sentence by filling in the missing words. Write down only the words next to the question number (1a)–(1b)).

In lines 1 and 2 “a child of the sun” is an example of personification.

The a) ... is being described as the b) ... of the narrator. (2)

vocab

Consecutive: Words that directly follow one another.

2. Refer to paragraph 1.
 - a) Quote no more than FOUR **consecutive** words from the extract to show that this story is written in the first person. (1)
 - b) Using your own words, briefly describe how the narrator feels on a Monday morning. State TWO points. (2)
 - c) In your view, why does he feel this way? State TWO points. (2)
3. Refer to paragraph 2.
Quote TWO consecutive words to show that the narrator has a negative outlook on life. (1)
4. Refer to line 10 (“... shoving savagery of the crowds ...”).
Which figure of speech is used here? (1)
5. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence:
In line 13, the word “flukes” refers to ...
A unfortunate accidents.
B lucky charms.
C unlucky coincidences.
D a stroke of good luck. (1)
6. Refer to the story as a whole.
Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Give a reason to support your answer.
The narrator’s journey was dull and uneventful. (2)
7. What point is the narrator making by including the description of the train carriage and the station? State TWO ideas. (2)
8. A girl boards the train at Phefeni station.
 - a) Explain what the narrator finds unusual for a girl of her age. State TWO points. (2)
 - b) Explain why the narrator is surprised by the girl’s reactions later, when the *tsotsi* attacks her. State TWO points. (2)

[18]

hint

Any TWO of the answers given in question 2b) and c) are acceptable.

hint

Any ONE of the answers given in question 3 is acceptable.

hint

In question 8a) and b), any TWO of these answers are acceptable.

Answers to Activity 11

1. a) sun ✓
b) parent/mother/father ✓ (2)
2. a) "at least, to me ..." ✓
"I feel rotten" ✓
"my interest" ✓
"whole world around me." ✓ (1)
- b) He feels sick/ill/bad. ✓
He feels cold./ He shivers. ✓
He feels like vomiting. ✓
His chest is tight/has difficulty breathing. ✓
He is not interested in anything. ✓
He feels miserable. ✓
He feels irritable. ✓
He feels unhappy. ✓
He feels scared. ✓ (2)
- c) He does not like Monday mornings. ✓/He is faced with a bleak prospect of the coming week. ✓
He probably has a hangover/has consumed too much alcohol during the weekend. ✓
The thought of getting on the Dube train scares him/sends shivers down his spine./He is afraid. ✓
He is faced with his dismal surroundings. ✓ (2)
3. "sour-smelling humanity" ✓
"its malevolence" ✓
"hostile life" ✓
"Despairing thoughts" ✓
4. Assonance ✓ (1)
5. D ✓ (1)
6. False. The journey was full of drama, with a tsotsi attacking a girl, and then the tsotsi being thrown out of the train by a strong man. ✓✓ (2)
7. The narrator is showing how unfriendly and dirty his world is. The trains are full with sour-smelling people, and at the station seemed unfriendly and confusing. ✓✓ (2)
8. a) She has an adult manner/she seems to know all about the world/she is precocious. ✓
She is arrogant. ✓
She has an air about her that scares/intimidates even the adults. ✓ (2)
- b) Later in the story, she suddenly reacts like the young girl she is. She panics. ✓
She looks around for help./She hopes the other passengers will come to her aid./Her arrogance suddenly disappears. ✓
She whimpers. ✓
She runs away/tries to get off the train. ✓ (2)

[18]



Activity 12

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract B

[The narrator describes the reactions of the passengers.]

Our caveman lover was still at the girl while people were changing from our train to the Westgate train in New Canada. The girl wanted to get off, but the *tsotsi* would not let her. When the train left the station, he gave her a vicious slap across the face so that her beret went flying. She flung a leg over me and rolled across my lap in her hurtling escape. The *tsotsi* followed, and as he passed me he reeled with the sway of the train. 5

To steady himself, he put a full paw in my face. It smelled sweaty-sour. Then he ploughed through the humanity of the train, after the girl. Men gave way shamelessly, but one woman would not take it. She burst into a spitfire tirade that whiplashed at the men. 10

“Lord, you call yourselves men, you poltroons! You let a small ruffian insult you. Fancy, he grabs at a girl in front of you – might be your daughter – this thing with the manner of a pig! If there were real men here, they’d pull his pants off and give him such a leathering he’d never sit down for a week. But, no, you let him do this here; tonight you’ll let him do it in your homes. And all you do is whimper, ‘The children of today have never no respect!’ *Sies!*” 15

1. Refer to line 1.
 - a) Who is “our caveman lover”? (1)
 - b) Why is this person described as a “caveman”? (1)
 - c) Quote ONE word from paragraph 2 which shows that the narrator is comparing the “caveman” to an animal. (1)
2. Refer to line 7.

What caused the “caveman” to reel? (1)
3. Refer to line 12.

Using your own words, explain why the woman calls the men “poltroons”. (1)
4. Refer to paragraph 4 of the extract.

Quote FOUR consecutive words to show that the woman believes that the men have strong fatherly instincts. (1)
5. Refer to line 18.

What does the use of the word “*Sies!*” suggest about the woman’s feelings? (1)
6. Later in the story the attacker draws a knife when the big man confronts him.

How do the following people react when they see the knife? (1)

 - a) The woman (1)
 - b) The male passengers (1)
7. The big man, who has been sitting quietly all the time, comes to life because of the incident described in the extract.



Any TWO answers to questions 7 and 9 are correct for 2 marks.

- a) Why, do you think, does he not react when the *tsotsi* attacks the young girl? State TWO points. (2)
- b) What causes the big man's violent reaction later? (2)
8. Do you feel sorry for the attacker who is flung from the train and probably killed? Explain your answer. (2)
9. The passengers on the Dube train choose not to get involved when the *tsotsi* attacks the girl. They also do nothing when he is flung from the train. Why do you think this is the case? Discuss your view. (2)

[17]

hint Any ONE of these answers will earn you 1 mark.

hint Any TWO of these answers in 7a), 7b) and 9 will earn you 2 marks.

hint Question 8 asks for your opinion. These answers are examples.

Answers to Activity 12

1. a) The *tsotsi*/the man who is attacking the girl. ✓ (1)
 b) His behaviour is vicious/primitive/savage/barbaric. ✓ (1)
 c) "paw" ✓ (1)
2. The movement/swaying of the train. ✓ (1)
3. They behave like cowards. ✓/They do not help the girl. ✓/They should have intervened. ✓/They should have given him a beating. ✓/The *tsotsi* appears to be younger than most of them so the men should discipline him. ✓/He is one and they are many. ✓ (1)
4. "might be your daughter" ✓ (1)
5. She is angry ✓/disgusted ✓/disapproving ✓/contemptuous ✓/disappointed ✓/ upset. ✓ (1)
6. a) She shouts ✓/screams ✓/shrieks. ✓ (1)
 b) They move out of the way. ✓ (1)
7. a) He is used to incidents like this. ✓
 He does not want to get involved in this incident ✓/he has been minding his own business, humming a song. ✓
 He probably thinks the two young people know each other. ✓
 He feels she deserves such treatment ✓/her arrogance when boarding ✓/the way she is dressed invited such treatment. ✓ (2)
 b) The disrespect shown to the older woman. ✓/The *tsotsi* swearing at a woman old enough to be his mother. ✓
 The *tsotsi* wounds him with a knife. ✓ (2)
8. Yes, although he attacked the girl he does not deserve to be flung from the train. ✓
 OR
 No, there is no excuse for being so rude to a woman/elders/people in general./No, he got what he deserved because he was so violent himself. ✓ (2)
9. Violence is part of their daily lives ✓/they are used to it. ✓
 There is no respect for human life. ✓
 There is no respect for women. ✓
 They fear for their own lives. ✓
 They do not wish to get involved in other people's lives/business. ✓ (2)

[17]

words to know**Definitions of words from the short story:**

nauseous	feeling sick
hostile	unfriendly
congested	very full
malevolence	hostility
fluke	lucky chance
lackluster	lifeless
obtrusive	interfering, in the way
genie	magical spirit
nefarious	wicked
ditty	little song
titillating	pleasing
lechery	lust
bawdiness	vulgarity
precocious	maturing early
anticipation	expectation
nonchalantly	casually
exuberant	lively, high-spirited
superlatives	highest order or degree
ungallant	not gentlemanly
confluence	coming together
tirade	verbal abuse
poltroons	cowards
lewd	vulgar
helter-skelter	disorderly behaviour
berserk	mad
demonical	behaving badly
cacophony	loud noise
relishing	enjoying
harass	torment, molest
passive	resigned, enduring
monotonously	repetitively, unchangingly, boringly

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

by James Thurber



James Thurber

James Thurber (1894-1961) was an American journalist, writer and cartoonist. For many years he worked for *The New Yorker*, a literary magazine. He lost one eye early in life and, as a result, he was not able to play sports like his peers. To pass the time he would escape into a rich fantasy world. He wrote many stories and memoirs. He often illustrated his stories with his own drawings.

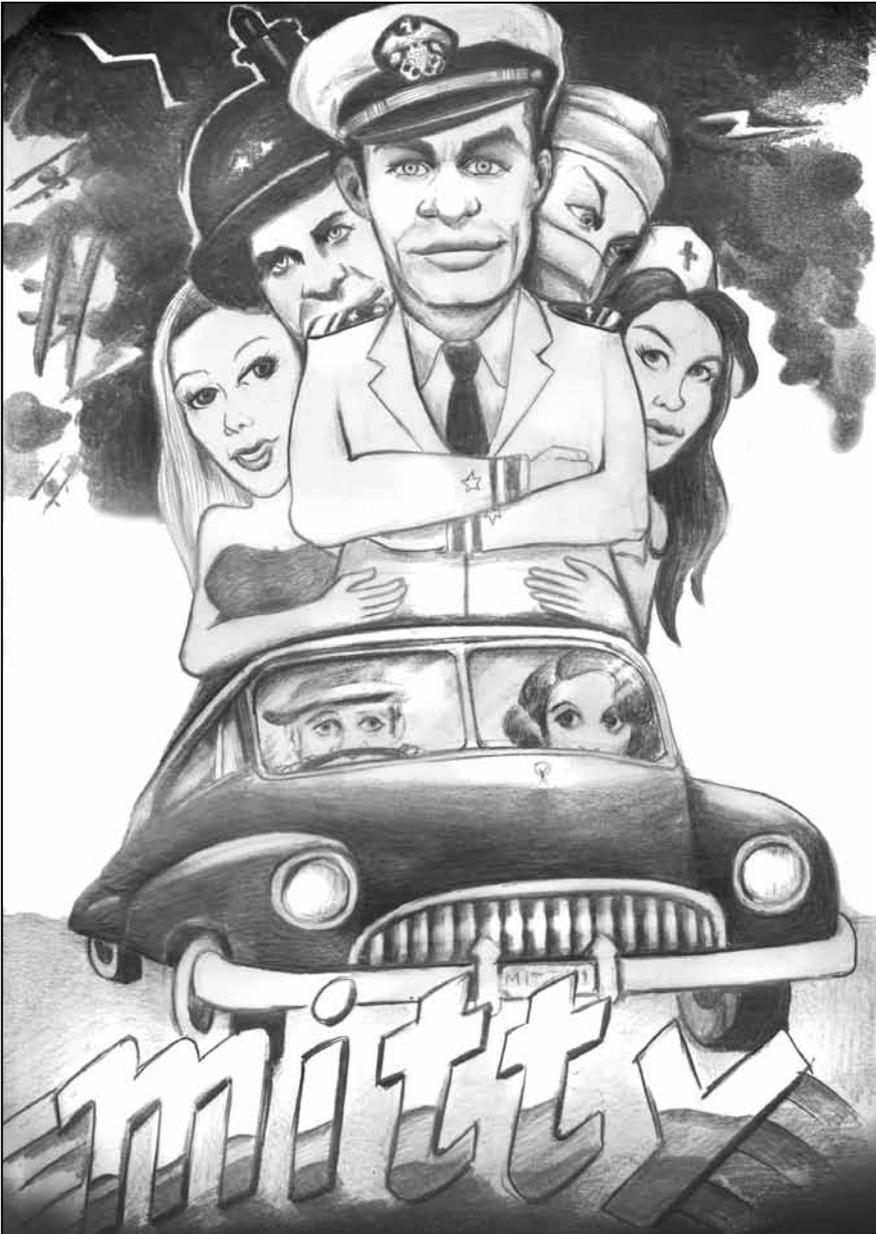
To read more about James Thurber, go to www.ThurberHouse.org

1. Summary

The story takes place on a snowy day during World War 2 (1939-1945) in an American town called Waterbury. Walter Mitty, an elderly man, is taking his wife to town so that she can go to the hairdresser and he can do some shopping while she is there.

As Walter Mitty drives his wife into town, does his errands and waits for her, he escapes into the following five **fantasy** worlds of his “secret life”. These are:

- **Fantasy 1:** He imagines that he is a Commander of a navy hydroplane going through a heavy storm – the worst storm in naval history. In his real life his wife shouts at him for driving his car too fast.
- **Fantasy 2:** He imagines that he is a renowned surgeon, saving a millionaire’s life. In his real life he drives past a hospital, which triggers his fantasy.
- **Fantasy 3:** He imagines he is a brave defendant in a murder trial. In his real life he walks past a boy selling newspapers who is shouting the headlines about a famous trial called the Waterbury trial.
- **Fantasy 4:** He imagines he is a heroic bomber pilot fighting the Germans. In his real life he reads an article in a magazine titled, “Can Germany Conquer the World Through the Air?”.
- **Fantasy 5:** He imagines that he is a man bravely facing a firing squad without a blindfold. In real life he is waiting outside a shop for his wife and it begins to rain.



2. Title

The title includes the words “secret life”, which encourages the reader to read the story in order to discover what this life is, and why it is “secret”.

3. Themes

A main theme in the story is the **conflict** between **fantasy** and **reality**. Mitty appears to be a hero to himself in his fantasy world, but in his real world he is weak and inadequate.

Another theme is the **power of fantasy** and **imagination**. It is only by escaping into his fantasy world that Mitty can find some sense of power and relief from his real world where he is the object of ridicule in his wife’s and others’ eyes. Walter Mitty represents all of us who aspire to a life of glamour and heroics to brighten up our everyday reality.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The setting of the story is an American town called Waterbury. Although much of the action takes place in a car, we also follow Walter Mitty as he goes shopping and waits at the hotel for his wife.

4.2 Structure and plot development

The story is structured so that it has two layers:

- In the **first story layer** Walter Mitty has a rich and imaginative fantasy life in which he is a daring and respected hero.
- In the **second story layer** Mitty has a **nagging** wife and a boring life.

Mitty's real-life problem is to find something to counteract the nagging of his wife and the boredom of the real world. These problems rarely have satisfactory resolutions, because he is often forgetful and feels inadequate.

In his fantasies, however, Mitty has a number of problems and complications to solve. These problems, however, he always resolves brilliantly.

In each of the fantasies Mitty is faced with a situation that is at **crisis point** or has reached a **climax**:

- In **fantasy 1** he fearlessly guides a hydroplane safely through a huge storm.
- In **fantasy 2** an important machine used for an operation is starting to fail. Mitty fixes it by replacing a faulty piston with a fountain pen, and successfully continues with the operation.
- In **fantasy 3** he tells the court about his amazing skills with a gun – that he could have fired a shot accurately at 300 feet using his left hand.
- In **fantasy 4** he is the only one who is brave enough to go and bomb an enemy ammunition dump.
- In **fantasy 5** he bravely faces a firing squad, “erect and motionless, proud and disdainful”.

In each of his fantasies Mitty plays the part of a highly respected and heroic man. Not all his fantasies reach a **resolution** as they are often interrupted and he has to return to the real world. In his real life the **complications** rarely have satisfactory resolutions because he is so forgetful and inadequate. The end of the story is an **anti-climax** as Mitty is left standing in the rain waiting for his wife. However, even then, he imagines himself to be “Walter Mitty the Undefeated”.

4.3 Characterisation

The main characters in the story are **Walter Mitty** and **his wife**.

Walter Mitty is the **protagonist** or main character in the story. His wife is the **antagonist** as she is mostly in opposition to him. She constantly nags him and reminds him to do things, which leaves him feeling weak and inadequate. For example:

vocab

Nagging: Constantly criticising.

vocab

Anti-climax: An exciting point in the story that suddenly loses its importance due to a meaningless event.

- She scolds him for driving too fast.
- She nags him to wear his gloves.
- She reminds him to buy some overshoes.
- She is cross when she can't find him in the hotel.
- At the end of the story she makes him wait for her in the rain.

Whenever Mitty does try and answer his wife she implies that he is old or ill:

- When he says he doesn't need overshoes, she says: "We've been all through that ... You're not a young man any longer."
- When he asks her, "Does it ever occur to you that I am sometimes thinking?" her response is: "I'm going to take your temperature when I get you home."

The character of Mrs Mitty is a good example of a **caricature**, which is an exaggerated representation of a type of person. She is a typical nagging, bossy wife. She is also an example of a **stereotype**. She is a stereotype because the writer has not given any additional features to her character.

By **contrast**, all the **characters in Mitty's fantasies** are distinguished by their youth, inexperience or reverence for Mitty:

- In **fantasy 1** the crew of the hydroplane believe that, "The Old Man'll get us through ... The Old Man ain't afraid of Hell!"
- In **fantasy 2** the doctor, Mr Pritchard-Mitford, in the operating theatre compliments him on a book he has written, saying it was a "brilliant performance". Dr Remington says that he and Pritchard-Mitford are not worthy to be compared to Mitty. Dr Renshaw feels that the situation in the theatre is beyond his control, so he asks Mitty to take over.
- In **fantasy 3** Mitty gets the better of the District Attorney and the Judge in the courtroom.
- In **fantasy 4** Mitty tells the sergeant that he will fly the plane alone even though the sergeant believes it is too hard a task.
- In **fantasy 5** Mitty bravely faces the firing-squad.

The other characters we meet in the story besides Mitty and his wife in the real world are mainly like his wife – they are authority figures who make him feel small and pathetic. These are:

- **Traffic cops** who order him to watch how he is driving;
- The **parking attendant** who has to park his car;
- The **young garageman** who has to help him with his snow tyres; and
- The **passerby** who laughs at him.

At the end of the story Mitty finally escapes from all this torment to a world where he will face the firing squad heroically.

vocab

Stereotype: A fixed, oversimplified view of a person, often based on their gender or race.

Remember that this story is set during World War 2 (1939-1945). This is why many of Mitty's fantasies have war references.



4.4 Style

The strength of the story lies in the writer's use of **contrasts**.

For example, Walter Mitty is a timid, inadequate, forgetful, absent-minded man who is constantly being picked on by his wife. By contrast, his wife has an attitude of certainty and control. Whereas he listens to her without comment, Mrs Mitty constantly comments on his behaviour, as she thinks he does everything wrong and she knows better.

She often treats him as if he were a child. For example:

"I'm going to take your temperature when I get you home."

She gives the impression that it is she who will get him home, but in reality it is he who will drive. As a result of being controlled in this way, Mitty feels humiliated and seeks to find an escape from her demands. It is not surprising that his fantasy world forms a pleasurable contrast to his real world. Here, at least, he is the brilliant, brave and dependable hero who saves the day and whom everyone admires.

4.5 Narrator and point of view

The **narrator** is not one of the characters in the story. The narrative is told using the **third person**.

4.6 Diction and figurative language

The way the writer uses figurative language and literary devices is very effective in the story.

vocab

Satire: The use of irony to comment critically on society or an individual.
Irony implies the opposite of what is either said or written.

The story can be read as a **satire** revealed to us by the fantasies that Walter Mitty has about himself. The satire works through the **irony** used throughout the story because, in his fantasy life, Mitty is completely different from what he is in reality. In his fantasies he is always respected and admired for his bravery and ability to save others in dangerous situations. In his real life he is the opposite of this.

Onomatopoeia (words that imitate real-life sounds) is always used in the fantasies. Sounds like "pocketa-pocketa" are used to show the reader that Mitty is in his "secret life". It indicates the sound of the hydroplane and the anaesthetiser. The "rat-tat-tatting" indicates the sound of guns and flame throwers used by bomber pilots.

vocab

Ellipsis: Three dots... which show that a sentence or thought is incomplete.

Note also the use of grammatical punctuation marks, namely the **ellipsis**, to indicate when Mitty is entering or coming out of one of his fantasies.

In order to add humour to the story the writer makes use of a number of **malapropisms** (words that sound like the correct one but are wrong) and **neologisms** (made-up words). For example, in Mitty's hospital fantasy the malapropisms "Obstreosis of the ductal tract" and "streptothricosis" sound like medical conditions, but they are not the correct terms. The gun in the courtroom fantasy is called by the **neologism** "Webley-Vickers 50.80", but there is no gun with that name in reality.

4.7 Tone and mood

When the story starts we are in the middle of one of Mitty's fantasies. The tone in this fantasy is **excited** and **optimistic**, conveyed by the writer's use of multiple exclamation marks:

"We're going through!"

"Rev her up to 8500!"

"Full strength in No. 3 turret!"

The next fantasy has Mitty in the middle of a life-threatening situation, so the tone is **serious**, but **confident**. Later, when he imagines himself facing a firing squad, the tone is **scornful**, "**proud** and **disdainful**".

This contrasts with the tone Mitty's wife uses when she speaks to him. She is usually **irritable** and **scolding**:

"What are you driving so fast for?"

"Why don't you wear your gloves? Have you lost your gloves?"

"Why do you have to hide in this old chair? How do you expect me to find you?"

The dreariness of Mitty's real life is emphasised when Mitty's wife leaves him waiting in the cold rain while she goes shopping. This creates a tone of **sadness** – we feel pity for poor, clumsy Mitty as he tries to create a richer life for himself. We almost welcome his last fantasy, when he faces a firing squad, because at least he is strong and brave even though he is facing death.

Mood: How does this story makes you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? What are the reasons it make you feel this way?

summary

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

by James Thurber

1. Title

- "Secret life" makes the reader want to read the story to find out about the "secret"

2. Themes

- **Conflict** between **fantasy** and **reality**
- The **power** of **fantasy** and **imagination**

3. How is the story told?

3.1 Setting

- An American town called Waterbury. Much of the action occurs in the car.

3.2 Structure and plot development

- **First story layer:** Walter Mitty's fantasy life

summary

- **Second story layer:** Walter Mitty's boring life and nagging wife
- **Crisis points/climaxes:** Occur in each of his five fantasies, although not all reach a resolution
- **Complications:** Occur in Walter Mitty's real life because he is forgetful and inadequate
- **Anti-climax:** The end of the story, as Walter Mitty is left standing in the rain waiting for his wife

3.3 Characterisation

- **Protagonist:** Walter Mitty, the main character
- **Antagonist:** Mrs Mitty, who opposes him in most things. She is presented as a caricature and a stereotype.
- **Characters in Walter Mitty's fantasies:** All treat him as a hero
- **Characters in Walter Mitty's real life:** All make him feel small and pathetic

3.4 Style

- **Contrasts:** Between the characters of Walter Mitty and his wife; between Walter Mitty's fantasy life and real life

3.5 Narrator and point of view

- **Third person**

3.6 Diction and figurative language

- **Satire:** The **irony** in the complete contrast between Walter Mitty's character in his fantasy life and his character in real life
- "pocketa-pocketa", "rat-tat-tatting"

Onomatopoeia

- "Obstreosis of the ductal tract", "streptothricosis"

Malapropisms

- "Webley-Vickers 50.80"

Neologism

3.7 Tone and mood

- **Tone:** In Walter Mitty's fantasy life the tone is **excited** and **optimistic**, **serious**, **confident** and **proud**. In his real life the tone is **irritable** and **scolding**. The anti-climax at the end creates a **sad** tone.
- **Mood:** How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Give reasons for your answer.



Activity 13

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract A

[Walter waits for his wife.]

He found a big leather chair in the lobby, facing a window, and he put the overshoes and the puppy biscuit on the floor beside it. He picked up an old copy of *Liberty* and sank down into the chair. ‘Can Germany Conquer the World Through the Air?’ Walter Mitty looked at the pictures of bombing planes and of ruined streets. 5

... “The cannonading has got the wind up in young Raleigh, sir,” said the sergeant. Captain Mitty looked up at him through tousled hair. “Get him, to bed”, he said wearily. “With the others. I’ll fly alone.”

1. Where is Walter Mitty and why is he there? (2)
2. What is he doing? (1)
3. Explain the meaning and significance of “Can Germany Conquer the World Through the Air?” (2)
4. What grammatical signs do we have to show that he begins to fantasise? (2)
5. What is the challenge or problem facing Mitty in this fantasy? Give a reason for your answer. (2)
6. Which THREE words could be used to describe Mitty as he is in his secret world. Choose the correct words from the list below. Sick, Heroic, Anxious, Brave, Respected, Fearful. (3)
7. Briefly explain why Mitty has this fantasy. (4)

[16]

Answers to Activity 13

1. He is in a hotel waiting for his wife. ✓✓ (2)
2. He is reading a newspaper or a magazine. ✓ (1)
3. It is the headline of the article he is reading. ✓ The article is about whether the German army can beat the Allies with its air-force. ✓ (2)
4. The ellipsis and inverted commas. ✓ (2)
5. He has to fight on his own because Raleigh is ill. ✓ (2)
6. Heroic, ✓ Brave, ✓ Respected. ✓ (3)
7. He wants to escape from his boring real life world where he is nagged by his wife and where he never achieves anything. ✓ (4)

[16]



Activity 14

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract B

[Walter and his wife drive in to town.]

“I don’t need overshoes,” said Mitty. She put her mirror back into her bag. “We’ve been all through that,” she said, getting out of the car. “You’re not a young man any longer.” He raced the engine a little. “Why don’t you wear your gloves? Have you lost your gloves?” Walter Mitty reached in a pocket and brought out the gloves. He put them on, but after she had turned and gone into the building and he had driven on to a red light, he took them off again. “Pick it up, brother!” snapped a cop as the light changed, and Mitty hastily pulled on his gloves and lurched ahead. He drove around the streets aimlessly for a time, and then he drove past the hospital on his way to the parking lot.

5

1. What evidence does this passage give that Mrs Mitty is a nagging wife? (2)
2. What evidence does this passage give to show that Mitty tries to do things his way. (2)
3. What else does he usually do to escape his wife? (2)
4. What does driving past the hospital make him think of? Describe his thoughts in detail. (4)
5. What word in the passage tells us that he is bored? (1)
6. Answer TRUE or FALSE and give a reason for your answer. Do you agree that Walter Mitty is a good driver? (2)

[13]

Answers to Activity 14

1. She tells him he should use overshoes and that he should put on his gloves. ✓✓ (2)
2. He takes the gloves off as soon as she has gone. ✓✓ (2)
3. He goes into his secret life which means that he imagines he is in a different situation. ✓✓ (2)
4. He thinks or fantasises that he is a famous surgeon who will operate well and help the other doctors. ✓✓ He will fix the machine and take over because the other doctors are not as good as he is. ✓✓ (4)
5. aimlessly ✓ (1)
6. False, because he races the engine and does not move fast enough when the lights change. ✓✓ (2)

[13]

words to know**Definitions of words from the short story:**

rakishly	jauntily, smartly
hydroplane	a plane that can land on water
grossly	hugely
overshoes	shoes worn over ordinary shoes to protect them from the snow
aimlessly	without direction
distraught	worried, upset
haggard	tired
glistening	shining
vaulted	sprang
insinuatingly	suggestively
bickering	arguing
pandemonium	chaos
lobby	entrance room
“auprès de ma blonde”	a French song
erect	upright
disdainful	scornful
inscrutable	impossible to understand

The Sisters

by Pauline Smith



Pauline Smith

Pauline Janet Smith (1882–1959) was born in Oudtshoorn, in the Western Cape. Her father was a British doctor who came to South Africa in the hope of curing his ill-health. When Pauline Smith was 13, she and her sister were sent away from their beloved Karoo to boarding school in England.

Although she never lived permanently in South Africa again, she visited many times over the next 40 years. During her extended visit from 1913–1914, she kept a journal which she used later as the basis for her first collection of short stories, called *The Little Karoo*, for her novel, and *The Beadle*. Her stories describe the isolated rural areas of the Little Karoo and the lives of the farming people who lived there.

1. Summary

Two sisters, Marta and Sukey, live on a farm called Zeekoegatt with their father, Burgert de Jager. Their mother has recently died of a disease of the heart caused, in part, by their father's "water-cases". Their father is always trying to get water from a neighbouring farmer, Redlinghuis, and has spent a great deal of money on legal fees.

In his last attempt to get water their father loses more money than ever and, in order to get water from Redlinghuis's farm, has to bond some of his lands to Redlinghuis. That means that instead of paying the money he owes, he gives the neighbour some of his land with the intention of buying it back when he has money again. When their father is unable to pay to get the land back again Redlinghuis tells him that he will take Marta as a wife instead.

Sukey is very angry that Marta is being offered to Redlinghuis, but Marta assures her that it is the right thing to do – it will save their father's farm. When Sukey confronts Redlinghuis and tells him that Marta is too good for him, and that she will offer herself up instead, Redlinghuis tells her that if he can't have Marta he will take their farm.

When Marta marries Redlinghuis he buys a tent-cart so that he can drive around all day and show off his new wife to everyone – "the wife that Burgert de Jager sold to me". Marta never complains about her husband, but she is clearly not happy and grows weaker and becomes sickly, until it is obvious she is dying. Before Marta dies, Redlinghuis disappears into the mountains with his gun. His body is found six days after Marta dies.



The story ends the night after the burial, with Burgert de Jager blaming himself for the deaths because of his demands for water. Sukey, however, tells him she will not judge him.

2. Title

The title of the story indicates that the focus is on the two sisters, Marta and Sukey, who are devoted to each other.

3. Themes

The themes in the story are **land, patriarchy, tradition, devotion, obedience, submission, female self-sacrifice, compassion, bitterness, the meaning of sin and the right to judge.**

vocab

Patriarchy: A society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.

In this quiet rural world the most important source of wealth is land. Owning land for generations is a sign of wealth and standing in society. It is not difficult to understand why Burgert de Jager is so obsessed with keeping his land, and why Marta is ready to sacrifice herself to help her father keep it. However, one of the underlying messages of the story is that it is destructive to attach more importance to land than to the welfare of people.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The setting of the **Little (Klein) Karoo** is important, even though there are few descriptions in the story. We know that it is a very harsh, drought-stricken world where a strong belief in tradition and obedience to God and family rules the lives of the people. These are also important **themes** in the story.

4.2 Structure and plot development

The **complication** in the story arises from the fact that Burgert de Jager has tried for many years to get water from the Ghamka river through a neighbouring farm owned by Jan Redlinghuis and has spent a great deal of money on legal fees. He is so obsessed with this that he does not notice how it is affecting his wife, who dies in his “bitterness and sorrow”.

The **conflict** between the two farmers creates the **tension** in the story. Burgert de Jager eventually owes Redlinghuis so much money for allowing the water to pass through his farm that he is forced to make a deal with him – Redlinghuis will either marry Marta or take over the De Jager’s farm. This **tension rises** in the story when De Jager decides that Marta must marry Redlinghuis to save the farm.

The story reaches a **climax** when Marta becomes weaker and weaker from the **humiliation** of her position, and eventually dies. Sukey is very unforgiving towards her father and blames him for the deaths of both her mother and sister. This causes tension and conflict between Sukey and her father.

The **resolution** to the story only comes after Marta has died and Redlinghuis has shot himself. Sukey comes to understand the goodness of Marta, and she finds some compassion for her father and tells him:

“Do now as it seems right to you ... Who am I that I should judge you?”

4.3 Characterisation

The main characters in the story are the sisters, **Marta** and **Sukey**, and their father, **Burgert de Jager**, who are the **protagonists**. The **antagonist** is **Jan Redlinghuis**, the farmer who opposes them and lives next door.

The two sisters are very different from one another, but they have great affection for each other.

vocab

Humiliation: Made to feel embarrassed and ashamed.

Marta is very loving, gentle, unselfish and accepting. She shows this by agreeing to do as her father asks in order to help him save the farm. She tells Sukey:

“if I do right, right will come of it, and it is right for me to save the lands of my father.

Marta is willing to accept her fate. She does not even blame Redlinghuis for demanding that she marry him:

“There is not one of us that is without sin in the world and old Jan Redlinghuis is not always mad. Who am I to judge Jan Redlinghuis?”

Sukey is also prepared to sacrifice herself to save her gentle and passive sister, when she tries to persuade Redlinghuis to take her instead of Marta, but she is much tougher and more judgemental. She believes her father has done wrong in sacrificing both his wife and his daughter, and she tells him that he is at fault. She says to her father:

“It is blood that we lead on our lands to water them. Did not my mother die for it? And was it not for this that we sold my sister Marta to old Jan Redlinghuis?”

Sukey is also very judgemental of Redlinghuis, based on what people say about him. She says to him:

“it is said that you are a sinful man, Jan Redlinghuis, going at times a little mad in your head”

Sukey loses her faith in God as she cannot believe that God would allow the marriage of Marta and Redlinghuis. She tells her father:

“There is no God or surely He would have saved our Marta.”

Burgert de Jager's obsession with getting water for his farm leads to the death of his wife and his daughter Marta. It also causes the break in the relationship between himself and his daughter Sukey.

Burgert de Jager and Jan Redlinghuis are mostly seen through the eyes of Sukey. They are both seen as obsessive and greedy. However, near the end of the story they both seem to realise they have been wrong and feel sorry about it. Burgert de Jager says to Sukey:

“It is true what you said to me, Sukey. It is blood that I have led on my lands to water them, and this night will I close the furrow that I built from the Ghamka river. God forgive me, I will do it.”

Jan Redlinghuis becomes remorseful when Marta is at the point of death. He says to Sukey before he goes into the mountains and takes his own life:

“Which of us now had the greatest sin – your father who sold me his daughter Marta, or I who bought her? Marta who let herself be sold, or you who offered yourself to save her?”

By saying this, he points to the fact that no one should judge, as everyone has played some part in the tragic events.

Note how much of the dialogue sounds biblical. It establishes their identity as characters belonging to a religious community.



4.4 Style

The story is told through a combination of **dialogue** and **description** of the events, but only from the point of view of the narrator, Sukey. We are not told by the writer what the characters look like, or what the land looks like, or how they view their surroundings, because the focus is on the attitudes and reactions of the characters to the troubles that they experience.

The style of the language in the dialogue is old-fashioned and mimics (copies) the **sentence structure of Afrikaans** to give us a closer impression of the speakers' context and culture. An example of this is: "this night will I" instead of 'tonight I will' as the writer wants to follow the Afrikaans word order, namely 'sal ek'.

4.5 Narrator and point of view

The **first person narrator**, Sukey de Jager, is a young girl living on a farm in the Little Karoo. She is strong-willed and the story is told from her point of view.

4.6 Diction and figurative language

The way the writer uses words and word order emphasises the meaning she wants to convey to the reader.

For example, **repetition** is used throughout the story for emphasis:

- To emphasise the pain of their lives due to her father's obsession with water-rights, Sukey repeats "bitterness and sorrow" when she says:
With each new water-case came more bitterness and sorrow to us all. Even between my parents at last came bitterness and sorrow. And in bitterness and sorrow my mother died.
- When Redlinghuis puts Burgert de Jager under pressure to pay him back, Sukey emphasises the growing pressure by saying:
And from that day Jan Redlinghuis pressed him, pressed him, pressed him, till my father did not know which way to turn.
- Marta explains why she will marry Redlinghuis:
"if I do right, right will come of it, and it is right for me to save the lands of my father."

This emphasises the idea of loyalty and what is appropriate behaviour. Repetition is therefore used to focus on key themes in the story.

Sukey also uses **sarcasm** when answering her father's questions. For example, when he says:

"Is it not wonderful, Sukey, what we have done with the water that old Jan Redlinghuis lets pass to my furrow?"

Sukey answers:

"What is now wonderful? It is blood that we lead on our lands to water them."

vocab

Sarcasm: A choice of words and tone of voice used in order to express displeasure or unkindness.

vocab

A symbol: Something that stands for or represents something else.

It is also interesting that Redlinghuis's farm is called "Bitterwater" which **symbolises** that his water is not a source of goodness.

The writer also uses **an idiom** (a clichéd saying) in the story:

"my father's back was up against the wall"

This means that the father has no options left, he has nowhere to turn.

The writer also uses figurative language in the story. For example:

- **Simile**

I went back to my father's house with my heart heavy like lead.

Sukey's heart is compared to lead.

- **Metaphor**

"It is blood that I have led on my lands to water them"

Here, Sukey's father compares the water from Jan Redlinghuis to blood because in order to get this water, lives have been lost. 'Blood' here could also refer to 'flesh and blood' or family.

4.7 Tone and mood

In this story the narrator's tone mostly emphasises the **sorrow** and **despair** that the characters experience. For example, when Sukey refers to Marta, she remembers her only as having a "still, sad face".

The writer emphasises this tone of despair near the end of the story when Marta dies at sun-down. It is as if Sukey and her father are entering an emotional night-time.

However, the story ends with a more **hopeful** tone when both Burgert de Jager and Sukey come to deeper emotional insights. Burgert de Jager finally realises that his actions have caused the deaths of his wife and his daughter, and he asks for God's forgiveness. Sukey doesn't scold her father, but says what her sister Marta would say:

"Who am I that I should judge you?"

Mood: How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? What are the reasons it makes you feel this way?

summary

The Sisters

by Pauline Smith

1. Title

- Focuses on the two sisters, Marta and Sukey

2. Themes

- **Land, patriarchy** and **tradition**
- **Devotion, obedience** and **submission**
- **Female self-sacrifice**
- **Compassion** and **bitterness**
- The **meaning of sin**
- The **right to judge**

3. How is the story told?**3.1 Setting**

- The Little (Klein) Karoo

3.2 Structure and plot development

- **Complication:** The legal cases brought by Burgert de Jager against Jan Redlinghuis
- **Conflict:** Between Burgert de Jager and Jan Redlinghuis because of the water issue and then the money owed due to the expensive legal cases
- **Rising tension:** Grows when De Jager decides that his daughter Marta must marry Redlinghuis
- **Climax:** Marta becomes weaker and weaker because of her humiliation, and then dies
- **Resolution:** Sukey comes to understand the goodness of Marta and finds compassion for her father

3.3 Characterisation

- **Protagonists:** Marta, Sukey and Burgert de Jager are the main characters
- **Antagonist:** Jan Redlinghuis opposes their actions

3.4 Style

- **Dialogue:** Uses the sentence structure of Afrikaans to give a better impression of the speakers' context and culture
- **Description:** Of events, not the land or the people

3.5 Narrator and point of view

- **First person** narrator (Sukey de Jager)

3.6 Diction and figurative language

- "With each new water-case came more bitterness and sorrow to us all. Even between my parents at last came bitterness and sorrow. And in bitterness and sorrow my mother died."

Repetition

summary

- “What is now wonderful? It is blood that we lead on our lands to water them.”
Sarcasm; Afrikaans sentence structure; metaphor
- “my father’s back was up against the wall”
Idiom
- “I went back to my father’s house with my heart heavy like lead.”
Simile
- “It is blood that I have led on my lands to water them.”
Metaphor

3.7 Tone and mood

- **Tone:** Mostly a tone of **sorrow, bitterness** and **despair**; ends with a more **hopeful** tone.
- **Mood:** How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Give reasons for your answer.





Activity 15

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract A

[Marta agrees to marry Jan Redlinghuis.]

And she said again: "Sukey, my darling, listen now! If I marry old Jan Redlinghuis he will let the water into my father's furrow, and the lands of Zeekoegatt will be saved. I am going to do it, and God will help me."

I cried to her: "Marta! Old Jan Redlinghuis is a sinful man, going at times a little mad in his head. God must help you before you marry him. Afterwards it will be too late." 5

And Marta said: "Sukey, if I do right, right will come of it, and it is right for me to save the lands of my father. Think now, Sukey, my darling! There is not one of us that is without sin in the world and old Jan Redlinghuis is not always mad. Who am I to judge Jan Redlinghuis? And can I then let my father be driven like a poor-white to Platkops dorp?" And she drew me down on to the pillow beside her, and took me into her arms, and I cried there until far into the night. 10 15

The next day I went alone across the river to old Jan Redlinghuis's farm. No one knew that I went, or what it was in my heart to do.

1. Complete the following sentences by using the words provided in the list below. Write only the words next to the question numbers (1a – 1d).

Orange; Jan Redlinghuis; Sukey; Grootkops; Ghamka; Marta; Burgert de Jager; Platkops

- This short story is set near the a) ... river in a place called b) ... The narrator of the story is c) ... and her father is d) ... (4)
2. Why does Marta's father ask her to marry Jan Redlinghuis? State TWO points. (2)
 3. Using your own words, explain why Marta agrees to marry Jan Redlinghuis. (2)
 4. Choose the correct answer to complete the following sentence. Write only the answer (A–D).
Sukey's father's agreement with Jan Redlinghuis proves that he is ...
A arrogant.
B careful.
C selfless.
D selfish. (1)

5. Sukey thinks that Jan is “a sinful man” and often “a little mad” (line 5).
In your opinion, is he mad? Give a reason for your answer. (2)
6. Briefly describe the relationship between the two sisters, Marta and Sukey. Give an example to substantiate your answer. (2)
7. Name TWO aspects of Marta’s character that are shown in this extract. (2)
8. Sukey goes to see Jan Redlinghuis the next day.
a) Explain why Sukey goes to see Jan Redlinghuis. (2)
b) Identify the theme which is shown here. (1)
9. Discuss your views on Marta’s decision to marry Jan Redlinghuis. (2)

[20]

Answers to Activity 15

1. a) Ghamka ✓
b) Platkops ✓
c) Sukey ✓
d) Burgert de Jager ✓ (4)
2. Burgert bonded some of his lands to Jan Redlinghuis. He cannot repay Jan, who, in turn, demands to marry Marta. If Marta refuses to marry Jan her father will lose his water rights. ✓✓ (2)
3. She wants to help her father/save the farm./ Her marriage to Jan will give her father access to the much-needed water. ✓✓
OR
She wants to spare her father the humiliation of poverty/being treated like a poor white. ✓✓ (2)
4. D ✓ (1)
5. Yes, he is mad because he kills Marta by humiliating her so much. ✓✓ (2)
6. They love each other dearly./They care for each other’s well-being. ✓
AND
Examples: Sukey is willing to take Marta’s place with Jan./She often visits Marta./They share everything./Sukey nurses Marta when she is dying./Marta calls Sukey “darling”./Marta held Sukey in her arms./Sukey cried in Marta’s arms. ✓ (2)
7. She is selfless and will do anything for her father. ✓
She is compassionate towards her sister. ✓
She is not judgemental. ✓
She is willing to accept her fate. ✓
She is obedient. ✓ (2)
8. a) She goes to ask Jan to marry her instead of Marta. ✓✓ (2)
b) Sisterly love/love for her sister/ sacrifice. ✓ (1)
9. Marta was foolish to sacrifice herself like that because marrying Jan ended up killing her. ✓✓
OR
Marta was very brave to sacrifice herself by marrying Jan because she saved her father’s lands so he didn’t have to live in poverty. ✓✓ (2)

[20]



Question 5 and 9 ask for your opinion. Back up your view with reasons. These answers are examples.



Any TWO of these answers in questions 6 and 7 will earn you 2 marks.



Activity 16

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract B

[Marta has died.]

We buried Marta in my mother's grave at Zeekoegatt ... And still they could not find Jan Redlinghuis. Six days they looked for him, and at last they found his body in the mountains. God knows what madness had driven old Jan Redlinghuis to the mountains when his wife lay dying, but there it was they found him, and at Bitterwater he was buried. 5

That night my father came to me and said: "It is true what you said to me, Sukey. It is blood that I have led on my lands to water them, and this night will I close the furrow that I built from the Ghamka river. God forgive me, I will do it." 10

It was in my heart to say to him: "The blood is already so deep in the lands that nothing we can do will now wash it out." But I did not say this. I do not know how it was, but there came before me the still, sad face of my sister, Marta, and it was as if she herself answered for me. 15

"Do now as it seems right to you," I said to my father. "Who am I that I should judge you?"

1. Which aspect of her personality caused Sukey's mother to be severely saddened and upset by the feud between her husband and Jan Redlinghuis? (1)
2. Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Write "true" or "false" and give a reason for your answer. (2)
Mrs de Jager died of cancer.
3. Give ONE reason why the people are looking for Jan Redlinghuis (lines 1–3). (1)
4. Explain why Jan Redlinghuis goes to the mountain. (2)
5. Refer to line 8 ("It is blood ... on my lands"). (1)
(a) Identify the figure of speech used here. (1)
(b) Explain the meaning of this line in the context of the story. (2)
6. Briefly explain how Burgert de Jager changes in this story. (2)
7. Quote a sentence which proves that Sukey is submitting to her father. (1)
8. In your opinion, who is to blame for Marta's death? Explain your choice. (3)

[15]

Answers to Activity 16

1. She was a very gentle/peace-loving/sensitive person. ✓ (1)
2. False. She died of a broken heart./She died of a heart condition. ✓✓ (2)
3. Marta had died. ✓
OR
He had disappeared. ✓ (1)
4. He is feeling guilty. ✓
He knows that he is responsible for Marta's illness. ✓
He probably wants to commit suicide. ✓
He does not want to be present when Marta dies. ✓ (2)
5. a) Metaphor ✓ (1)
b) The fight for water rights has caused the death of Marta (and his wife). ✓✓ (2)
6. He changes from a greedy/selfish/cruel man to one who is sorry for his mistakes/actions. ✓✓
OR
He changes from a greedy/selfish/cruel man to one who wants to be a better/kinder person. ✓✓ (2)
7. "Who am I that I should judge you?" ✓
OR
"Do now as it seems right to you." ✓ (1)
8. Her father Burgert and husband Jan are to blame for her death. ✓
Burgert sold her to him knowing he was cruel, and Jan humiliated her so much it killed her. ✓✓
OR
Marta is responsible for her own death because she chose to marry Jan, even though it was clear that he was mad. ✓✓✓ (3)

[15]

Any TWO of these answers to question 4 will earn you 2 marks.



Question 8 asks for your opinion. Back up your view with reasons. These answers are examples.

words to know**Definitions of words from the short story:**

water-cases	legal cases involving the right to use water
water-rights	permission to use water from a river or from another farm
furrow	a channel for water
cashmere	fine, soft wool
bond	instead of paying with money land has been used to pay a debt; if the person cannot pay it back the land goes to the person who lent the money
tent-cart	wagon with a hood
inspanned	harnessed the wagon to horses so that they could pull it



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