

HORNBILL NOTES

THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY

In this story, the author draws a pen portrait of his grandmother. He beautifully unfolds his relationship with her, while describing her appearance and daily activities.

Appearance of the grandmother

The author recalls his grandmother as a very old lady with a wrinkled face. She appeared so old that it was hard for him to believe that she had once been “young and pretty”. She was short, fat and a little stooped in appearance. The author remembers her moving about the house in “spotless white”, counting the beads of her rosary while her lips moved constantly in silent prayers. She was not “pretty” in the traditional sense, yet her serenity made her “beautiful”.

Initial years of togetherness: Life in the village

In the initial years of his life, the author lived with his grandmother in the village, sharing a good friendship. His grandmother used to wake him up in the morning and get him ready for the school. She would hand over to him the things he required in the school. After having thick, stale chappatis with butter and sugar for breakfast, they used to leave for school. The author's grandmother always accompanied him to school as it was attached to the temple. It was her habit to carry several stale chappatis for the village dogs, which they used to feed while returning from the school. The grandmother used to sit inside the temple reading holy books while the narrator learnt alphabets and prayers in the school.

Turning point of their friendship: Life in the city

The ‘turning-point’ of their friendship came when they moved to the city to stay with the author’s parents. Though they shared the same room, his grandmother no longer accompanied him to the school since the author started going in a bus. As years rolled by, they “saw less of each other”.

Meanwhile, as there were no dogs in the streets, she took to feeding the sparrows.

Unlike the village school, the author was not taught about God and the scriptures which troubled his grandmother. She did not believe in what was being taught at his school and was unhappy as she could not help him with his lessons. Moreover, she was disturbed at the idea of music lessons being given at school as she considered music to be unsuitable for gentlefolk. Her disapproval was conspicuous in her silence.

The grandmother combat's her loneliness by feeding the sparrows

When the author started going to the university he was given a room of his own. It resulted in a further gap between them. She accepted her loneliness and rarely spoke to anyone. All day long, she sat spinning the wheel and reciting her prayers. She relaxed for a short time, only in the afternoon, to feed the sparrows who came in large numbers.

The bond and level of comfort they shared with her is evident in the fact that they perched even on her legs and head. She used to be at her happiest-self while feeding the sparrows.

Author leaves for higher studies

The author decided to go abroad for further studies. He was sure that his grandmother would be upset at his departure. On the contrary, she came to the railway station to see him off but did not show any emotion. She was absorbed in her prayers, telling the beads of her rosary. She silently kissed the author's forehead, which the author considered to be (supposedly) the last sign of their physical contact.

Author's homecoming

On his return after five years, the author did not find any change in his grandmother. She was as old as ever and remained absorbed in her prayers. Even that day, the happiest moment for her was feeding the sparrows.

In the evening, for the first time ever, she did not pray. She collected several ladies of the neighborhood and sang songs related to the home-coming of the warriors. She had to be persuaded to stop singing in order to avoid overstraining. However, the next day she was taken ill.

Grandmother's death

Though diagnosed with a mild fever by the doctor, grandmother knew that her end was near. She decided to spend the last few hours of her life reciting prayers and telling her beads. Soon, her lips stopped moving and she died.

A silent tribute by the sparrows

The family went to make arrangements for the grandmother's funeral. As they came with a stretcher, they stopped mid-way to find thousands of sparrows scattered around her dead body. The sparrows mourned the death of the grandmother in utter silence. They ignored the bread crumbs thrown at them by the author's mother and flew away silently after the body was carried away for cremation. The bread-crumbs were swept away by the sweeper next morning.

THE PHOTOGRAPH

SHIRLEY TOULSON, an English author who lives in Somerset, was drawn into the spell of Celtic Christianity as she worked on her books dealing with the oldest roads and folklore of Britain and Ireland, and found herself following the routes taken on their journeys by the saints of the early church.

Introduction

In the poem "The Photograph", Toulson presents the emotions she and her mother felt once by seeing a photograph of her mother's childhood and what it means to the poet now. The photograph captures a moment in author's mother's life and with that captures the emotions felt during the moment the photo was taken as well.

For the poet, the image brings out feelings of loss as her mother has passed away (12 years prior). The poet remembers her mother looking at the image and laughing as she recalled her holiday trip to the beach.

The title of the poem represents something very different for the poet than it did for her mother. As for the author the image evokes a sadness of the loss of her mother, while it evoked thoughts of happiness for her mother.

Materialistically, the poet can find sadness that those depicted in the image have changed while the scenery in the photo has been allowed to stay the same. Here, the poet could sense a feeling of the memory being unfair given the ocean has been allowed to exist, without change, over the years while her mother has changed dramatically and is now gone.

Therefore, the title of the poem creates a double meaning for both the poet and the poet's mother. For one it is sadness and the other is happiness. The poet finds this ironic given her sadness is associated with her mother's happiness.

According to poet a photograph captures something seen by many and can; therefore, evoke many different feelings for those depicted and those looking at the image.

SUMMARY

The poet looks at the photograph of her mother, which was taken when her mother was 12 years old. She had gone for a sea holiday with her cousins Betty and Dolly and while they were paddling, her uncle took a photograph of them. Each of the cousins was holding the hands of the poet's mother who was the eldest among them. All the three of them stood smiling through their hair while the photo was taken. Her mother had a sweet face. All these happened before she was born. Years fled past since then. Her mother grew up into an adult. They all underwent changes while the sea stood still. After about twenty or thirty years the poet's mother would look at the photograph laughing nostalgically and remembering the past. She would appreciate the dress worn by her cousins Betty and Dolly. The sea holiday belonged to the past of her mother and the poet still remembers how her mother would laugh

looking at the snap shot. For the poet both these bring great sadness and an acute sense of loss. Her mother died 12 years ago and now the poet has nothing to say about this circumstance of the photograph.

Detailed explanation

This poem by Shirley Toulson is a tribute to her mother. One day, she finds an old photograph of her mother, pasted on a cardboard sheet; a photograph she remembered her mother talking about with fondness.

The cardboard shows me how it was that day when the two cousins went for a walk along the poet's mother. Each of the cousins held one of her mother's hands. And among all the three girls her mother was the eldest, about twelve years old at this time.

Poetic device used:

1) **allusion** as the cardboard's lack of durability hints at the lack of permanence of human life

All three stood still to smile through their hair

At the uncle with the camera, A sweet face

My mother's, that was before I was born

And the sea, which appears to have changed less

Washed their terribly transient feet.

All three of them stood smiling, their hair possibly tossed by the beach wind or water and they were snapped by the uncle who was with them in the beach. In the photo poet's mother was having a smiling happy face. Maybe the photo was taken long before poet's birth. And the mother changed a lot. But the sea remains same. In the picture it seems to wash their feet which by nature are transient because human life is short-lived as compared to nature.

Poetic devices used:

1. Alliteration... stood still to smile

2. Transferred Epithet. Human life itself is temporary not the feet. When the adjective for one noun like life is transferred to another noun like feet, it is called transferred epithet.

It is also alliteration due to the repetition of the 't' sound but Transferred Epithet is the dominant device here.

Some twenty- thirty- years later

She'd laugh at the snapshot. "See Betty

And Dolly,” she’d say, “and look how they

Dressed us for the beach.” The sea holiday

was her past, mine is her laughter. Both wry

With the laboured ease of loss

Some twenty, thirty years later from when the picture was clicked, her mother had looked at the snapshot and laughed. She had pointed out her cousin Betty and Dolly and talked nostalgically of how oddly they used to be dressed for the beach. The sea holiday was remembered by her mother with a fondness as well as a sense of loss because that time would never return. Similarly, her laughter would never return to the narrator. So, the sea holiday was the narrator’s mother’s past and her mother’s laughter is the narrator’s past. These pasts, the sea holiday as well as the laughter of her mother are remembered with a difficult and yet easy sense of loss.

Poetic devices used:

1) **Oxymoron:** The coming together of two opposite ideas to describe the same entity. ‘Laboured’ and ‘easy’ are opposite words describing the same entity ‘losses. The loss of the holiday and the laughter was easy because these things have to be accepted as a part of life. They are merely a part of the past and cannot be brought back or relived. However, precisely because they cannot be relived, there will always be a tinge of difficulty letting them go completely. They will always be seen as loss.

“Now she’s has been dead nearly as many years

As that girl lived. And of this circumstance

There is nothing to say at all,

Its silence silences. “

Now, it has been twelve years since her mother passed away. The girl in the photograph seems like a different person altogether. Thus, the use of the words, ‘that girl’ and about the fact that her mother has passed away leaving behind nothing but memories and photographs like this one. There is nothing to be said. It is a part of life and on thinking of it, one really has no words to express how one feels. The silence of the whole situation silences the poet and leaves her quiet.

Poetic device:

1. **Personification** : The situation has been given the human quality of silence
2. **Alliteration** : The sound of ‘s’ has been repeated

The camera thus managed to capture a moment in time. It kept the memory of the mother and for the mother alive. The sea holiday brought a sad smile (wry) to the mother's face because she couldn't relive it but was glad that she once had. Similarly, thinking of her mother's laughter brought a sad smile to the poet's face because although that laughter was now gone she was glad to have once had it

WE'RE NOT AFRAID TO DIE...IF WE CAN ALL BE TOGETHER”

A dream to duplicate the round-the-world voyage

The narrator, a 37 year old businessman and his wife Mary have dreamt to voyage around the world like the famous Captain James Cook. For the voyage, they have been perfecting their seafaring skills for the past 16 years. They have got a professionally built, 23 metre and 30 ton wooden-hulled boat, *Wavewalker*. The boat has been tested for months in the roughest of the weathers.

The beginning of the voyage

In July 1976, the narrator, together with his wife and kids (son Jonathan, 6 and daughter Suzanne, 7) sets sail from Plymouth, England. The initial period of the three-year journey (from the west coast of Africa to Cape Town) proves to be quite pleasant. Before heading east, they employ two crewmen, namely, Larry Vigil and Herb Seigler to help them tackle one of the world's roughest seas, the southern Indian Ocean.

The second day they encounter strong winds and alarming waves. By December 25, they manage to reach 3,500 kilometres east of Cape Town. Despite the bad weather, the family celebrates Christmas on the boat. However, the weather worsens with the passing time.

A catastrophe- the attack of the huge wave

On the early morning of January 2, the family faces strong, mighty waves and screaming winds. They attempt to slow down the boat by dropping the storm jib. They carry out life-raft drill and prepare themselves for the worst case scenario by donning life jackets and oilskins.

Later in the evening, a “perfectly vertical”, huge, tremendous wave hits the deck of the boat throwing the narrator off the boat. He accepts his ‘approaching death’ and begins to lose consciousness. The boat is just about to overturn when another huge wave comes and turns it right back. The narrator grabs the guard rails and sails into the boat's main boom. He suffers injuries in his ribs and mouth.

Fight for survival

Realising that the ship had water in its lower parts, he instructs Mary to take the wheel, while Larry and Herb pump out the water. He checks on the children in their cabin, where Sue informs him about a bump on her head to which he does not pay much

attention.

The narrator begins waterproofing the gaping holes. Most of the water now deviated to the side. However, their hand-pumps block due to debris and the electric-pump gets short-circuited. Fortunately, he finds a spare electric pump and connects it to an out-pipe in order to drain out the water.

They keep pumping and steering all night long. Even their Mayday calls are not answered as they are in a remote corner of the world.

Injuries of Suzanne

Sue's head swells, her eyes go black and has a deep cut on her arm. On being asked about her injuries, she replies to her father that she did not want to bother him when he was trying to save them.

Desperation to reach the land

The family manages to survive for 15 hours since the wave hit the boat. The water levels are controlled to a considerable level but they still have leaks below the waterline. They decide to rest and work in rotations.

The wave had left *Wavewalker* in a considerably bad state. Since it is not in a condition to make them reach Australia, they decide and hope to reach the nearest island, Ile Amsterdam, a French scientific base. Unfortunately, the chances to reach the island are very slim unless the wind and seas subside. Besides, their supporting engine had also been damaged.

January 4 and 5

After pumping out the water for 36 hours continuously, they take a sigh of relief as just a few centimetres of water is left to be pumped out. They decide to hoist the storm jib as the main mast is destroyed and head towards the supposed location of the islands.

Having found some corned beef and crackers, they eat their first meal in two days.

However, their relief is short-lived. The weather starts changing for the worse and by the morning of January 5, they are again left desperate.

Courageous Jonathan

As the narrator goes to comfort the children, he is left spellbound to see the fearlessness of his son, Jonathan, who says that he does not fear death as long as they all are together. This fills the narrator with determination and courage to fight the sea.

The ongoing struggle

He tries his best to protect the weakened starboard side. That evening, the narrator and his wife sit together holding hands, feeling hopeless and thinking that their end is approaching. But still with all the moral support that he receives from his children, he

continues his efforts. Fortunately, *Wavewalker* sails through the storm. He works on the wind speeds in order to calculate their exact position. While he is thinking, Sue gives him a greeting card expressing her love, gratitude and optimism.

Though he is not very convinced, he instructs Larry to steer a course of 185 degrees saying that if they are lucky they can hope to find the island by the evening. He then goes to sleep with a heavy heart.

Ultimate victory

Fortunately, they sail on and manage to find Ile Amsterdam by evening. On being informed about this, the narrator's joy knows no bound. Jonathan calls him the “best captain” and the “best daddy” in the whole world. Soon, they get off-shore and struggle to reach the island with the help of its inhabitants.

Stepping on the land after such turmoil fills the narrator's thoughts with cheerful and optimistic Larry and Herbie; supportive Mary; a brave seven-year-old girl who did not want her parents to worry about her head injuries and a six-year-old boy who is not afraid to die.

DISCOVERING TUT- THE SAGA CONTINUES

Tutankhamun, the 11th pharaoh of the 18th dynasty of Ancient Egypt is famous due to the discovery of his completely intact tomb by the British archaeologist Howard Carter in 1922

Tut was a teen aged heir to the royal throne of Egypt. The family had ruled Egypt for centuries. But Tut died young. He was the last of the family line. His father or grandfather Amenhotep-III was a powerful Pharaoh who ruled for almost 40 years. His son, Amenhotep-IV succeeded him but he shocked the country by attacking Amun, a major God, smashing his images and closing all his temples. His family had ruled for centuries before the boy king, Tut took over. However, Tut ruled for nine years and then died unexpectedly.

Centuries passed. In the year 1920, an archaeologist, Howard Carter, discovered this tomb after 3300 hundred years of Tut's burial. Carter was a British citizen and therefore he didn't have the beliefs of the Egyptians. The Egyptians never tried to go near Tut's tomb because they had feared that going near Tut's tomb was disastrous. It could invite the Pharaoh's curse! Like other British citizens, Carter also believed that this was just a superstition to keep thieves away from the tomb and from the enormous wealth buried with the little Pharaoh. Anyway Carter was not scared. He decided to take Tut's body out.

But taking Tut's body wasn't that easy. Carter and his team broke the three gold coffins one after the other. Finally they broke the innermost coffin and saw the dried, hard body of Tut. It was really wonderful to see the dead body of a 3300 year old mummy and to know for

ure that his name was Tutankhamun. He then decided to take the body out of the coffins but soon realized that that was not so easy because the body had got hardened with the resins and separating the body from the coffin was Impossible. But Carter could not think of leaving the body there. He feared the thieves who could destroy the mummy for stealing the valuable wealth inside, so Carter decided to cut Tut's body into pieces.

That really happened: Carter amputated Tut's hands, legs and all the other joints. You can call it a kind of a 21st century murder of a 1300 BC Pharaoh and the Murder was committed by Howard Carter. Carter had no other option because for him the mummy was more important than the treasures. Having taken the sliced pieces of Tut, Carter rejoined them into Tut again. Why did Carter amputate Tut's body? Well, Carter received criticisms from everywhere for killing an ancient mummy but Carter went ahead with his discovery. After some years, probably after Carter's death, a doctor performed an Xray and found out that one of Tut's bones was missing from his reassembled body. How did it happen? No one knows! Years passed and archaeologists and scientists performed a number of studies and experiments.

Today CT scan takes hundreds of X-Rays and creates a three dimensional image of the body. Tut's mummy was put into a CT scanner on 5 Jan. 2005 to answer two questions – How did he die? and how old was he at the time of death? King Tut was one of the first mummies to be scanned in death as in life. The process took less than three hours. The Pharaoh was taken back in the tomb again. The CT scan dispelled all doubts. Nothing had gone seriously wrong. Tut is resting in peace in his tomb in the valley of the departed kings of Egypt.

The modern world has turned impossibilities to possibilities. William's report gives an insight into this. The mummy scanned after a thousand years has opened new avenues regarding a cause of its death but technology hasn't been able to give us a definite answer to Tut's death. However, it has given us a direction to think and proceed. Maybe in future, technology would solve it for us.

THE VOICE OF THE RAIN

Poets and authors have always been fascinated by nature and its elements. The one element which has caught the fancy of most creative writers is the rain.

It has been associated with memories and emotions, freedom and depression, preserver and destroyer all together. Take a look at how evocative simple pictures can be when it has rainfall in its panorama.

The poet Walt Whitman writes of a conversation he once had with the rain as it dropped gently from the heavens. 'Who are you?' the poet asked. Stragely, the raindrops replied and the poet translates its answer for the readers.

'I am the poem of the earth,' said the rain. The rain adds that it is born in the form of invisible and intangible vapours that rise eternally from the earth's land and deep water bodies. It then reaches heaven (the sky) and changes its appearance complete to form clouds of abstract, changeable shapes. Yet, at its core, it remains the same as it was at birth.

It then returns to earth as little droplets which wash away the dust and rejuvenate the drought-ridden, dry land. New plants find life which would have otherwise remained hidden and unborn inside the land as mere seeds. Thus, this perpetual cyclic lifestyle ensures that the rain returns to its origin, the earth, giving it life, and making it pure and beautiful.

The poet realises that the rain's life is similar to that of any song. A song's birth place is the poet's heart. Once complete, it is passed on (wanders) from one person to another. It may change (reck'd) or remain the same (unreck'd) as it travels, but one day, it returns to the poet with all due love of the listeners.

IMPORTANT LINES:

'Which strange to tell...'

Often, poets took on the role of the mediator between nature and humanity. The poet admits it was strange that he could understand the rain and now takes up the task of translating the answer for the readers.

'I am the poem of the earth'

There is an immediate metaphoric comparison between the rain and poetry. However, this significance only comes to light in the poet's reflection at the end of the poem.

'Eternal I rise...'

The sense of permanence is extremely strong throughout the poem. The cyclic lifestyle is endless and shall continue as long as the connect between the rain and earth persists. The words 'eternal', 'impalpable', 'bottomless' show that though we record the overt reality, the true scope of nature remains tantalizingly beyond our rational comprehension.

'Altogether changed, and yet the same'

The rain changes its appearance from intangible vapours to abstract clouds, yet, at its core, it remains the rain. This is the universal law that energy is never destroyed, only transferred from one form to another. Hence, ironically, in change, lies eternity.

'I give back life to my own origin'

The rain falls to bring life to the unborn seeds hidden in the earth, it's own birth-place.

'(For song... duly with love returns)'

These lines have been placed in parenthesis because they are not a part of the conversation between the poet and the rain, rather its aftermath where the poet reflects on the conversation. He realises that the rain's life is similar to that of any song. A song's birth place is the poet's heart. Once complete, it is passed on (wanders) from one person to another. It may change (reck'd) or remain the same (unreck'd) as it travels, but one day, it returns to the poet with all due love of the listeners.

Comment on the style of the poem

Walt Whitman broke several conventions of poetry when writing this poem. There is no rhyme scheme nor do the lines stay of the same length. Although each phrase is just enough to be read in one breath, we find ourselves breathless as the line runs on and eventually becomes a part of the whole. This kind of poetry was known as prosaic poetry, that is, poetry that is written like prose.

THE AILING PLANET: THE GREEN MOVEMENT'S ROLE

The chapter comments on the deteriorating condition of our planet. It speaks of the problems faced by our planet, reasons for its poor condition and the changing view of the world for the planet.

The Green Movement

The author begins by commenting on the great attention received by the Green Movement that began some 25 years ago. The world's first nationwide Green party was founded in New Zealand in the year 1972 and the movement has been a great success since then.

A change in the human perception

A revolutionary change has come in the perception of the human beings bringing in a "holistic and ecological" view of the world. There has been a shift from the understanding developed by Copernicus to the people's belief that the earth is a living organism whose needs must be respected and preserved by us. According to the writer, our earth is like a "patient in declining health". Thus, we have to realise our ethical responsibility of guarding the planet.

Sustainable Development

The World Commission on Environment and Development propagated the concept of "sustainable development" in 1987. Sustainable development calls for a well-balanced development so as to meet the demands of the present and not to deprive our future generations from the natural world of resources.

Man and the other living-species

Man has been considered as the most dangerous being on the planet. However, due to the

efforts of a number of agencies all over the world, man is learning to live in harmony with the other living species on the planet. Man's existence is shifting from the system of domination to that of partnership.

The depletion of the principal biological systems

There are still many millions of living species that have not been catalogued. The author mentions the ecological concern pointed out by Mr. Lester R. Brown in his book "The Golden Economic Prospect". Mr. Brown points out four principal biological systems - fisheries, forests, grasslands and croplands. These form the foundation of the global economic system as they supply food and provide raw materials for industries except minerals and petroleum-derived synthetics.

The demand of the human beings on these systems is increasing to such an 'unsustainable' extent that the productivity of these systems is being hampered. The excessive demand result in deterioration and depletion of resources leading to the breakdown of fisheries, disappearance of forests, deterioration of croplands and turning of grasslands into barren lands.

Deforestation

The forests are being destroyed in large proportions to obtain firewood in poor countries. Depletion of tropical forests has lead to the extinction of several species. In fact, the tropical forests or "the powerhouse of evolution" are eroding at the rate of forty to fifty million acres per year. Besides, the increasing use of dung for burning deprives the soil of important natural fertilisers.

According to our Parliament's Estimates Committee, a near "catastrophic depletion" has been marked in the number of the forests of India over the last four decades. Ironically, article 48A of the Indian Constitution states that the state shall "protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country". However, India is losing its forests at the rate of 3.7 million acres a year.

The condition of the environment is 'critical' as per a study conducted by the United Nations.

The problem of over-population

One of the major factors adding to the deforming future of the human society is the fast-growing world population. The present world population is estimated at 5.7 billion. With

this ever-increasing population, development seems a far-fetched dream.

As per the author, the best contraceptive to control the population is development. Voluntary family planning with an element of coercion is the only alternative. Rise in income, spread of education and improved health would lead to fall in fertility. Population and poverty are directly proportional to each other. Thus, control of the population should be our top-most priority.

“Era of Responsibility”

The author now re-mentions the “holistic view” of the basis of our existence. He points that it is an “Era of Responsibility” that calls for “seeing the world as an integrated whole rather than a dissociated collection of parts”. Industry plays an important role in this responsibility. Excellence in environmental performance is required for the manufacturers to continue their existence. Our earth belongs as much to the future generation as much to us. We should soon realise our duty towards our planet and should not treat it solely as our property.

The chapter concludes with the beautiful lines of Mr. Lester Brown, “We have not inherited this earth from our forefathers; we have borrowed it from our children.”

THE BROWNING VERSION: Key Areas

- 1) The student-teacher relationship between Taplow and Frank vs. the relationship between Taplow and Crocker Harris
- 2) The portrait of Crocker Harris which emerges from the conversation between Taplow and Frank
- 3) Comparison of Frank with Harris as teachers at the same school
- 4) The concept of punishment, rules and bonding with students

THE BROWNING VERSION: SUMMARY OF THE ENTIRE PLAY

The play is about the last few days in the career of Andrew Crocker-Harris, an ageing Greek and Latin teacher at a British Public School. He is forced to retire due to health concerns and feels that he has become obsolete.

Taplow, a pupil who needs Crocker-Harris to pass him so he can go up to the next year, comes to him for help with his Greek, but Crocker-Harris is not in his rooms. Instead, Taplow meets Frank Hunter, another Master at the school. We find out (after Taplow leaves) that Hunter, and Crocker-Harris' wife, Millie, are carrying on an affair.

When Crocker-Harris returns, he first has the lesson with Taplow, where he begins to show his true feelings through his love for literature. Afterwards, the headmaster arrives to inform him that the school will not give him his pension because of his early retirement, though he was depending on it, and wishes him to relinquish his place in the end-of-term speech-giving to a popular sports master.

Mr. Gilbert, Crocker-Harris's successor at his teaching post, arrives to view the Crocker-Harris' home. He seeks advice on the lower fifth, the year Crocker-Harris teaches, and how to control them. Crocker-Harris begins to relate to Gilbert his own sad experiences after Gilbert tells Crocker-Harris that the headmaster had referred to Crocker-Harris as the 'Himmler of the lower fifth'. Heinrich Himmler was a commander in Hitler's Nazi army. Crocker-Harris, who did not realise he was feared by the boys, is very disturbed by this title.

Taplow returns, and moves Crocker-Harris by giving him an inscribed version of Robert Browning's translation of Aeschylus' Agamemnon, at which point he breaks down crying. Millie, his wife, shows her callousness at Crocker-Harris's emotional state by ruining this fond moment by implying Taplow only gave the gift to get the grades. Hunter breaks off the affair with her, instead turning his sympathies to Crocker-Harris. Crocker-Harris informs him that he knew of Millie's affair with Hunter, as well as her previous ones, but despite this he does not wish to divorce her. As the play ends, Hunter makes plans with a reluctant Crocker-Harris to meet him at his new place of work, and an uplifted Crocker-Harris telephones the headmaster saying that he will make his speech after the sports master, as is his right.

The 'Browning Version' of the title references the translation of the Greek tragedy given by Taplow, Agamemnon, in which Agamemnon is murdered by his wife, aided by her lover.

Summary of the extract:

The Browning Version opens in the sitting room of the home of Andrew and Millie Crocker-Harris. A young student, John Taplow, knocks at the front door, then lets himself inside. He steals a chocolate from an open box, then uses his walking stick to practice his golf swing.

Frank Hunter, a young schoolmaster, watches Taplow's moves unseen. Finally, he interrupts and gives Taplow pointers on his swing. They converse for a few moments. Taplow has come for his tutoring session with Andrew, although it is the last day of school. The young man is worried, however, that Andrew will not give him his "remove." He plans to study science, which is Hunter's subject.

Taplow does a wicked impersonation of Andrew, which he almost immediately regrets. However, Frank asks him to do it again, then suggests that since Crocker-Harris is rather late, Taplow should go play golf. Taplow is appalled at the suggestion. Despite his problems with Andrew, Taplow does like him and fears him enough to stay. Taplow relates an incident and again mimics Andrew for Frank's benefit. This time, Millie Crocker-Harris appears at the door, and she listens for a moment before coming inside.

Taplow is afraid that Millie has overheard his imitation. Millie informs Taplow that her husband will be tied up at the Bursar's for a while and that he could go, but he decides to wait. Millie sends him on an errand.

CHILDHOOD

The poem *Childhood* begins with the poet pondering over 'when' was it that he lost his childhood. He wonders if it was the time when he crossed the age of eleven or the time when he started realizing that there is no real existence of heaven and hell as they could not be geographically located in maps.

He wonders if he lost his childhood the moment he realised that adults were not all they pretended to be or when he recognised that the adults, who spoke and preached of love, themselves 'did not act so lovingly'.

The poet asks if he lost his childhood when he realised that he has a mind of his own or that he can choose his own way, guided by his mind now capable of producing thoughts and opinions that are different from other people.

The poet speculates as to 'where' his childhood disappeared. Though he is not aware of the day he lost his childhood, he knows that it has gone to some forgotten place, in an infant's innocent face.

FATHER TO SON

ANALYSIS OF THE POEM:

The poem revolves around a conflict between father and son who are in a serious communication gap. Though they live in the same house/globe, they are like strangers to each other. The father broods over this and this forms the centre of the poem. He introspects with an agrarian imagery where he feels he has sown his seed in a stranger's land that forbids him from owning it. He admits that he cannot share what his son loves and expects him to come back home like the Prodigal/lost son in the parable of Jesus in the Bible. He is ready to forgive him and develop a new love from sorrow. But his son feels anger growing out of sorrow and admits the vain efforts of both in understanding each other.

This poem doesn't merely depict a domestic conflict but touches upon the Creator-creation conflict/god-man conflict which gives an entirely novel dimension to the poem. Remember the Frankenstein story.

Had the poem been written from the point of view of the son, it would have brought in new scopes for discussion and debate. "Your children are not your children..." from the Prophet can be recounted in this context.

THE PRODIGAL SON: 'The Prodigal Son' is a Biblical reference from the New Testament's parables of Jesus. The story is of a father with two sons. The younger demanded his inheritance despite the fact that traditionally, the eldest born is heir. The father accedes and the spoilt younger son leaves home. He spends his fortune foolishly, eventually returning to his father's house with barely a stitch of cloth on his body. The father forgives him, and welcomes him into his embrace with open arms and a celebratory feast. Artist Pompeo Batoni represented this parable beautifully through the following painting:

COMPLETE DESCRIPTION

The poem revolves around a conflict between father and son who are in a serious communication gap. Though they live in the same house/globe, they are like strangers to each other. The father broods over this and this forms the centre of the poem. He introspects with an agrarian imagery where he feels he has sown his seed in a stranger's land that forbids him from owning it. He admits that he cannot share what his son loves and expects him to come back home like the Prodigal/lost son in the parable of Jesus in the Bible. He is ready to forgive him and develop a new love from sorrow. But his son feels anger growing out of sorrow and admits the vain efforts of both in understanding each other.

This poem doesn't merely depict a domestic conflict but touches upon the Creator-creation conflict/god-man conflict which gives an entirely novel dimension to the poem. Remember the Frankenstein story.

Had the poem been written from the point of view of the son, it would have brought in new scopes for discussion and debate. "Your children are not your children..." from the Prophet can be recounted in this context.

SNAPSHOT NOTES

THE SUMMER OF THE BEAUTIFUL WHITE HORSE

This is a story of two tribal Armenian boys who belonged to the Garoghlanian tribe. For their family, even at times of extreme poverty nothing could match the importance of honesty. They never did anything wrong and never lied or never even stole anything. The story talks about an incident that revolves around two cousins Aram who is nine years old and Mourad who is thirteen. The world, for Aram, at that time, seemed to be a delightful and extremely joyous yet mysterious dream. People believed in every imaginable kind of magnificence. Mourad was considered to be crazy by everybody he knew.

The story opens with Mourad coming to Aram's house at four in the morning one fine day. He tapped on the window to Aram's room. When Aram looked out of the window, he was taken aback and startled to see Mourad riding a beautiful white horse. In fact, he was so dazed that Mourad had to say "Yes, it's a horse. You are not dreaming." All this was too unbelievable because Aram knew that they were too poor to be able to afford to

buy a horse. The only way Mourad could possess it could be by stealing. They were too honest to lie and yet too crazy to ride a horse.

Thus, they kept the horse for two weeks, enjoying its ride in cool air and singing to their heart's content on the country roads. They hid it from the rest of the world by keeping it in a barn of the deserted vineyard. Meanwhile, Aram came to know that the horse was stolen from John Byro. They planned not to return it to him so soon although it pricked their conscience to steal, which was completely their ethics and tribal norms.

One fine day they came across John, the farmer. Such was the boys' family famous for their honesty that the thought of his horse being stolen by the boys never crossed John's mind. He was just amazed at the resemblance and said: "I would swear it is my horse if I did not know your parents."

This moving experience led the boys towards John's vineyard the very next morning. They left the horse in the barn after patting it affectionately. Later that day, John seemed to be very pleased and shared the news of the return of his horse with Aram's mother. The story teaches us the importance and necessity of honesty even in the face of greed and passion

THE ADDRESS

The Background

World War II ran its course from 1939 - 1945. Most of the nations of the world divided themselves into two groups: the Allies and the Axis. The Allies initially comprised of France, Poland and UK but soon became the group led by "the big three" - USA, the British Commonwealth, the Soviet Union. Other allies were China, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and other third world nations. The axis were formed of Germany, Italy, Japan and the areas they presided over (Parts of Europe, Africa, East and South East Asia and islands of the Pacific). The Allies eventually won but in the interim, about 50-70 million lives were lost.

The most devastating aspects of this war were the Holocaust and the Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Holocaust was the genocide of about six million European Jews under the Nazi reign of Adolf Hitler. The holocaust began with laws being established to remove Jews from civil society. They were sent to concentration camps and used as labour or for medical experiments unto death. Often mass shootouts took lives. Some were sent to extermination camps by freight train to be killed in the now infamous gas chambers.

Although it is proven that Hitler was an illegitimate child, there is only speculation to a Jewish birth father. Scholars still debate whether Hitler's antisemitism (hatred for the Jews) was due to his abandonment issues or was a product of the loss of Germany in World War I due to the civilian Jewish leaders and Marxists within Germany. In any case, having lived in antisemitic areas in his youth and served in the German army, Hitler grew up hating Jews and eventually devised "the final solution to the Jewish problem".

Our story begins after the Holocaust when our narrator, a Jewish survivor who had lost her entire family, had returned to find her mother's things at 46, Marconi Street.

The Synopsis and key points

The narrator arrives at 46, Marconi Street, a house owned by a certain Ms. Dorling. The door is opened a mere inch by a woman who seems not to know the narrator and treats her with cool incivility. However, during the course of the interaction, three important realisations occur:

- 1) The narrator realises that she is at the correct address as Mrs. Dorling is wearing her mother's sweater. From the faded buttons, it is evident that the sweater has been worn fairly often.
- 2) The narrator knows she is unwelcome as Mrs. Dorling does not even let the narrator come into the house. The narrator goes away disappointed and unsuccessful in collecting her things.
- 3) The narrator hears a door open and close within the house behind Mrs. Dorling. The readers know then that there is another person in the house, someone whom Mrs. Dorling is anxious to keep away from the narrator.

As the narrator walks back to the train station, she recalls how once on returning home from the university during the first half of World War II, she had found several of their household items missing. Her mother had then informed her that Mrs. Dorling, an old acquaintance of her mother's, had renewed their contact and insisted that she (Mrs. Dorling) keep their things safe during the war. The narrator also recalls another incident when she had seen Mrs. Dorling for an instant in a brown coat and shapeless hat, before the woman left with yet another instalment of the narrator's things.

The narrator's mother, an apparently gullible woman, did not seem to suspect Mrs. Dorling of any ulterior motive. Mrs. S, the narrator's woman was more worried about Mrs. Dorling hurting herself or being attacked by someone while carrying their things back to Marconi street for safekeeping. She asked her daughter to remember Mrs. Dorling's address in case the narrator was the only one who survived the war.

After the first unsuccessful visit, the narrator ruminates about why she took so long to return for her mother's things. The war and the loss of her family had settled heavily on the narrator's heart. She only felt fear and hesitation when she thought about the things kept at Mrs. Dorling's house. Each of those things carried memories of her life before the war. The pain of loss stopped her from returning for her things sooner.

The impact of war on civilians has been portrayed in several books and movies including 'The Diary of a Young Girl: Anne Frank', 'Sarah's Key' by Tatiana de Rosnay, 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas' by John Boyne and movies such as 'Schindler's List'. The torture of the concentration camps, the loss of loved ones left a painful ever-lasting impact. The narrator's observation of the light-coloured bread, familiar views and unthreatened sleep implies the coarse stale food of the camps, the view of barren land and barbed wires and a sleep forever threatened with pain and death.

After the first failed attempt, the narrator tried to visit Mrs. Dorling again. This time, the woman was not at home and she was greeted by her fifteen year old daughter. The girl showed off the antiques in her house to the narrator oblivious to the fact that they had once belonged to the narrator's own home. When the narrator finds that her things had now become part of someone

else's life and memories, she decides not to take her things after all. The memories associated with her things were overwhelming, there was no space for such fancy items in the small room where she lived now, and everything was now a part of someone else's home and life creating new memories each day. The visit was actually successful in the sense that the narrator was finally able to find the strength to move on and felt that of all the memories left behind by the war, the address with her mother's old things would be the easiest to forget.

Albert Einstein at School

The father of modern physics, Albert Einstein is famous to have discovered the theory of relativity which marked a revolution in physics. However, how many of us know the fact that in his early school days he was a dull student and got expelled from his school. No teacher liked him and he too, in turn, disliked attending school. This led to the school finally taking a decision in chasing him away.

The narrative begins with Albert being asked about a date by his history teacher. This was when he was very abrupt and crude in replying that he found it pointless to memorize dates when one could flip through the necessary pages whenever one needed to. He believed in education but didn't consider learning facts as education. He hated school because he hated the conventional form of education and the teachers found him to be a 'disgrace.' Finally, the teacher, disgusted and fed up, asked him to be taken away by his father. Einstein also hated going home, not for the obvious reasons of bad food and lack of comfort, but because he hated the atmosphere of 'slum violence.'

He was so against the idea of going to school and adopting to the set educational pattern that he once confided in his friend that he thought he would never pass the exams for the school diploma. He once told his cousin Elsa that he wanted to study science simply because he liked it. He didn't need additional reasons to study the subject he was interested in. He was sent to Munich to study where within six months he grew disinterested and found it wrong to waste his father's money, especially when it was so unfruitful and unproductive.

This was the moment of Albert's childhood epiphany when he gleamed with a sudden bright idea of averting school forever. He asked his friend Yuri to search for a friendly doctor who would write him off as a lunatic at school. He wanted the doctor to certify him as a person suffering from nervous breakdown so that he could stay away from school. To this doctor, Albert revealed his love for mathematics and his maths teacher. Later, in school, he asked for a reference letter from his maths teacher. This is when he heard the most surprising comment from his maths teacher who said: "I knew you were going to leave before you knew yourself."

Finally, the day when Albert was called by the headmaster he was not worried when this happened. However, he was taken aback when the headmaster said that he couldn't tolerate Albert's attitude towards education and his behavior in the classroom which disturbed an ideal environment for studying. Thus, he wanted Albert to leave school. Albert felt the medical report burning a hole in his pocket.

He left the school where he had spent five miserable years, without turning his head to give it a last look. He felt like seeing only Yuri before he left Munich. Elsa was back in Berlin when he left. Yuri bade him farewell and wished him good luck.

RANGA'S MARRIAGE

Ranga's Marriage, by Masti Venkatesh Iyengar, is a story about a boy who returns to his village after receiving education in English medium from Bangalore. The boy is the son of the accountant of the village. They live in the village Hoshali in Mysore. The boy when returns, the whole village floods over him to see if there is any change in his personality. However, to their dismay, he still has the same eyes and mouth and everything else. He did the traditional namaskar and all dispersed.

The story is a first person narrative and a major portion of the story is in flash back. The speaker directly addresses the reader. The narrator is a neighbour of the protagonist. He introduces the story with a difference by first giving a detailed description of their village Hoshali. He praises the mangoes from his village. He asks the reader if he/she has ever heard of the village. He replies to the question himself, for the village was not located in any of the maps for the English babus and the ones in our country forgot to put it there. Then he introduces Ranga, the protagonist, in a time ten years ago. Ranga had gone to Bangalore for studies and returned home after six months. It was the time when English was a language not popular and a few people used it. All used to converse in Kannada.

All the villagers arrived at Ranga's place and began scrutinising him. To their dismay, he was still the same old Ranga and they left disappointed. However, the narrator stayed back and shared a few jokes with the boy and then left. Later in the afternoon, Ranga arrived at the narrator's home with a few oranges. The narrator judged the boy and felt it appropriate to marry such a well educated and humble boy. However, Ranga had no plans to settle as a married man. He put his views on marriage in front of the narrator that he wanted to get married to a girl who is mature and someone Rangappa could admire.

Ranga left after the discussion and the narrator decided then that he would get the boy married. Determined, he began considering Rama Rao's niece Ratna as a suitable bride for Ranga. She was from a big town and knew how to play veena and harmonium. He came up with a plan. He asked Rama Rao's wife to send Ratna to his place to fetch some buttermilk. So she came on Friday wearing a grand saree. He requested Ratna to sing and sent for Ranga. Ranga reached the narrator's place and stopped outside the room as he did not want to disrupt the singing but was curious to see her face so peeped in. Ratna noticed the stranger and stopped abruptly. Ranga came in and the girl left.

Curiously he inquired about the girl and narrator cleverly played at his words. He told Ranga that the girl was married off a year ago and noticed the disappointment flaring Ranga's face. He was infatuated to the girl. The narrator was happy as his plan was working. As his next step, the next day the narrator took Ranga to an astrologer who he had already tutored what to say. It was the meeting with the astrologer when the narrator's name is disclosed. Shyama, he was. The astrologer pretended to read the natal chart of Rangappa and declared that the boy was in love with a girl who had a name of

something found in the ocean. Shyama said it could be Ratna, Rama Rao's niece. Ranga's smile was not hidden from Shyama. But the girl was married!

The narrator took the boy to Rama Rao's home and asked him to wait outside. When he came outside he confirmed that the girl was not married, that there had been some confusion. After all, the narrator had to come up with something. Even Ranga then admitted that he had been attracted to the girl. Later a conversation between the astrologer and the narrator is described how the astrologer says that though the narrator had given him clues, he could have found it all out by himself through astrology.

The story moves forward ten years, or to say, returns to the present. Rangappa came one day to the narrator, inviting him at his son Shyama's third birthday. Obviously, ratna and Ranga had been married. And now they have a three years old son whom Ranga named after the narrator.

MOTHER'S DAY

Mother's Day, a play by J. B. Priestley, portraying the status of a mother in a household. Priestly humorously explores the story when Mrs. Pearson, in her forties, stands up for her rights and how her family reacts at this. Mrs. Pearson is very fond of her family and works day and night to support her family member in the best possible manner. However, she is upset at the way she is being treated. Nobody cares for her or asks about her. All day long she stays at home doing all the work. In the evening when the kids and her husband return she gave threw herself in meeting their demands. She did not want any dislikeable thing to happen in her household yet she craved for their attention and a little respect. She went to her neighbor Mrs. Fitzgerald, a fortune teller and a magician. Older and heavy, Mrs. Fitzgerald comes with a plan. She proposed that they could exchange bodies and then with Pearson's body, she would teach a lesson to Pearson's family that Mrs. Pearson could not herself for she was too humble and nice to do that.

Though reluctant, Mrs. Pearson agreed to the idea and the two exchanged their bodies. Mrs. Pearson was still not sure and asked Mrs. Fitzgerald if she could get her body back. However, determined Fitzgerald tells Pearson to not worry and that she would handle the matter carefully. She left for Pearson's home with Mrs. Pearson's body. She entered the home and knew what she was to do to teach Pearsons' a lesson so they would not bother Mrs. Pearson in future unnecessarily. Mrs. Pearson (Mrs.Fitzgerald's soul) smoked a cigarette and was confident than ever. A few moments later, her daughter, Doris Pearson, entered the house and started demanding tea and her dress. Mrs. Pearson was sure to make her realize that she was Doris' mother and not a servant. She was stunned to see her mother smoking and that she had not prepared tea for her and that her dress was not ready as well. Doris told her mother that she was to go out with her beau Charles Spencer on which the mother remarked if she could not find someone better. This broke Doris and she left weeping.

Then came the son, Cyril Pearson, who is amused at his mother's strange behavior. They get into an argument. The children could not baffle the situation. When the mother left to fetch the stout,

the children discussed their mother's behavior. Doris felt that it might have been that mother got her head hit. Then enters mother with a bottle of stout and a glass half filled with it. The children began to laugh and the mother chided them and asked them to behave like grown-ups. Doris then asked her mother for her such behavior and if they had done something wrong. Then Mrs. Pearson tells them that it is actually the children's and her husband's behavior that has disturbed her. They always come and go without bothering about her. They demand duties from her and she does her best to keep everyone happy and still no body is bothered about her. She remarks that while the three of them do a job of forty hours a week with two days as weekend, she goes on working seven days round the clock. She proclaimed that she would do some work on Saturday and Sunday only if she is thanked for everything.

When the mother scolded Doris and Cyril duly, entered George Pearson and is annoyed at her wife sipping stout. He told her that he would have supper at the club and that he did not want tea. The wife told him that there was no tea. He got annoyed and the wife then said that when he did not want tea then why he was fighting for it. Mr. Pearson is flabbergasted at such conduct of his wife. The wife continues to rebuke the husband telling him that why he goes to club when he is a joke among all there. He is stunned and demanded the truth from his son. Cyril got upset at his mother yet told the father that it was the truth.

Then enters Mrs.Fitzgerald (actually Mrs.Pearson). Mrs. Pearson (actually Mrs.Fitzgerald) told her that she was just putting everyone at place and that the things were alright. Mrs.Pearson(Mrs. Fitzgerald in body) requested to have her body then and Mrs.Pearson(Mrs.Fitzgerald in body) on a condition that Pearson would not go soft on her family again. They got into their original bodies and Mrs.Fitzgerald left. The mother and the children and husband smiled at each other and it was decided that they all will have the dinner together and play a game of rummy.

BIRTH NOTES

The story Birth is an excerpt from The Citadel. It relates how a medical fresher handles a child delivery case in a mysterious way and brings back life in a seemingly dead born child. In doing so he applies his medical text book knowledge as well as intuition. He finds that text book knowledge alone is not sufficient to handle such cases. The story expresses the anxiety and excitement of the doctor, Andrew Manson and his team.

In the beginning of the story, it is narrated how Andrew Manson who had recently passed out from a medical school, was returning home after a disappointing evening with his girl friend, Christine. It was midnight and when he reached near his house he was requested by Joe Morgan to attend to his wife immediately. She was expecting her first child. Andrew agreed to go despite late night.

At the patient's house, Andrew saw that the lady was being attended to by a midwife. Mrs.Morgan was very serious. Andrew examined the patient and could understand that it would take some time for the delivery to take place. He took a break. In this period Andrew's mind started wavering in stray thoughts. He started thinking about Branwell who was foolishly devoted to a woman who deceived him meanly. Then he thought of Edward page who was married to the ill-natured Blodwen, and was now living unhappily, apart from his wife. Andrew thought all marriages were a dismal failure. In the meantime Andrew had to go back to attend to the patient.

The subsequent section narrates how after an hour long harsh struggle a child was born towards the dawn. But the child was still born. When Andrew gazed at the lifeless form, he shivered with horror. Then he looked at the mother. She required immediate attention. Andrew was to decide to whom to attend: the child or the mother.

Andrew gave the child to the nurse and turned his attention to the mother who was unconscious. Gradually, her heart strengthened and Andrew could now leave her to attend to the baby. Andrew asked about the child. The midwife was thoroughly frightened. Taking it as a still child, she had dumped it beneath the bed amongst soaked newspaper. Andrew pulled out the child. The child was perfectly formed. Andrew could understand that it was a case of suffocation due to lack of oxygen and excess of carbon-dioxide in the blood. Andrew started giving the necessary treatment. He did not lose heart. The midwife again and again told him that it was a still born child. But Andrew did not heed. He continued with his treatment.

Towards the end of the story, a miracle happened he rubbed the child with a towel crushed and relaxed the little chest with both his hands. Thus, he tried to infuse breath into that limp body. The little chest gave a short, convoluted heave. The child started turning around. It was no longer still born.

At last Andrew heaved a sigh of relief. He handed the child to the nurse. He told the entire story to Joe standing outside and walked down the street with some miners with a sense of deep satisfaction that he could achieve something great.

THE MIDWIFE AND ANDREW

Beliefs of the small town: The midwife is present in the house before the doctor arrives. The mining community did not have complete faith in modern medicine and perhaps, preferred to have someone older, more experienced and traditional present during a birth. Yet, Joe Morgan trusted Andrew completely. Contrasting personalities: The midwife is a foil to Andrew. She feels hopeless, resigned, helpless, fearful and untrained. On the other hand, Andrew proves to be more optimistic, diligent, efficient, self-sufficient, spontaneous and well-trained.

THE TITLE OF THE EXCERPT

The 'Birth' is not only of the child but also of the many relationships the birth ushers. It is the birth of a grandmother, father and mother. Most significantly, it was the birth of Andrew as a true doctor worthy of his title and confident of his future.

ANALYSIS OF THE POEM 'THE TALE OF THE MELON CITY'

'The Tale of Melon City' is a satire on the 'just and placid king'. In an amusing way the poet, Vikram Seth narrates the tale of the Melon city where the King ordered that an arch should be built and so the workmen built the arch but when the King came under the arch, his crown fell off as the arch was built too low. The King thought of it as a disgrace and ordered that the chief of builders be hanged.

The chief of builders claimed that it was the workmen's fault but the workmen shifted the blame to the masons and the masons accused the architect. The architect said he wasn't guilty because it was the King himself who made amendments when he saw the architect's plan, hearing this the King

said that he needs some advice, so the wisest man was found and carried to the court because he was very old and thus very wise.

The wisest man suggested that the culprit must be hanged. The King sensed the mood of the crowd and announced that a hanging must take place. The noose was set but it was set very high and only one man fitted it who was the King himself, therefore the King was hanged. Now, a new King was to be found, the Ministers announced that the first person to pass the City Gate will choose the new king.

An idiot passed the City Gate and when the ministers told him that he has to name a King, he replied that a melon should be proclaimed the King, he said so because it was his standard answer to all the questions as he liked melons. Even years later, the people have no problem from their King, a melon, no constraint is imposed on them, that is, there is lawlessness in the State and miscreants can do anything they want.