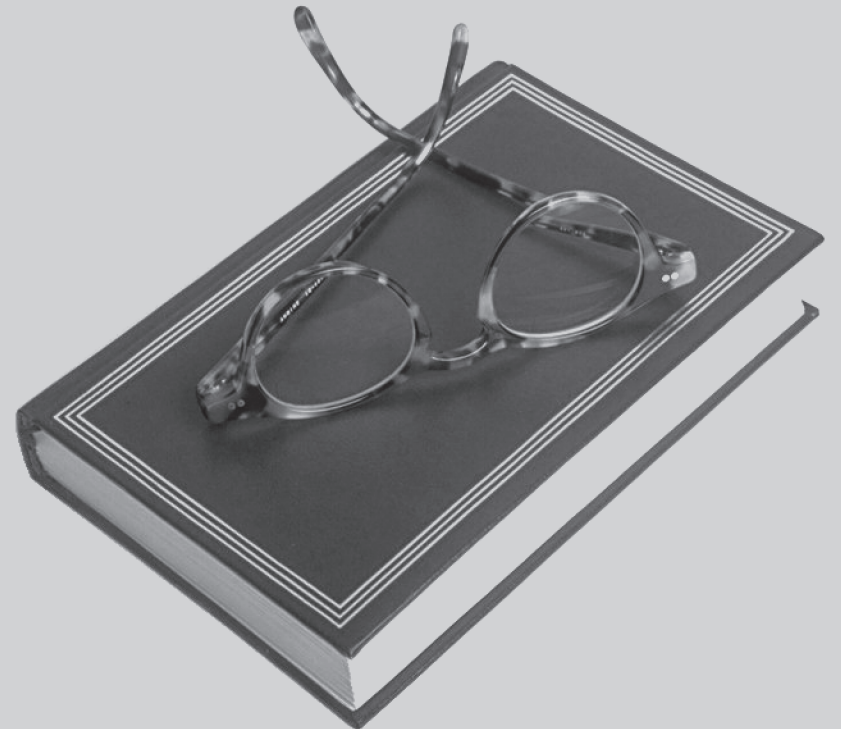


I. A. Schirova

HOW TO ANALYZE FICTION



РОССИЙСКИЙ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИЙ
УНИВЕРСИТЕТ ИМ. А.И. ГЕРЦЕНА

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HOW TO ANALYZE FICTION

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Учебное пособие состоит из двух частей: теоретической и практической. Теоретическая часть пособия (I) освещает общие проблемы организации и интерпретации художественного текста (Раздел 1), в том числе, распространённых в XX веке текстов психологической литературы, (Раздел 2), а также содержит краткие рекомендации по написанию эссе о литературном произведении (Раздел 3). Практическая часть пособия (II) включает тексты восьми произведений англоязычной психологической прозы указанного исторического периода и упражнения, направленные на их понимание, анализ и интерпретацию. Произведения предваряются краткими справками, в которых приводятся биографические и библиографические сведения об авторах.

Целью пособия является изучение сущностных и функциональных характеристик языковых фактов, несущих дополнительную эстетическую информацию, овладение понятийно-терминологическим аппаратом, необходимым для осмысления природы художественного текста, и формирование умения понимать словесное произведение искусства, занимая активную позицию интерпретатора-соавтора.

Рекомендуется студентам, аспирантам и магистрам, заинтересованным в приобретении навыков устной и письменной интерпретации художественного текста.

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Introduction

Author, Reader, Text

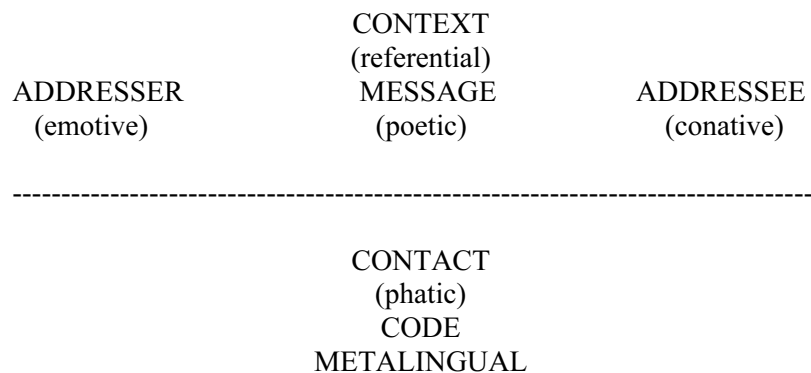
Fiction (Latin *fictiōnem*, from *figĕre*, to shape, fashion) is imagined narrative and literature consisting of such narrative, usually in prose.

‘Art is thinking in images’, V. Shklovsky writes. ‘This maxim, which even high-school students parrot, is nevertheless the starting point for the erudite philologist who is beginning to put together some kind of systematic literary theory’ [Shklovsky 1997: 3]. There exist different views on fiction. Some scholars treat its universe as a possible world created by a mental art. Like all types of merely possible worlds, fictional worlds, they say, lack autonomy, reality, and actuality. The acts of fictional characters are entirely specified by the text. Characters are made of language and owe their existence to the author’s imagination [Rescher 1983]. Others, however, share a different viewpoint: once we become immersed in a fiction, they maintain, the characters become real for us, and the world they live in momentarily takes the place of the actual world [Lewis 1978, Ryan 1991]. What remains indisputable in this discussion is the product of the author’s unique imagination – the image’s ineffable richness, showing us the way to a great variety of the author’s mental constructs – the possible worlds of literature.

Literature is traditionally considered a medium for transmitting aesthetic information. The *aesthetic* (‘more precisely *poetic*’ ‘as far as we deal with verbal material’) function is dominant in the hierarchy of basic verbal functions, pointed out by R. Jakobson within a poetic work. Just like in any other verbal message, this work fulfils the following six functions: *poetic, referential, emotive, conative, phatic, and metalingual*. The referential (denotative, cognitive) function is orientation towards the CONTEXT. The emotive (expressive) function aims at a direct expression of the speaker’s attitude towards what he is speaking about. It tends to produce an impression of a certain emotion whether true or feigned and is focused on the ADDRESSER. The conative function is orientation towards the ADDRESSEE: it finds its purest grammatical expression in the voca-

tive and imperative sentences. The phatic function aims at CONTACT to start and sustain the communication. Whenever the addresser and/or the addressee need to check up whether they use the same code, speech is focused on the CODE: it performs the metalingual (glossing) function. The poetic function focuses on the message ‘for its own sake’. This function is a determining function of verbal art, whereas in other verbal activities it acts as ‘a subsidiary, accessory constituent’.

Each of the functions, Jakobson observes, is determined by a different constitutive factor, involved in verbal communication. He schematizes these constitutive factors, complemented by the basic functions, as follows:



The ADDRESSER sends a MESSAGE to the ADDRESSEE. The MESSAGE requires: (1) a CONTEXT referred to, either verbal or capable of being verbalized; (2) a CODE, fully or partially common to the addressee; (3) CONTACT, a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication [Jakobson 1997: 72–74]; see also [Bradford 1997: 40–41].

As can easily be seen, a literary text may be presented as a transformed act of speech communication (quasi-utterance), though these communicative acts are not identical. In the course of literary communication the participants do not change their roles. They are fixed and separated by both time and place. The author is not present and the reader is left face-to-face with the text alone. Information flows

in one direction, as the author is the creator of the text. However, the cognitive activity of the reader is necessary for the text ‘to come to life’: the text cannot begin to exist as a real phenomenon until a reader actualizes it. Thinking is dialogical by nature: when an author sets out to write he is urged by a desire to impart his vision of the world to the reader, even if he sounds seemingly impersonal. A talented literary work always affects the reader, reaches his intellect and stirs his emotions. Thus text is the observable product of a writer’s discourse which is the process that created the text, but it always needs activation in the process of the reader’s discourse which aims at the reconstruction of the author’s intended message.

The supremacy of the poetic function over the referential function within a literary work does not obliterate the message, – it makes it ambiguous. The double sensed message finds correspondence in the so-called ‘split reference’ (Jakobson). On the one hand, the creative imagination always produces a reality that is consistent with the facts it sees around. No matter how far weird a work of art is it is rooted in reality. A vivid sample is utopian literature, describing an ideally perfect place or ideal society¹. On the other hand, it is the author’s unique imagination that gives birth to this fictitious reality and it changes it in its unique remarkable way. A literary work, unsurprisingly, cannot be subjected to the test of truth: it is neither true nor false. It is a lie in the impersonal general world, but it is the truth in the individual personified worlds of cognitive co-creators – the author and the reader.

Any literary text is by definition made of language: sounds, words, and sentences. The book is ‘total expansion of the letter’ (Mallarme). Whatever the novelist does, ‘*qua* novelist, he does in and through language’ [Lodge 1996: xi – 6]. All elements of a literary work are components of form. But they are also the bearers of meaning and extra-aesthetic values, and thus components of content. Form cannot exist for the sake of form: a really good writer will never use form at the expense of matter. Thus the analysis of form must not be narrowed to a mere formal analysis. The tools for the

¹ Sir *Thomas More* was the first to apply the word to a literary genre under the influence of *Plato's Republic*. More named his imaginary republic *Utopia* (1516) (Gk. *outopos*, no place, nowhere), a pun on *eutopia* ‘place (where all is) well’.

linguist are the obvious tools for analysis, but linguistic description with no interpretation is, in Jakobson's opinion, 'a sterile activity'. He underlies, that a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unconversant with linguistic methods are 'equally fragrant anachronisms' [Jakobson 1997].

The text stands before the recipient of information doubly encoded. The first encoding is the system of natural language: it is decoded automatically. However, the recipient knows that the text is encoded in some other way and part of the condition on which a text functions aesthetically is this very knowledge. Since the recipient does not know which elements of the text are significant, he 'suspects' that all the elements of expression are content elements. In applying to a work of literature a whole hierarchy of supplementary codes we are faced with a complicated strata of meanings additional to those of a non-literary text [Lotman 1976: 40].

An external non-linguistic context draws us to ideas and experiences in the world outside a literary text. A great number of text-external features may influence our interpretation. According to P. Verdonk, they may be as follows:

- the text type, or genre
- its topic, purpose, and function
- the immediate temporary and physical setting of the text
- the text's wider social, cultural, and historical setting
- the identities, knowledge, emotions, abilities, beliefs, and assumptions of the writer and reader
- the relationships holding between the writer and the reader
- the association with other similar or related text types (intertextuality) [Verdonk 2003: 19].

The linking of the language of linguistics and the analysis of a literary text is essentially the domain of *stylistics* which occupies the middle ground between linguistics and literary criticism. Its concerns overlap with those of the two disciplines. Thus 'stylistic analysis shades imperceptibly into literary appreciation' [Widdowson 1997: 117]

'The trouble with stylistics', writes Lecerle, is that no one has ever known exactly what the term meant...And yet, paradoxically, the object, *style*, seems to be as fascinating as ever, and the subject,

stylistics, like the phoenix, is forever reborn' [Lecerle 1993:17]. And this is what a long history of stylistics has really proved. The word "*style*" derives from Latin "stilus" – a pointed instrument the Romans used for writing on wax tablets. Later on *stilus* came to express the manner typical of a given author, a literary school or a period, of a literary genre. Then the word has been carried over to other spheres to indicate the style of a painter or of a composer, the elegance of technique or that *individual* quality that distinguished his work from the works of others.

A difficult task of defining style is sometimes compared with a try 'to put a sack of flour in a thimble' (Gourmont). There exist a lot of concepts of style. It is treated as embellishment of language, as technique of expression, as a distinctive feature of language, as a product of individual choice among linguistic possibilities etc. One of the most popular definitions of style is as follows: *style is balanced correlation of form and matter*. This last definition of style is of great importance for an interpreter of a literary text.

'Style is life! It is the very life-blood of thought' (Flaubert). It reflects personality's vision of reality, his individual imagination. Marking any work of art, the individual style of a writer combines personal idiosyncrasies, the domineering features of the language of the epoch and the style of that literary school to which the writer belongs. But, as it has just been mentioned, style is not a mere combination of artistic means. The best style is exactly fitted to its purpose. "Proper words in proper places", as Swift remarks, makes its true definition. So an interpreter should be interested not only in the individual choices of the author but in the reasons why particular forms are used rather than others.

To analyze individual style, we should examine a writer's choice of sounds, words, figures of speech, tropes etc. Both the prevailing rhythmical patterns and their alternations are keys to the writer's ideas. Graphological aspects of the text, including typography, are features of the writing system. The author's individual, unique imagination reveals itself in the system of images which also reflect the author's perception of the world. The intricacy and the clarity of the sentence pattern indicate the peculiarities of the writer's mentality. Thus needless to say, what is of paramount importance for interpreters is the sphere of meaning. In reading a literary work it is nec-

essary to know what the words mean, but it is equally important to know what they imply. Generally speaking, the obvious plane of the literary work (its subject and plot) is usually expressed in word denotations, while the implied plane (the author's attitude, the author's intention) is found in word connotations – the suggestions or implications evoked by a word. Connotative information is over and above what the word actually denotes. However, individual style defies complete analysis. As J. Cuddon writes, it is the "voice" of the writer himself, as peculiar to him as his laugh, his walk, his handwriting and the expression of his face [Cuddon 1992: 922].

The aim of interpretation is to name the meaning of the text examined. This meaning is elusive of precise description. A work of art always involves the interrelation of the real and the imagined, and its perception needs a creative effort. The task of a creative text is to display the contradictory plurality of its conclusions, setting the reader free to choose. In this sense a creative text is always an Open work [Eco 1996: 140]. Different readers will bring to it their own preconceptions and values. Their responses to a literary work are subjective. Words and images evoke various personal associations, stirring different trains of thought and feeling. Historical context is also important to interpretation. Textual meaning changes through time, and from this viewpoint the history of interpretation is a history of re-interpretations of the canonical texts. The reader rewrites every work, imposing upon it a new grid of interpretation and in this sense literary communication is a meeting or even a battle of minds.

From this it does not follow that a text means anything a reader wants it to mean. The variations in readings are not anarchic. There is a difference between a variant interpretation and overinterpretation: to avoid the danger of the latter any reader should check his guess at every level of the text, resorting to 'a quasi-anatomical analysis' (Eco). So we may say that the properties of the text itself set limits to the range of interpretation. Interpretation depends upon the reader's competence in language, his world knowledge, and the cultural conventions that language has produced. It demands of the reader both linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge, sensitiveness to art and inner maturity. People who know how to read literature become better capable of attending to what other people say and feel.

Responsiveness thus is 'an indispensable part of a fully developed personality' (Arnold).

Fiction has specific elements that exist from work to work and help us to break down a literary text into its components, i.e. to analyze it. *Plot, theme, characterization, imagery, symbolism, and point of view* are most obviously identified with fiction. They are useful concepts, but they do not exist as discrete parts of a finished work. Interpretation requires talking about a story in terms of its elements, but we must remember about the arbitrariness of those distinctions and of the organic integrity of the story itself.

PART I

1. ANALYZING ELEMENTS OF FICTION

Plot and Conflict

Analytical criticism of the novel has customarily distinguished three main constituents, plot, characterization and setting. Each of these elements is determinant of the others. As Henry James asks in his essay *The Art of fiction*, “What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?”

Aristotle called *plot* (Fr. *complot*, conspiracy) the ‘first principle’ and the ‘soul of a tragedy’. Plot is what happens in the narrative. It is narrative structure, the arrangement of the action in such a way as to induce curiosity and suspense – a state of uncertainty, anticipation and doubt about the outcome of a literary work. In the space/time continuum of plot the continual question operates in three tenses: Why did that happen? Why is this happening? What is going to happen next? “There is nothing in us but primeval curiosity, and consequently our other literary judgements are ludicrous”, E.M. Forster, similarly, notes. He adds, “A story is a narrative of events arranged in time sequence...A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. ‘The king died and then the queen died’ is a story. ‘The king died and then the queen died of grief’ is a plot” (*Aspects of the Novel*).

A usual pattern of causally related events starts with an unstable situation that describes *conflict* (Latin *conflictus*, from *confligere*, to strike together), a struggle between opposing forces. Conflict sets the plot in motion and may be *internal* or *external*.

Internal conflict is within the mind of characters. Thus, In *Julius Caesar* by Shakespeare, Brutus is “with himself at war”. He loves Rome more than he loves his friend, Caesar.

External conflict is between characters, between groups in society, between a character and the society or between a character and the forces of nature.

Let us now illustrate external conflict by considering a number of examples.

In Shakespeare’s *Othello*, the conflicts are between Iago, Cassio, Othello and Desdemona while in his *Romeo and Juliet*, the Capulets and the Montagues, the families of the leading characters, are enemies. The deaths of Romeo and Juliet are the only way out of their hopeless situation. In *The Moon and Sixpence* by Maugham, who used the life-story of Paul Gauguin, an artist is fighting conventional society. And in Hemingway’s *The Old man and the Sea*, a parable of inner strength and courage, a Cuban fisherman is struggling to bring home a great marlin he has caught.

The author usually explains the nature of the conflict in the *exposition* (Lat. *expositiōn-* (em), a showing forth) which introduces the situation, describes the characters and provides the setting. Whatever the causal relationship among the events in the story, each event intensifies (complicates) the conflict. The author next introduces a series of events, all related by cause. One event may cause another event, which in turn causes another event etc. Or several events may be linked to the same cause. In all these cases the action rises, the situation becomes more and more complicated, and the crisis is reached. The turning point and the most intense event in the literary work is called *climax* (Gr. *khlimax*, a ladder; *khlinen*, to slope, slant). The rest of the story – the falling action (*denouement* – Fr. literally untying) – leads toward diminishing tensions, the resolution of the conflict and a stable action at the end. Thus, ‘an ideal narrative’ begins with a stable situation that some force will perturb, from which results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in a converse direction, the equilibrium is re-established [Todorov 1981: 51].

In life, actions occur sequentially, one after the other, and literary works may also describe events chronologically. As it has already been mentioned, the time sequence gives the most obvious framework for the plot. However, there have been periods that have broken away from its dominance. In the 1920s of the twentieth century there was a tendency in prose towards the abandonment of logical ties between the episodes and a general fragmentation of existence into a series of unrelated points. We can observe the tendency in psychological novels. They are concerned mainly with the mental and emotional lives of characters. Action is almost completely obliterated in favour of psychological characterization.

Questions about Plot and Conflict

1. How is the action organized? What unstable situation does the exposition introduce? What events complicate the situation? What is the climax of the action? At which point does the unstable situation become stable? What conflict does the work dramatize? Personal, social or both?
2. What is the main conflict?
3. What are the minor conflicts?
4. How are the main and the minor conflicts related?
5. What causes the conflicts? Which conflicts are internal, which external?
6. Who is the protagonist? Who is the antagonist? What values does the author associate with each side of the conflict?
7. Are the characters in conflict with society?
8. Do forces beyond control drive the characters? What are these forces: illness, forces of nature, fate? Are the characters aware of these controlling forces?
9. Do characters contradict themselves? Why?
10. How is the main conflict resolved?
11. Which conflict goes unresolved and why?

Point of View

Point of view (perspective, vision) is an important aspect of narrative writing. It is the author's relationship to his fictional world, especially to the minds of the characters, the position from which the story is told. We do not deal, in literature, with events in the raw, but with events presented in a certain fashion. Point of view is an indication of the way the author sees things, but its effect on the reader is no less important.

The 'subject of the speech-act' is called *a narrator*. The narrator incarnates the principles from which judgements of value are brought to bear, conceals or reveals the characters' thoughts, chooses between direct and transposed discourse, between chronological order and temporal disruptions. Thus, on the one hand, point of view implies the speaker's mental, emotional and ideological attitude toward

the subject narrated, and, on the other hand, indicates the narrator's spatial and temporal perspective [Verdonk 2003: 120]

The narrator's 'partner', the one to whom the discourse uttered is addressed, is called *narratee*. The narratee is not the real reader, any more than the narrator is the real author. As Tz.Todorov remarks, 'We must not confuse the role with the actor who takes it' [Todorov 1981: 40]. The functions of the narratee are many. He constitutes a relay between narrator and reader, he helps specify the context of the narration, he serves to characterize the narrator, he puts certain themes in relief, he makes the plot advance, he becomes the mouthpiece of the work's ethic [Prince 1973].

There exist numerous descriptions of perspective in literature. Todorov, for example, distinguishes six categories clarifying the distinction among its particular kinds.

The first category concerns the quality of information received. This information may be either *objective* (a perception informs us about what is perceived) or *subjective* (a perception informs us about the perceiver).

The second category concerns the quantity of information, the reader's degree of knowledge. From the viewpoint of the extent (the angle) of vision *internal* vision (from inside) is opposed to *external* vision (from outside). Similarly, G. Genette writes about *inner* and *outer* points of view [Genette 1986].

The third category concerns the opposition between *unicity* and *multiplicity*, on the one hand (one character or all the characters may produce narrative), *consistency* and *variability*, on the other (an internal vision can be applied to a character throughout the narrative or during only one of its parts).

The fourth category concerns *ignorance* and *illusion*. Our information about the fictive universe can be absent or present and, in case it is present, can be true or false. Imperfect vision may be accompanied by the character's mistake or it may be a matter of a deliberate dissimulation.

The fifth category concerns the *judgement* brought to bear on the events represented. The description of the story can involve a moral evaluation but not always [Todorov 1981: 33–40].

It is clear that perspective combines several distinct characteristics.

N. Friedman presents a more complex classification with six points of view. They are:

- two types of *omniscient narrating* with or without authorial intrusions (*editorial omniscience* in *Tom Jones* by Fielding vs. *neutral omniscience* in *Counter Point* by Huxley);
- two types of *first-person narrating* (*I as witness* in *The Great Gatsby* by Fitzgerald vs. *I as protagonist* in *Great Expectations* by Dickens);
- two types of *selective-omniscient narrating*, i.e. with restricted point of view (*multiple selective-omniscience* in *To the Lighthouse* by Woolf vs. *single selective omniscience* in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by Joyce);
- two types of *objective narrating* (*dramatic mode* in Hemingway, *Hills Like White Elephant*, vs. *the camera* in Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*) [Friedman 1967].

So we might say, to sum it up, that, in the *omniscient* position, the author narrates the story assuming complete knowledge of the characters' actions and thoughts. In the *selective (limited) omniscient* position, the author narrates the story, but restricts (limits) his revelation of the thoughts of characters. In the *first-person position*, the author is even more restricted, because a major or a minor character tells the story, eliminating the author as narrator. The reader's attention is focused on what the character-narrator actually experiences or may be retrospectively surveying (*Moll Flanders* by Defoe), sometimes in detailed letters or diaries.

One of the most obvious reasons for application of the first-person narrative is the effect of authenticity. The events may be recounted from the standpoint of several characters. Browning's most ambiguous and complex book, *The Ring and the Book*, for instance, is divided into 12 books and running 21,000 lines of blank verse. The same story is told over and over again here by practically everyone involved, directly and indirectly: the main characters, their supporters, impartial observers etc. At the same time, when reading stories in the first person, we should realize that what the narrator is recounting might not be the objective truth.

At last, in the *objective* position, the author remains a detached observer. He narrates the story without entering very deeply into the

minds of the characters and summarizing them rather briefly when it is necessary to motivate an action. The author relies on the behaviour, gestures, and words of the character. This point of view is sometimes called 'dramatic' because we see the characters as if in a play. The objective position is best suited to novels with a large cast of characters' (*Oliver Twist* by Dickens) and to detective novels. The reader is not given all the necessary information to titillate him till the end leaving some mystery unsolved. It is a well-known fact, that Hemingway and Faulkner also often adopt the objective position.

Some other classifications of perspective provide us with simpler approaches to the problem. Many critics, for example, oppose *objective perspective* to *subjective perspective*, pointing out intermediate types between the two extremes. Sometimes *the first-person narration* (see above) is opposed to *the third-person narration*. In the latter case, the narrator does not participate in the action of the story as one of the characters, but lets us know exactly how the characters feel. We learn about the characters through this outside voice.

The examples below help us to see how the degrees of the narrator's presence can vary.

K. Tessaro's *Loise Canova (Elegance)* is the first person narrator. She uses the first-person pronoun and tells the story as an element of her experience:

Finally, they leave. I unlock the door and stand in front of the mirror. Like any other normal woman, I look in the mirror every day, when I brush my teeth or wash my face or comb my hair. It's just I tend to look at myself in pieces and avoid joining them all up together. I don't know why; it just feels safer that way.

In L.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* the third-person narrator functions only as an impersonal purveyor of the events and as a link between the characters. This is the narrator on Gudrun Brangwen's circumstances and choices:

She had a certain amount of money. She had come home partly to save, and now she had sold several pieces of work, she had been praised in various shows. She knew she could become quite the 'go' if she went to London. But she knew London. She wanted something else.

To make the narration more emphatic, the author may include several points of view in the same work. He often applies different types of perspective according to the matter with which he is dealing. Fashions and conventions influence his preferences too.

Tone

A very important aspect of point of view is *tone*, the narrator's predominant attitude toward the subject, whether it is a particular setting, an event, a character or an idea. We should bear in mind that tone can't but imply the writer's prevailing spirit, mental attitude and moral outlook too.

Tone may suggest sympathy for the characters. In some stories it is judgmental; in others it is neutral, but, on the whole, it provides a great variety of attitudes: playful, friendly, detached, pompous, officious, intimate, bantering, optimistic, pessimistic etc. The way a story is mediated is a key element in fictional structure.

Consider, for example, the opening of G. Mikes' story *On Shopping (How to be a Brit)*. Full of comic observations, it definitely lends a playful tone to the narration:

My greatest difficulty in turning myself into a true Britisher was the Art of Shopping. In my silly and primitive Continental way, I believed that the aim of shopping was to buy things; moreover, you needed or fancied. Today I know that (a) shopping is a social – as opposed to a commercial – activity and (b) its aim is to help the shopkeeper to get rid of all that junk.

We might note that instead of standing point-black how he feels about a subject, the narrator conveys his attitude indirectly. And here we deal with irony.

Irony (Gr. *eirōneia*, dissimulation or simulated ignorance) is based on the opposition of what is said to what is implied. Irony was first recorded in Plato's Republic, where it had the meaning of a glib and underhand way of taking people in. Swift, Pope, Fielding, Johnson has shown themselves as real masters of this particular form of expression. With the decline of satire in the 20th c., irony ceases to

be the principle mode, but it is frequently occasional, as J. Cuddon puts it, in verse, prose, and drama [Cuddon 1991: 462].

Most forms of irony involve the perception of a discrepancy or incongruity between words and their meaning, between actions and their results or between appearance and reality. In all these cases there may be an element of the absurd and of the paradoxical. When a text intended to be ironic is not seen as such, the effect can be disastrous. D. Defoe's contemporaries, for example, took his *Shortest Way with the Dissenters* literally; the author was fined and imprisoned.

The two basic kinds of irony are *verbal irony* and *situational irony* (irony of situation, irony of behaviour).

Verbal irony involves saying what one does not mean. The dictionary meaning of the word opposes its contextual (evaluative) meaning, as, for example, in the Mikes text, quoted above. The adjectives *silly* and *primitive* change their dictionary negative evaluative colouring for a new positive evaluative meaning, the latter being imposed on them by the context. We should not be surprised: the narrator is definitely unlikely to apply these unflattering characteristics to himself. The interrelation between the dictionary negative evaluation and the positive contextual meaning of the adjectives produces the effect of irony.

After reading the first two paragraphs of G. Mikes' *How Not to be Clever*, we cannot doubt the ironic usage of the word 'clever' either. The narrator supports this conclusion explicitly:

'You foreigners are so clever,' said a lady to me some years ago. First, thinking of the great amount of foreign idiots and half-wits I had had the honour of meeting, I considered this remark exaggerated but complimentary.

Since then I have learnt that it was far from it. These few words expressed the lady's contempt and slight disgust for foreigners' (G. Mikes. *How to be a Brit. A George Mikes Minibus*)

A 'classic' example of verbal irony is Marc Antony's reference to Brutus being 'an honourable man' (*Julius Caesar* by Shakespeare). No less ironic is the opening sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* by J. Austen:

It is a belief of every mother trying to find a rich husband for her daughter that a single man in possession of a fortune must be in want of a wife.

When the effect of irony is created by the whole text, and it is not possible to fix the exact word in whose meaning we can trace the contradiction between the said and the implied, we speak about *sustained irony*. An example is Esmond's judgement of Marlborough (Thackeray's *Henry Esmond*). As a soldier of the English army, Esmond sees the Duke at very close quarters, and his observations are full of irony:

Our Duke was as calm at the mouth of the cannon as at the door of a drawing-room. Perhaps he could not have been the great man he was, had he had a heart either for love or hatred, or pity or fear, or regret or remorse... for he used all men, great and small, that came near him, as his instruments alike, and took something of theirs, either some quality or some property... and having, as I have said, this of the godlike in him, that he could see a hero perish or a sparrow fall, with the same amount of sympathy for either... He would cringe to a shoeblick, as he would flatter a minister or a monarch; be haughty, be humble, threaten, repent, weep, grasp your hand (or stab you whenever he saw occasion). But yet those of the army, who knew him best and had suffered most from him, admired him most of all: and as he rode along the lines to battle or galloped up in the nick of time to a battalion reeling from before the enemy's charge or shot, the fainting men and officers got new courage as they saw the splendid calm of his face, and felt that his will made them irresistible.

Defoe, Swift, Lewis, and Waugh also provide many examples of sustained irony.

In situational irony, the situation is different from what common sense indicates it is, will be or ought to be. Situational irony occurs when, for instance, a man is laughing at the misfortune of another while the same misfortune, unbeknownst, is happening to him. The surprise recognition by the audience often produces a comic effect, making irony funny. Situational irony is a complex intellectual phenomenon difficult to define in a sentence or two. A profound example is Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. The novel is set in the 17th century Boston and opens as a young woman named Hester

Prynne emerges from prison with her illegitimate baby in her arms. Hester, will not reveal the identity of her lover, try as the community does to draw out the secret. Ironically, the guilty man is one of that community's most respected figures, the young minister, Arthur Dimmesdale.

Some critics also point out *attitudinal irony* and *dramatic irony*.

Situational irony results from what most people expect, whereas attitudinal irony results from what one person expects. A frequent example is a naive character (*Don Quixote* by Cervantes).

Dramatic irony occurs in plays when characters state something that they believe to be true, but that the audience knows to be false. An example of dramatic irony would be when King Oedipus, who has unknowingly killed his father, says that he will banish his father's killer when he finds him (*Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles).

Although dramatic irony gets its name from drama, it can occur in all forms of literature [Griffith 1995: 62].

Types of irony may overlap.

Irony is the most common and most efficient technique of the satirist. As an instrument of truth, it provides wit and humour, and is usually obliquely critical in that it deflates, scorns, or attacks. *Satire* (Lat. *satura*, later *satira*, feminine singular of *satur*, full, sated, from *satis*, enough, sufficient) is the holding up of vice or folly to ridicule. The satirist may insert serious statements of value, but most often he relies on an implicit moral code, understood by his audience. The satirist's goal is 'to show how foolish someone or something is' [Thornley and Gwyneth Roberts 1995: 205], to point out the hypocrisy of his target in the hope that either the target or the audience will return to a real following of the code. Thus, satire is inescapably moral even when no explicit values are promoted in the work. A good satirist's hatred, as Wilson puts it, is cleansing and exhilarating [Wilson 1976: 21]

Satire often makes use of sarcasm, a form of sneering criticism in which disapproval is often expressed as ironic praise.

Questions about Point of View

1. Who is the narrator of the story?

2. How many characters produce the narrative?
3. What is the relationship between the narrator and the protagonist?
4. Who is the narratee in the work, if any?
5. Does the knowledge we receive inform us about what is perceived or about the perceiver?
6. Is the narrative conducted 'in the first person' or 'in the third person'?
7. Does the narrator convey his attitude to the subject directly or indirectly?
8. Is the narrator's vision internal or external?
9. Is this point of view omniscient, limited-omniscient or objective?
10. Can you trust the narrator? Is the narrator's vision perfect?
11. What image do you have of the narrator at the beginning of the work? Later on?
12. What is gained by this point of view? What effects does it have on the characters, the theme, the setting and the language?
13. Does it change the meaning of the work?
14. What tone is domineering in the work? Friendly, intimate, mater-of-fact, detached, optimistic, pessimistic or any other? What attitude to the subject of narration does the tone imply?
15. What narrative devices help the author to convey the narrator's attitude to the subject? Is the choice of words helpful here?
16. What are the most obvious ironies in the work? What types of irony are they? Verbal? Situational? Attitudinal? Dramatic?
17. Which of the characters often use verbal irony? Why? Are the characters disappointed or simply realistic?
18. Does the verbal irony take the form of sarcasm? Why so?
19. Do situational ironies, if any, result from fate or human actions? Are the characters aware of the situational ironies? Should we blame the characters for creating the situational ironies or for not understanding them?
20. What is the author's attitude towards the ironies in the work?
21. Do you share the author's attitudes?

Characterization

Characterization is the author's presentation and development of fictional *personages* (*characters*).

The 'characters' (Gr. – *kharactér*, stamp; *kharássein*, to engrave) were short prose sketches of different types of people moulded to a pattern. An interest in characterization is connected with publication in 1592 of a Latin translation of *The Characters* by Teophrastus of Lesbos (371–287 BC), a pupil of Aristotle. Though the character as a literary genre had had a long history in European literature in the form of allegory, fable and tale, it became popular in the 17th c. An example is the character studies in Chaucer's *General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*.

The most common term for *the leading (chief, central) character* who engages the reader's interest and empathy is the *protagonist* (Greek *protagonistes*, first actor in drama). The Greek tragic poet was restricted to three actors: protagonist, deuteragonist and tritagonist, i.e. first, second, and third actor. When contests between actors were established, only the protagonists were considered. The *antagonist* (Greek *antagonistes*, a rival; anti, against, a contest) is the protagonist's opponent, the character, force or collection of forces (death, the devil, an illness) that stands directly opposed to the protagonist and gives rise to the conflict of the story. Thus Iago is the antagonist in *Othello*. Throughout the play, he instigates conflicts and sows distrust among the main characters, Othello and Desdemona. The antagonist may be 'a non-human force or even an aspect of the protagonist – his or her tendency toward evil and self-destruction' [Griffith 1995: 45].

The terms *hero* (*heroine*) and *villain* may also be used to describe the leading character and his opponent. They do not sound neutral and imply the presence or the absence of outstanding virtue. The noble nature of *Quentin Durward* in W. Scott's novel opposes de la Marck's villainous nature. Wolf Larsen, the hero of *The Sea-Wolf* by London, is not simply a man, he is a 'superman', a real master of nature. The beautiful poetess Maude Brewster becomes fascinated with him after he rescues her and takes on board his ship. In most modern fiction, however, the leading character is much more ordinary. Such a character is sometimes called the *antihero*, not be-

cause he opposes the hero, but because he is not like a hero in stature or perfection.

Characters may be *major* and *minor*, *flat (simple)* or *round (complex)*.

Major characters are those we see more or over a longer period of time (the American wife in *The Cat in the Rain* by Hemingway). Minor characters are less important and we learn less about them than about major characters (the hotel owner in the same story).

Flat characters embody one or two qualities, ideas or personality traits that can be readily described in a brief summary. They are not psychologically complex characters and therefore are readily accessible to readers. Some flat characters are recognized as *stock characters*; they embody *stereotypes*, such as ‘the mean stepfather’ or ‘the lazy husband’.

Characterization as literary method is connected with *characterology* (theory of characters, personality types). For example, in nineteenth-century English and American fiction one finds brunettes, male and female (female instance – Becky Sharp in Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*), and blondes (female instance – Amelia Sedley). The blond is a home-maker, unexciting but steady and sweet, the brunette – passionate, violent, mysterious, and untrustworthy. Dickens, however, largely adopts and adapts the types of the eighteenth-century stage and novel; he initiates only two types – the helpless old and young, and the dreamers or fantasists [Wellek and Warren 1980: 220].

Flat characterization may be abstract idealization or may be caricature which ridicules a person by exaggerating and distorting his most prominent features. Examples are Malvolio and Sir Toby Belch in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* or Lady Bracknell in Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

The creation of characters is supposed to blend, in varying degrees, inherited literary types, persons observed, and the self. The novelist’s potential selves, including those viewed as evil, are all potential personae. ‘Madame Bovary, c’est moi’, says Flaubert. Only selves recognized from within as potential can become ‘living characters’, not flat but round [Wellek and Warren 1980: 90]. Round characters are more complex than flat or stock characters and often display the inconsistencies and internal conflicts found in real people. They are fully developed, have multiple personality traits and

therefore are harder to summarize. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is one of literature’s most psychologically complex characters.

In the course of the work characters remain the same (*static* characters) or change because of the action in the plot (*dynamic* characters). Flat characterization commonly overlaps static and round characterization dynamic but not always. Shakespeare’s Sir John Falstaff in *King Henry the Fourth* is static. However, he is ‘proudly penniless, delightfully rude, fatly wicked, wonderfully unpleasant to look at, boastfully late for battles, and a cheerful coward who carries a bottle even on the battlefield’ [Thornley and Gwyneth Roberts 1995: 44].

Dynamic characters, especially main characters, typically grow in understanding. The climax of this growth is *epiphany*, a term that James Joyce used to describe a sudden revelation of truth experienced by a character. The term comes from the Bible and describes the Wise Men’s first perception of Christ’s divinity. Joyce applied it to fictional characters [Griffith 1995: 47]. According to Joyce’s theory of art, epiphanies are moments observed by an artist, in which ‘the soul of the commonest object seems to us radiant’ (Willson). Such sudden snap-shots are ‘a revelation of the whatness of a thing’. In *The Dubliners* the epiphany often occurs at the climax of the plot.

Modern characters tend to be individuals, unique in their distinctive qualities.

Modes of characterization are many, *telling* and *showing* among them (in Genette’s terms, *narrative of words* and *narrative of events*, correspondingly). Hemingway’s *Hills like White Elephants* is a canonical example of showing while Irving’s *Tales of a Traveller* illustrates telling.

Plato was the first to address the problem of telling and showing when he contrasted *diegesis* (pure narrative) and *mimesis* (imitation). Accentuating the basic distinction between these two narrative modes, we should bear in mind the following: ‘The very idea of showing is completely illusory: in contrast to dramatic representation, no narrative can ‘show’ or ‘imitate’ the story it tells. All it can do is tell it in a manner which is detailed, precise, ‘alive’, and in that way give more or less the illusion of mimesis...that narration, oral or written, is in fact of language’ [Genette 1986: 163–164]

The author may reveal the characters *directly* or *indirectly*. In the direct method, he simply tells the reader what the character is like. Here, for example, is W. Thackeray telling us what Amelia Sedley is like:

Now, Miss Amelia Sedley was a young lady of this singular species; and deserved not only all that Miss Pinkerton said in her praise, but had many charming qualities which that pompous old Minerva of a woman could not see, from the differences of rank and age between her pupil and herself.

For she could not only sing like a lark, or a Mrs. Billington, and dance like Hillisberg or Parisot; and embroider beautifully; and spell as well as a Dictionary itself; but she had such a kindly, smiling, tender, gentle, generous heart of her own, as won the love of everybody who came near her, from Minerva herself down to the poor girl in the scullery (W. Thackeray: *Vanity Fair*)

In the indirect method of revealing characters, the author shows us, rather than tells us what the characters are like through what they say about one another, through external poetic details (dress, movements etc), through their thoughts, speech and deeds [Griffith 1995: 47]. The following expressive graphons in Penny's speech make the reader doubt the sincerity of her feelings towards the narrator:

And then it happens. I am spotted.

"And this must be your wiiiiiiife!" Penny gasps, turning her attention to me. Spreading her arms wide, she shakes her head in disbelief and for one horrible moment it looks as if I am to walk into them. I dither stupidly and I am about to take a step forward when she suddenly contracts in delight. "You are adooooorable!" she coos, turning to the others for affirmation. "Isn't she just adooooooooooooorable?" (K. Tessaro: *Elegance*)

The author introduces his persons by a number of paragraphs describing in detail their physical appearance, moral and psychological nature or reduces this block characterization to an introductory label. The simplest form of characterization is naming. The so-called speaking (telling) names (*Rebecca Sharp* in the above-mentioned *Vanity Fair* or *Lady Teazle* in *School for Scandal* by Sheridan) are often found in literature. Speaking names are cases of *antonomasia*

(Gr. *antonomázein*, to name instead, to call a new name) – a trope in which a proper name is used to express a general idea.

In the example below *Milton* as a case of antonomasia has a stronger association than the word *poet*, and *Cromwell* – than the word *tyrant*:

Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.
(Gray: *Elegy*)

Discussions directed to the reader and constituting a substantial break in the narrative illusion of reality are termed *authorial intrusions*. Such intrusions are not typical of modern literature with its tendency to research on psychology. The author's explicit evaluation of the characters is missing, and the reader has to come to 'his own' conclusions basing upon *implicit (suggestive) poetic details*.

Any poetic detail is a part selected to represent the whole (an image), and its function should be evaluated against the background of all other elements of the text. With this in mind we can differentiate two types of detail: a detail which is a directly observed and a directly expressed feature of an image (a), and a detail which has the form of a trope (b).

Compare the examples below:

(a) A man in a blue cap jostled him, cursed, walked on (M. Cunningham: *Specimen Days*)

(b) Her hands were like a goddess's hands in carved ivory (B. Vine: *Gallowglass*)

Or

(b) A bead of milk trembled on her upper lip that was red like a poppy petal (Ibid.).

Implicit poetic details of actions, words, thoughts, looks, dress, bearing, etc., though external, reveal (imply) the characters' inner

state, their feelings and emotions. Some of these details are *associative*. Thus correlatives between man and nature are evident. 'A stormy, tempestuous hero, write Wellek and Warren, rushes out into the storm. A sunny disposition likes sunlight' [Wellek and Warren 1980: 221]. Similarly, Amiel remarks, 'A landscape is a state of mind' [Ibid.].

Notice how H. James uses details of setting as a clue to his character. Isabel (*The Portrait of a Lady*) does not feel like looking out at the real world – she leaves the door unbolted and does not remove the green paper, preferring it to the green of the 'vulgar street':

It was in the 'office' still that Isabel was sitting on that melancholy afternoon of early spring which I have just mentioned. At this time she might have had the whole house to choose from and the room she had selected was the most depressed of its scenes. She had never opened the bolted door nor removed the green paper (renewed by other hands) from its sidelights; she had never assured herself that the vulgar street lay beyond.

In his appreciation of an image the reader will be guided by detail for it is by carefully selected details that the author depicts this image.

Speech Characterization

There exist different approaches to the problem of speech characterization. Thus G. Genette differentiates three states of characters' speech (uttered or inner), connecting them with narrative distance:

1. *Narratized, or narrated, speech* is the most distant and the most reduced

E.g. "I informed my mother of my decision to marry Albertine" or "I decided to marry Albertine".

2. *Transposed speech*, in indirect style is more mimetic, though the narrator's presence is still perceptible in the syntax of the sentence.

E.g. "I told my mother that I absolutely had to marry Albertine" (uttered speech) or "I thought that I absolutely had to marry Albertine" (inner speech).

3. *Reported speech* is the most mimetic in form: interior monologue (immediate speech, according to Genette) pushes this mimesis of speech to its extreme.

E.g. "I said to my mother (or: I thought:): it is absolutely necessary that I marry Albertine" [Genette 1986: 171–172]

To create linguistic personality in both uttered and inner speech, literary and colloquial words are used. They are included into the author's plane or into the character's plane. Making speech mimetic in form these words add to the sense of authenticity and immediacy.

Special Literary Words

Special literary words include poeticisms, archaisms, barbarisms, foreignisms, and terms.

Poeticisms (poetic words) are traditionally used in poetry ("poetic diction"). They are bookish and make the utterance understandable to a limited circle of readers. That is why poetry is sometimes called poetic jargon (Cf., for example, the pure poeticisms *quoth* (said), *spouse* (wife, husband), *steed, courser, charger, barb* (horse), never used in any other sphere, or the archaic poeticisms *vale* (valley) and *adown* (down)). At some periods a special poetic vocabulary has been obligatory, at others it has been banned; and conversely, sometimes colloquialisms have been forbidden, sometimes their use has been encouraged, while yet other periods have steered a middle course between these extremes. When used in a literary text poeticisms contribute to the message a high-flown tone of solemnity and sophistication. Colliding with words of lower stylistic levels, they may produce a humorous effect.

Archaisms (Gr. *arkhaios*, ancient) are found in poetry and in prose. When in poetry they sound lofty, high-flown or sophisticated. A novelist who places his story in some former age resorts to archaisms to present a living picture of the time of which he writes, including speech mannerism. The reader is transplanted into another epoch and perceives the use of archaisms in the characters' speech as a natural way of communication. As seen from the lines below, the process of archaization (Cf. *though, hast, thy, avow, vessel*) is however, relative. This is because it should not hinder understanding.

Special Colloquial Words

‘Enough,’ said the Grand Master; ‘thou hast indeed convinced me of thy sincerity. Others may hold the same opinion, save Conrade of Montserrat, dared frankly avow that he desires not the restitution of the kingdom of Jerusalem, but rather prefers being master of a portion of its fragments, like the barbarous islanders, who labour not for the deliverance of a goodly vessel from the billows, expecting rather to enrich themselves at the expense of the wreck’ (W. Scott: *The Talisman*)

Barbarisms (Gr. *barbarismos* – impropriety of speech, speaking like a foreigner) are often associated with the unjustified use of foreign expressions which are not in keeping with the classical standard of a language. No wonder, S. Johnson said in *The Rambler*: “I have laboured to refine our language to grammatical purity and to clear it from colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms, and irregular combinations”. Barbarisms differ from *foreignisms*, though no straight line of demarcation can be drawn here. Barbarisms are those words that have become part and parcel of the English language and are registered by dictionaries. Foreign words, though used for certain stylistic purposes, do not belong to the English vocabulary and are not registered by dictionaries. In printed works barbarisms are not made conspicuous while foreignisms are italicized to show either their alien nature or their stylistic value. Both barbarisms and foreignisms are used to characterize the lingual behaviour of a personage. Thus, Hercules Poirot, whose native language is French, is in the habit of using French words: "*A la bonne heure*, Hastings. You use your gray cells at last". Sometimes foreignisms expose the speaker's pretension in speech.

Terms are lexical items for concepts which occur in a particular discipline or subject-matter. For example, ‘clause’, ‘conjunction’, and ‘aspect’ are part of the terminology of English grammar. The function of terms in a work of belles-lettres is many-fold. They may either identify the technical subject of the narration or indicate a character's occupation. Hence an abundance of medical terms used in Arthur Hailey's *Strong Medicine*. The use of special, non-popular terms, unknown to the average speaker, may show a character's pretentious manner of speech, lack of taste or lack of tact etc.

In modern literature special colloquial words are widely used. They are expressive and evaluative and usually imitate the authentic atmosphere of everyday speech. Special colloquial words include colloquialisms, slangisms, jargonisms, professionalisms, vulgarisms, and dialectisms (dialectal words).

Colloquialisms (Lat. *colloquium*, from *colloqui*; to speak together) are have been recorded “in the writings of any age” (Bradley), but in the 20th c. they have been more fully recorded than in any earlier period. Colloquialisms vary from class to class, group to group, individual to individual and even, according to the individual's mood or aspiration. The average colloquial speech of any age is a compromise between a variety of vocabularies. Colloquialisms are appropriate in informal speeches or writings but not in formal written discourse. In a literary work they point to a non-official situation and may also imply the speaker's social experiences, his general background, his intellectual and moral cultivation, as well as his attitude to the objects, things or phenomena named. Some colloquial words and grammatical structures are introduced to imitate the uncultivated speech of illiterate people (low colloquial): *me comes, he ain't coming*,

Slang (ON *slyngva*, to sling) often seems to mean everything below standard. It opposes to the natural or normal speech and consists of commonly understood and widely used words of humorous or derogatory character. “The place of slang is in real life”, remark the compilers of *The King's English* H.W. and F. G. Fowler. The same idea is professed by J. Cuddon, “Common to many languages, slang is the lingo of the gutter, the street, the market-place, the saloon, the stable, the workshop, the theatre, the fo'c'sle, the barrack room and the ranch – indeed almost anywhere where men work or play. It is the poetry of the common man, the tuppence-coloured of everyday life, and it is indispensable to the well-being of a language, for it provides its calories, its energy and its vigour” [Cuddon 1992: 884–885]. Slang is sometimes condemned on the ground that, being vague and ill-defined, it destroys those delicate shades of meaning which are at the root of a good style. Some critics call it the speech of lazy persons, “the conversation of fools” and degradation of Eng-

lish. However, it is impossible to prohibit slang just as it is impossible to stop the development of language. According to Eric Partridge slang is referred to "just for the hell of it" (in sheer joie de vivre) by the young in spirit, just as by the young in years; as an exercise either in humour or in wit and ingenuity; to be different from others; to be picturesque; to be arresting, striking, or even startling (epater les bourgeois); to avoid clichés; to be brief and concise; to induce friendliness or intimacy, for ease of social intercourse; to talk (to write) down to the inferior, or to amuse a superior", etc. [Partridge 1995: 169–170]. As a means of speech characterization, slang may also imply a lot. However, being the language of intimacy and everyday conversation it always contributes to an utterance emotional colouring and subjective evaluation.

In the citation below, the reader comes across a number of sub-standard coinages. They are the colloquial *Dad* and *kids*, the graphon *coupla*, and the slangy *mule* (someone employed as a courier to smuggle illegal drugs into a country and often to pass them on to a buyer) and *push* (see the previous explanation in brackets). All these verbal units add to the creative energy of the communicative situation and make us define this situation as informal.

I bought from him a coupla times. He was a mule, Dad. That means he pushed to other kids (E. McBain)

Jargonisms (OF *jargon*, warbling of birds, chatter, talk) may appear in professional groups as non-terminological substitutes for professional terms. They are called professionalisms in this case and are not understood by those outside the profession (Cf. *a baby of the house* meaning the youngest member of the Parliament in parliamentary jargon). Unlike professional jargonisms common jargonisms belong to all social groups and are understood by everybody. They do not denote professional objects and are misused deliberately outside the profession to express disrespect. As a means of speech characterization, jargonisms sound expressive, emotional and definitely unofficial. When opposed to formal words they may imply defiance in lingual behaviour.

Vulgarisms (Lat. *vulgāris*, from *vulgus*, the common people) "denote such objects or processes or functions or tendencies or acts"

that are not usually "mentioned by the polite in company and are never, under those names, mentioned in respectable circles" [Partridge 1995: 206]. Swear words and obscene words belonging to this group are rejected by the whole system of ethics of the society: the word *damn*, for instance, was kept out of print until 1914. Indecencies are usually expressed by euphemistic substitutions, abbreviations, omissions (dashes) or by scientific (medical) terms. When Oscar Wilde was tried for homosexuality, a subject never before quite widely aired, he defended his particular taste as 'the love that dare not speak its name' (Cuddon). Present-day editions, however, do not always shun such words. A proof is *The Seven Minutes* by I. Wallace where the very subject is defined as 'dealing with the problems of four-letter words in literature in the light of form and contents, pretence and honesty, seeming good and real evil'. Vulgarisms express the speaker's derogatory attitude towards the object of speech (cf. *old boot* meaning a woman or a wife) and are often found in affective colloquial speech. Unsurprisingly, in the character's speech vulgarisms also sound rude and unrefined. They express strong emotions mainly of negative character and point to a non-official situation.

Dialects are local varieties of the national language which imply local peculiarities in the sphere of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. E. Partridge calls them "languages within a language". Sometimes the word *dialect* indicates a manner of speaking peculiar to an individual or class but usually it belongs to a region. A good deal of literature is in dialect, especially the one created in the earlier stages of a country's civilization. All English medieval verse is in dialect. *Chaucer* wrote in the East Midland dialect and helped to establish it as the vernacular of educated people. Since the 16th c., dialect in writing has been used less and less because of the development of Standard English. However, *Burns* was at his best when using the Ayrshire dialect. Thomas Hardy resorted to in *Wessex Poems*. *Tennyson* experimented with dialect in *Northern Farmer – Old Style*. A large number of novelists have used dialect forms to give verisimilitude to dialogue: *Dickens*, *George Eliot*, *Thomas Hardy*, and *D. H. Lawrence* are notable instances.

Dialectal peculiarities are normative. They are devoid of any stylistic meaning in regional dialects, but when used outside they carry a flavour of their usual locality. In a work of art dialectisms

signal additional information about a character, his geographical, social or educational identity. Provincial lack of education may be prompted through phonetics or lexis, and here cockney is an example. Professor Higgins in Shaw's *Pygmalion* could place an Irishman or a Yorkshireman within two miles in London, sometimes within two streets.

Questions about Characterization

1. What is the character like?
2. What are the characters' traits? Do they have traits that contradict one another?
3. Are the characters flat or round, static or dynamic?
4. If they change, how and why? What steps do they go through to change? What moments of self-revelation do these changes produce? What problems do the characters have? How do they attempt to solve these problems?
5. If the characters are complex, what makes them complex?
6. Do the characters understand themselves? How do they relate to each other? Are they contrasting or parallel characters?
7. What ways of characterization does the author prefer? Implicit or explicit? Do the characters have speech mannerisms, gestures and modes of dress that reveal their inner selves?
8. What techniques of characterization does the author employ? Are the characters well-defined and realistic or are they indefinable and ungraspable? Is the incoherence of the characters' behaviour the main reason for this? Does the coherence of their language compensate for that psychological evanescence or accentuate it?
9. Is the characters' speech (uttered or inner) narrated, transposed or reported?
10. Do words of special literary stratum or of special colloquial stratum prevail in the characters' speech and why? What words indicate the characters' educational and cultural level? Are any of them introduced into the characters' speech to indicate their origin?
11. How does the author's choice of words contribute to the authenticity of the situation described?
12. Is the author a sharp observer of people? What makes you think so?

Setting

Setting is the total environment for the action of a fictional work. It includes *place* (physical, sensuous world), *time* in which the action takes place – "the where and when of the story", *social environment* (moral values that govern the characters' society, manners, customs etc.) and *atmosphere*.

The place can be fixed (*The Fly* by Mansfield) or varied (*The Dark Glasses* by Spark), foreign (*Kangaroo* by Lawrence), native (*An American Tragedy* by Dreiser for Americans) or tied to a region (*The Dubliners* by Joyce). As the place is usually related to a larger historical context the interpreter is to focus on social setting as well. Thus to grasp the protagonist's ideals in *The Great Gatsby*, the interpreter is to see Gatsby's world as "the world of many of his fellow Americans". In the time of the Great Depression America's economy collapsed, and people were trying to find their 'Golden Dream' in the 'natural goodness' of money.

The time can be contemporary (*Changing Places* by Lodge) or historical (*Ivanhoe* by Walter Scott). It can be elapsing a few minutes (*Late at Night* by Mansfield) or some years. Thus the story of two sisters, Constance and Sophia (*The Old Wives' Tale* by Bennette), starts in 1860 and ends in about 1906 with the sisters' death.

The relationship between a duration of the story, measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years) and a length of the text, measured in lines and in pages, is defined as the *speed* of a narrative (Genette). It is possible to point out four basic forms of narrative movement: *ellipsis*, *descriptive pause*, *scene* and *summary*.

In ellipsis a non-existent section of narrative discourse corresponds to some duration of story:

After an examiners' meeting lasting ten hours, nine of which were spent in discussion of Boon's papers, he had been awarded a 'low Upper Second' – a compromise grudgingly accepted by those who wanted to fail him and those who wanted to give him a First (D. Lodge: *Changing Places*).

Or

Then two years more went by, or perhaps three, for time is passing imperceptibly in Tahiti, and it is hard to keep count of it; but at last a message was brought to Dr Coutras that Strickland was dying

(S. Maugham: *The Moon and Sixpence*)

In descriptive pause some section of narrative discourse corresponds to a non-existent diegetic duration:

It was still dark outside, and the fog which had lain upon the city like an oppressive miasma for the past five days seemed even thicker this morning, pressing against the casement windows and streaking them with a lacework of moisture. On the wide sill stood a cage with a small bottle of water hanging on its side, an exercise wheel in its centre, and an athletic-sock-turned-nest in its far right-hand corner. Curled into this was a dollop of fur the size of a tablespoon and the colour of sherry. (E. George: *For the Sake of Elena*)

Scene, most often in dialogue, realizes the equality of time between narrative and story:

‘Hello, Mrs. Van Patterson. How are you this afternoon?’

‘You girls are using too much hot water! The electricity bill is enormous! It’s outrageous how much water you use! The boiler is on a timer! You must not press the immersion button. Ever!’

‘But the hot water runs out every time we do the dishes. Or if one person has a shower.’

‘Really! I’ve never seen anything like it! What are you doing? Bathing every day?’

‘It’s been known to happen.’

‘Listen, don’t you get smart with me! Twice a week is more than enough.’

‘Where I come from, it’s completely normal to bathe every day.’

‘Where you come from, people are spoilt! Americans think the world is made of money. You girls don’t know how lucky you are! Gloucester Place is one of the finest addresses in London. Have you ever played Monopoly?’

‘Yes, Mrs. Van Patterson, I have.’

‘Well, it’s like Park Lane. It’s not on the Monopoly Board but it could be.’

‘Humm...’

(K. Tessaro: *Innocence*).

Summary is the narration in a few pages of several days, months, or years of existence, without details of action or speech.

Let’s now see how it works. The passages below cover several lines while the action, depicted in them, embraces a long period of time. The obvious verbal marker of summary in Brookner’s lines (a) is the modal verb *would*, – it indicates a recurrent action. In the second passage (b), the same verb is strengthened by a number of adverbial modifiers (*every morning, occasionally, in the evenings*), all of them performing the same function of frequency.

(a) I took to walking in the very late evening, sometimes after nightfall. Instinctively I would make my way to the shore, from which I imagined I could survey the huge crescent of the Baie des Anges. I could not, of course, but I liked the feeling of infinity after a restricted day in my room pouring over my texts. Behind me cars kept up their rushing speed along the Corniche road, but on the water’s edge it was possible to capture silence. I would look round from time to time to see if anyone was following me, but for two nights nobody was (A. Brookner: *The Bay of Angels*).

(b) Winter came and with it the sunless days and long nights. Every morning the two of them went walking but they were only gone for an hour and the rest of the day was spent with Liza’s books. Occasionally Mother would insist that they spoke only French, so breakfast, lunch and supper were eaten in French and their discussions of other subjects were in French. She set Liza an examination in English, history and Latin. Liza learned whole pages of poetry by heart and in the evenings she and Mother read plays aloud, Mother taking all the male parts and she female. They read *Peter Pan* and *Where the Rainbow Ends* and *The Blue Bird* (R. Rendell: *The Crocodile Bird*).

So the author, as we have seen, may slow down or speed up the reader’s perception of time.

Atmosphere

Atmosphere refers to the emotional reaction that the reader and the characters have to the setting of a work and is largely but not entirely an effect of setting. It is the mood and the feeling, the intangible quality which appeals to extra-sensory and sensory perception, evoked by a literary work.

For instance, the beginning of David Lodge's novel indicates that it is going to be comic:

High, high above the North Pole, on the first day of 1969, two professors of English Literature approached each other at a combined velocity of 1200 miles per hour (D. Lodge: *Changing Places*).

In contrast, the introductory passage from *Rebecca* by D. Du Maurier establishes the atmosphere of danger and fear which runs throughout the novel:

Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again. It seemed to me I stood by the iron gate leading to the drive, and for a while I could not enter for the way was barred to me. There was a padlock and a chain upon the gait. I called in my dream to the lodge-keeper, and had no answer, and peering closer through the rusted spokes of the gate I saw that the lodge was uninhabited.

Setting is usually established through description, though narration is used too. Setting may be simple or elaborate, used to create ambience, lend credibility or realism, emphasize or accentuate, organize, or even distract the reader. As M.-L. Ryan puts it, 'Some fictions may lack events, and perhaps even characters, but all present a concrete setting' [Ryan 1995: 260]. The characters are always embedded in the specific context, and the more we know of the setting, and of the relationship of the characters to the setting, the more likely we are to understand the literary work.

Questions about Setting

1. Where does the action take place? What clues indicate place?
2. What sensuous qualities does the author give to the setting? Do you receive a dominant impression about it? Do descriptive and figurative images contribute to this impression?
3. Does place affect the characters?
4. Is place used as a thematic device?
5. When does the action take place? What clues indicate time?

6. At what period of history does the action take place? What clues indicate this period? Are these historical events relevant for the characters and the theme?

7. How long does the action occur? What clues indicate how much time is passing?

8. Is the passage of time important for the characters and the theme?

9. Is the author slowing down or speeding up our perception of time? Why so? How do the characters perceive time? Does the characters' perception of time help us to understand their inner state?

10. Is the social environment of small or great importance? Does it determine the characters' behaviour?

11. How is setting used as a clue to characters?

Image and Imagery

It is possible to divide all *kinds of writing* into two main groups:

- writing whose purpose is primarily utilitarian (*informative writing*);
- writing whose purpose is primarily aesthetic (*creative writing*).

In informative writing the personality of a writer as a writer is not important, what is important is the content. The writer's business is to express the content clearly and directly. Rules are in place here. A general standard of anonymity is sought after, and facts and ideas are more or less determined from outside. Informative writing appeals to our intellect. Such is scientific writing, most newspaper articles, laws, and official correspondence. They form utilitarian literature.

In creative writing the personality of a writer is of great importance. There can be no question of rules or norms here, or we should speak about norm in its broad sense. Masters of word contribute a lot to establishing the norm of literary language. Facts and ideas are an element of style, and the interactions between form and matter are complex. The writer appeals to our emotions and imagination. Such is poetry, drama and fiction. They form imaginative literature.

Between utilitarian writing and creative writing there lies a kind of no-man's land, occupied by oratory, appealing both to reason and emotions, and descriptive writing: memoirs, books on travels and history, literary criticism etc. Though utilitarian literature is opposed to imaginative literature, the borderlines here are flexible: the most utilitarian literature, e.g. a biographical novel, gives the information in the shape of concrete instances while imaginative literature reflects reality and conveys information [Minkoff 1966].

The basic notions defining the essence of natural language are *reality, sense, and text* while the basic notions defining the essence of poetic language are *reality, image, and text* (Г.В. Степанов). *Imagery* (Lat. *imago*, image; *imitary*, to imitate) – the use of images, which are usually treated as pictures brought into the mind by words, is a distinguishable part of a literary work. Imagery is one of the main features differentiating one poet from another poet, one literary school from another literary school.

As was pointed in the *Introduction*, poetic language models artistic reality making use of natural language as its building material. An essential feature of poetic language is a blend of the indirect reflection of reality and a flow of the author's imagination (Тупаева). Though any word of imaginative literature is rooted in reality, the information it carries is fictitious. Vivid samples are the images of sphinx, centaur, Cerberus and Griffin.

Let us trace the main components of these images, studying the dictionary definitions of the words creating them.

Sphinx is a monster with the body of a lion, wings, and the breasts and face of a woman. The best-known sphinx of Greek mythology is the one that beset Thebes and pronounced a riddle to all whom she met. Death was the penalty for those who failed to solve it. After Oedipus answered the riddle correctly, the Sphinx, mortified, killed herself.

Centaur is half horse and half man, representing to the Greeks the bestial and grotesque aspect of mankind.

Cerberus is the three-headed dog that kept the entrance of the infernal regions. Hercules dragged him to earth and let him go again.

Griffin (*Griffon, Gryphon*) is the creature sacred to the sun that kept guard over hidden treasures. Griffin's legs and all from the

shoulders to the head are like an eagle, the rest of the body is that of a lion.

All the components of the images above are found in nature and a reader can easily recognize them, though imagination combines them in a weird way. The similarity between an object and its image can be great. However, it never becomes identical. An object and its image are two different categories. While the object is a part of reality, the image of the object is representation of reality. The literary work in its recreation of life gives images which are similar but not identical to life.

“Imagination, Forester writes, is our only guide into the world created by words”. At the same time, it should be recognized that a cardinal property of an image is genetic and ontological independence from lingual expression. An image as a psychic phenomenon arises before and outside its verbalization. Imaginative perception of analogies, connections, contrasts of reality, overestimation and underestimation of its properties – all these acts of cognition can take place without language. Music and the Japanese ikebana, painting and architecture are metaphorical throughout.

A literary image is the language of literature, the form of its existence. Literature is a verbal art, and it is out of word sequences that literary images emerge. But images as such are supravertbal. Plot theme, composition, genre, style or image make the supravertbal (poetic) layer which is entirely revealed in verbal sentences. The supravertbal and the verbal layers of the literary text are inseparable from each other: the cohesion of the two layers constitutes its poetic structure.

‘Image’ and ‘imagery’ have many connotations and meanings. Thus the term image refers not only to the whole of the literary work but to any of its meaningful units such as detail, phrase etc. All these images constitute a hierarchical interrelation. The top of this hierarchy is the *macro-image*, the literary work itself. It is an image of life, visioned and depicted by the author. Within the literary work there is *the intermediate layer* which contains character-images, event-images, landscape-images etc. At the bottom of the hierarchy there are *micro-images* (*word-images*): similes, epithets, metaphors etc. Each micro-image, when in isolation, is a trope, but within the poetic

structure it, equally with other elements, shares in the expression of the content, of the author's message (Sosnovskaya).

A literary work is a complex phenomenon. It always involves the interrelation of the objective and the subjective, the real and the imagined, the direct and the implied. The number of readings of the same unit varies according to individuals. The variation in readings, as it has already been underlined, depends upon different kinds of knowledge: practical, national, cultural, and aesthetic. All of them are invested in the image. Thus the language of the image is not merely the totality of utterances emitted – it is also the totality of utterances received. As a result, the perception of a literary work needs a creative effort. The reader is to become a co-creator. Calling reading ‘a passive writing’, Todorov states, ‘Every work is rewritten by its reader, who imposes upon it a new grid of interpretation for which he is not generally responsible, but which comes to him from his culture, from his time, in short from another discourse; all comprehension is the encounter of two discourses: a dialogue’ [Todorov 1981: 17].

A possible division of images is into *descriptive (sensuous) images and figurative images (tropes)*. It is often the case that an image is not exclusively one thing or another. The borderlines between the two types are relative and they may combine and overlap. As a result, tropes may create in the reader's mind a vivid description appealing to the reader's senses, or, on the opposite, though full of descriptive images, a work may sound metaphoric (see Tennyson's *Oak* cited below).

‘... art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony’, Shklovsky exquisitely remarks.

Poetry and poetic prose are grounded in the concrete and the specific, in the details that stimulate our senses. It is through our senses that we perceive the world. Such specific details which stimulate our feelings and trigger our memories, are called *descriptive (sensuous) images*. A descriptive image may be *visual* (pertaining to the eye), *olfactory* (smell), *tactile* (touch), *auditory* (hearing), *gustatory* (taste), *abstract* (in which case it may appeal to intellect) and *kinaesthetic* (pertaining to the sense of movement).

Here are several examples of descriptive images.

When Shakespeare writes, “roasted crabs hiss in the bowl”, he creates a highly realistic experience in sound.

Several visual images below are similarly true to life. The reader will find them in Alfred Tennyson's poem:

Live thy Life,
 Young and old,
Live yon oak,
Bright in spring,
 Living gold,

Summer-rich
 Then; and then
Autumn-changed,
Soberer-hued
 Gold again.

All his leaves,
 Fall'n at length,
Look, he stands,
Trunk and bough,
 Naked strength.
 (A. Tennyson: *The Oak*)

*Figurative images (tropes)*² (Gr. *tropos*-turning) involve the use of figurative language. The ambivalence of the word is one of the most important characteristics inherent in poetic language.

The problem of types of renaming and their classification has been discussed for centuries. *Aristotle* in his *Poetics* treats the figurative use of words though he does not differentiate metaphor and metonymy yet. The literature on tropes is immense, but the majority of scholars did not present tropes as a generalized system. Some scholars even described them in alphabetical order. However, *tropes and figures of speech as typified, patterned models* have been worked out in philology and rhetoric since ancient times. Rhetoricians have catalogued more than 250 figures of speech, expressions or using words in a non-literal sense. In the times of classicism, when writing

² ‘Imagery’ is sometimes used to mean figurative language, especially metaphor [Griffith 1995].

was greatly ornamented, it was often thought that style itself consisted in their use. When writing became less decorative the role of *tropes* has greatly diminished. In modern stylistics tropes are understood in many ways: as transfer of a name from a traditional object to a situational object, as a case of secondary nomination, as a case of foregrounding etc.

The psychological essence of tropes is the prominence given to two meanings in one unit of form. Trope is a linguistic unit (word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, and text) with two senses, a combination of two semantic planes. Only the double meaning creates an image. If the original meaning is obliterated or is no longer associated with the secondary one there is no trope.

In the quotation below, it is the author himself who clarifies the metaphoric implications of the image:

God is really only another artist. He invented the giraffe, the elephant, and the cat. He has no real style. He just goes on trying other things (P. Picasso. In F. Gilot and C. Lake *Life with Picasso*)

Both *god* and *artist* are creators possessing rich imagination. Thus the same *creator* is a common semantic component for both the words. The expressiveness of the metaphor is promoted by the simultaneous presence of the images of the associated objects – the one named (God) and the one that gives its own name (artist).

Metaphor (Gr. *metáphora*, transference; *metá*, over, *phérein*, to carry), the application of a name to an object to which it is not literally applicable, is the most common form of trope. Metaphor is based on the similarity of a feature common to two different objects. This comparison is implicit, that's why metaphor is often called a hidden or a compressed simile.

As any trope, metaphor contains two components – *tenor* (sphere of attraction, what is compared) and *vehicle* (sphere of expansion, with what is compared)³. Tenor is the purport or the general drift of thought regarding the subject of a metaphor; vehicle is the image which embodies the tenor. Vehicle enriches the tenor and illustrates it.

³ The terms were coined by I. Richards.

Here are three examples.

(a) This world (tenor) is a comedy (vehicle) to those that think, a tragedy (vehicle) to those that feel

(Horace Walpole. Letter to Anna, Countess of Upper Ossory 16 August 1776, in *Correspondence* vol. 1).

Or:

(b) The poet is the priest of the invisible (W. Stevens: *Opus Posthumous*.)

Or:

My heart is a lonely hunter that hunts on a lonely hill
(F. McLeod: *The Lonely Hunter*).

The aura of implication and suggestion is very important in metaphor as in the example below. It illustrates the ability of metaphor to make the most opposite things 'miraculously equivalent' (Santayana).

Metaphor has no formal limitations: it can be a word, a phrase, any part of a sentence, or a sentence as a whole. If it involves the likeness between the inanimate and the animate we deal with *personification*:

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run
(Keats).

Or:

His socks compelled one's attention without losing one's respect (Saki: *Chronicles of Clovis*. '*Ministers of Grace*')

Metaphors can be subdivided into *fresh* (*original, genuine*) metaphors and *trite* (*hackneyed, etymological*) metaphors. Fresh metaphors are usually found in poetry and emotive prose while trite

metaphors are used in newspaper style, in oratoric style, and in scientific language. The two types of metaphor are in constant interaction. As all other stylistic devices, metaphor is fresh when it is used for the first time, but through frequent repetition it can become trite and join the general word-stock (*the floods of tears, a storm of indignation, needle's eye* etc). Trite metaphors, on the opposite, can regain their freshness. Here is the modification of the metaphoric idiom *the salt of the earth* (people, especially ordinary ones, whose character and actions are felt to be specially valuable and admirable) adding new expressiveness to the image:

The small businessman likes to think of himself as the salt of the nation's economy, if not of the earth (*Observer*)

Metaphor is related to *simile*, a figurative device of great antiquity, and the most rudimentary form of trope. Simile is equally common in prose and verse. Simile (Lat. *similis, like*) contains three components. The general formula for simile includes the symbols of the object named (compared) (tenor), the object being used to name (vehicle) (with which it is compared), and the words expressing the comparative juxtaposition (*like, as* etc.).

Minds are like parachutes. They only function when they are open
(*J. Dewar*)

Or:

*My love is like a red, red rose
That's freshly sprung in June,
My love is like a melody
That's sweetly played in tune*
(*R. Burns*).

Or:

Venice is like eating an entire box of chocolate liqueurs in one go
(*T. Capote. New Republic, 9 Feb., 1959*)

In simile, one thing is likened to another in such a way as to clarify and enhance an image. It is an explicit, imaginative comparison as opposed to the metaphor, where comparison is implicit. Simile is expansive and metaphor is laconic. Simile expands speech and metaphor curtails it. Simile expresses identification, metaphor – analogy. Metaphor expresses something stable, simile – transitory, therefore simile can be joined by an adverbial modifier of time. Metaphor expresses what is, simile expresses what seems to be [Арутюнова 1990, Тураева 1993].

Metaphor comes close to *symbol*, though metaphor aims at individualization while symbol at generalization (Ibid.).

A literary symbol combines an image with a concept. It is usually a concrete object that has abstract meaning beyond itself. Beside its literal self, symbol has another meaning or even several meanings. For example, a sword may be a sword and also symbolize justice. A rose can represent beauty or love. A soaring bird might stand for freedom. Light might symbolize hope or knowledge of life etc.

There are two kinds of symbols: *public (conventional, universal)* and *private*. Public symbols, like those enumerated above, are recognizable by most people, while private (constructed) symbols are unique to an individual or to a single work. Thus the white whale becomes a symbol of evil in *Moby Dick*. The moon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a reminder of instability in the sublunary world. The more inexhaustible its potential meaning, the richer the symbol is. Recurrent associations, the use in the key positions, and the author's explanation of symbolic meaning broaden the significance of a text component from mere implication (Cf. an implicit poetic detail) to symbolization (Cf. a symbolic poetic detail). The meaning of any symbol is always controlled by its context.

Questions about Image and Imagery

1. What sensuous images contribute immediacy to the text? Which of them domineer? Visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory or any others?

2. To what senses do the dominant sensuous images appeal? Why?

3. Are there any figurative images in the text? Are they metaphors, similes or any other tropes? Why does the author appeal to these analogies?

4. Are the figurative images trite or genuine? Are they simple or sustained?

5. Do sensuous images and figurative images overlap?

6. What symbols does the work seem to have?

7. Are the symbols universal or constructed?

8. What makes you think the elements are symbols? What associations broaden their meaning from a mere metaphor?

9. Are the symbols repeated? Are they used at the beginning of the text? At the end?

10. On what occasions does the author chiefly resort to imagery? In descriptions? For explanations? For emotional purposes?

11. The selection of what images helps to create:

- meaning,
- characterization
- tone?

Theme

Wordsworth in his preface to *The Excursion* writes:

How exquisitely the individual mind to the external world
Is fitted, and how exquisitely too,
Theme is but little heard of among men,
The external world is fitted to the mind.

All literature has one feature in common: it attempts to step back from the flux of the present and to make some broader generalizations about life. It may step back from the life of individuals and show a large cross section of human existence, many people suffering, loving and dying. It may take a detached attitude, with the underlying assumption that there is no question of judging life. However, 'there is no writer..., whose work does not possess some implied judgement on life and human destiny' [Wilson 1976: 187]. A simple message is not reconcilable with the subtlety of good art,

but an author is likely to have certain ideas which will inform his work. In moral terms, for example, he might be interested in the advantages and disadvantages of certain forms of behaviour, or concerned to distinguish between acceptable and less acceptable modes of conduct [Peck 1995: 14]. Here is E. Cassirer explicating the philosophy of the Enlightenment, 'When the mind becomes a mirror of reality it is and remains a living mirror of the universe, and it is not simply the sum total of mere images but a whole composed of formative forces' [Cassirer 1966: 124].

Theme is the central idea of a work. It is the comment the work makes on the human condition. The author intertwines theme throughout the work, and the full impact is slowly realized as the reader processes the text. Unsurprisingly, theme often comes last in a discussion of the elements of fiction. The ability to recognize theme is important because it allows the reader to understand part of the author's purpose in writing the book.

Theme is always an abstraction drawn from details, – to state it the reader should move from the situation and the characters of the work and generalize about people outside it. 'In this way, literature becomes a form of philosophy – wisdom about the nature of reality' [Griffith 1986: 50].

The theme of a work should be distinguished from the *subject* (*topic*) of a work which is often told in the title (*Her First Ball* by Mansfield). Subject is what the work is about; theme is what the work *says* about the subject. Subject is usually stated in *a word* or *a phrase*, the statement of the work's theme requires *a sentence* or sometimes several sentences. Thus the subject of *Romeo and Juliet* is love, and to frame the theme of the tragedy, it is possible to quote Dylan Thomas:

Though lovers be lost love shall not;
And death shall have no dominion.

A complex work may have more than one subject and more than one theme (*subthemes*). The subject and theme of complex works cannot be determined with complete certainty. Sometimes a work contains so many contradictory and incompletely developed elements that it is impossible to identify the work's theme at all. Theme

is an inadequate abstraction from the story: you cannot reconstruct a story from merely its paraphrased theme. Theme and story 'are not so much interrelated, as they are fused, inseparable' [Bain, Beauty, and Hunter 1995: 221].

Questions about Theme

1. What is the subject of the work?
2. What is the theme of the work?
3. Are there any subthemes in it?
4. What analogies and ideas are repeated throughout the work?

How do they contribute to the theme?

5. Does the work communicate the theme directly or indirectly?
6. Is the theme implied by the title?
7. Does any character overtly enunciate the theme? Is this general issue tested and modified by subsequent events?
8. How do the details of the plot, character and setting contribute to the development of the theme? What allusions and symbols should be accounted for in framing the theme?
9. What image of humankind emerges from the work? If people are good, what good things do they do? If they are flawed, how and to what extent are they so?
10. What is right and what is wrong in the work? Are the moral conflicts clear-cut? Does right win in the end? Who serves as «moral centre» in the work?

2. READING PSYCHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

'I believe, Faulkner spoke on his receiving the Nobel Prize, that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, ...because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honour and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can

be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail' [Six Great Modern Short Novels 1954: 326].

The spiritual, emotional and mental lives of the characters rather than the plot and the action are the main concern of *psychological* (Gr. *psūkhē*, life, breath, soul) *literature*. The works of many great masters are full of deep psychological insights. This is in part because 'the whole jumbled field of our inner musing', 'inner private consciousness, seething with arcane imagery and shadowy intuitions' occupies the greater part of our being. Shakespeare who was able 'to feel thought like the odour of a rose' [Murdoch 1993: 106–107] is an outstanding example, – his plays are vast areas of human life.

To make us interested in the workings of the mind, the author resorts to various techniques. The terms 'psychological novel', 'psychological story', and 'psychological fiction' are referred to the beginning of the 20th century when psychology was newly risen to the surface. A famous Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud pioneered the study of the unconscious mind and developed the techniques of *psychoanalysis* – the methods of free associations and interpretation of dreams. Unsurprisingly, Freud's idea of unconscious forces influencing people's thoughts and actions influenced creative writing. 'Conscious knowledge of the subconscious' (Foster) found an outlet in long passages of introspective writing of *literary modernism*.

The term 'modernism', pertaining to poetry, fiction, drama, painting, music and architecture, began to get under way in the closing years of the 19th c. It revealed a breaking away from established conventions, fresh ways of looking at man's position in the universe, and experiments in style. The accepted characteristics of literary modernism were limited action, an associated ambiguity, preoccupation with personality, especially a consideration of the fragmented, dehumanized self, and the self-conscious foregrounding of form. Plot was de-emphasized, though not rejected. The emphasis fell on internal, rather than external action. Instead of concentrating on what happened in the narrative the author attempted to reproduce the flow of the characters' impressions. Modernist characters 'watched life more than they lived it'. What was important was their reaction to events rather than the events themselves (High). 'Slice-of-life' *complex (lyrical)* stories (those of Joyce, Woolf and Mansfield in particular) were set against the *simple (conventional, epical plot-based)*

psychological stories, of which Maupassant was a figurehead. While simple stories concerned 'a single character in a single, simple action', in complex stories the forming elements were marshalled towards the revelation of character or the development of symbol, rather than toward plot. There could be in them no plot at all, only an unselective description of the day-to-day life of an isolated individual. Complex stories were often open-ended, less well structured and focused upon internal changes, moods and feelings [The Modernist Short Stories... 1994: 8, 16]. The same concerned modernist novels. They focused on the 'atmosphere of the mind' (H. James), the changing consciousness of characters and unconnected impressions. A plot implied direction, away of connecting such fragments up. As the flow of internal impressions was far less ordered and sequential than the world presented by realism, modernist fiction was difficult to read.

A great contribution to the new approaches, mentioned above, was the famous *stream of consciousness* method. The term 'stream of consciousness' (another phrase is *interior monologue*) was coined by the philosopher William James in *Principles of Psychology* (1890) to describe the random flux of conscious and sub-conscious thoughts and impressions in the mind. A minor French novelist, Edouard Dujardan was the first to use the method in *Lauriers sont coupes* (1888). The most distinguished developers of the technique were Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner. As there have been hundreds of others, Cuddon calls the stream of consciousness method 'a commonplace literary technique' [Cuddon 1992: 920].

An outstanding example of the attempt 'to capture inner consciousness' is '*A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*' by Marcel Proust. E.M. Forster writes about the novel, '... he [Proust] is concerned not with events and people...but with memories of events and people, and ... consequently his novel often has the quality of a daydream, in which the ordinary sequence of time gets interrupted and mixed up'. This idea correlates with Forster's opinion of Woolf, 'Like most novelists worth reading, she strays from the fictional norm. She dreams, designs, jokes, observes details, but she does not tell a story or weave a plot...' [Forster 1974: 229].

James Joyce exploited the possibilities of the method in *Ulysses*, though *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* indicates his first interest in it. *Ulysses* encompasses events during the twenty-four hours of June 16th, 1904. It is an account of the experiences of three leading characters: Leopold Bloom, a Jewish advertisement canvasser, his unfaithful wife Molly, and Stephen Dedalus, a young poet. The principle action follows Bloom and Steven as they wander separately around Dublin full of the bewildering sense of futility and loneliness within them. Thus Joyce takes a fairly ordinary, sample day in the lives of the title figures and by concentrating on their thoughts and little flashes of memory builds up to a general account of their lives. The stress is not on the events here but on mood and atmosphere; the episodes are often arranged at irregular intervals. The climax to the work is the forty-odd page interior monologue of Molly Bloom, – it has only one punctuation mark.

The following lines give some idea of modernist subjective writing:

whatll I wear shall I wear a white rose those cakes in Liptons I love the
smell of a rich big shop at 7^{1/2}d a 1b and the pinky sugar 11d a couple of
1bs or the other ones with the cherries in them of course a nice plant for the
middle of the table Id get that cheaper in wait wheres this I saw them not
long ago I love flowers Id love to have the whole place swimming in roses
God of heaven theres nothing like nature the wild mountains then the sea
and the waves rushing then the beautiful country with fields of oats and
wheat and all kinds of things and all the fine cattle going about that would
do your heart good to see rivers and lakes and flowers

Psychological literature demonstrates an extremely broad spectrum of forms to penetrate into our inner world, the famous stream of-consciousness technique being only one of them. Impressionistic stories of everyday life in the tradition of Chekhov are remarkable for their profound psychological insights. Widely recognized as one of the greatest writers of her period, 'The English Chekhov' Katherine Mansfield shows supreme control of similar technique of telling significance. With remarkable accuracy and the deftness of a movie camera she fixes those emotionally charged moments when an individual is most revealing. Conveying as much by omission as by

statement, she creates a delicate structure that is reminiscent of Chekhov. No less famous is Hemingway's technique of hints and understatements. His works do not reveal a psychological analysis explicitly. Emotional agonies are left unstated. Simultaneously the external world is described in photographic detail. Thus in *A Canary for One*, a train journey is described minutely. During the journey, an American woman mentions that her daughter fell in love with a foreigner, but that she was against this marriage and took her away. The girl's mother is taking her a canary now to console her, but her talk about her daughter's love is casual. It is only suggestive poetic details and the title of the story that indicate its real centre – the heart-break of the girl, separated from her lover.

The following fragment from *The Third Deadly Sin* by L. Sanders illustrates objective writing in a psychological detective novel. A highly meticulous procedure of the character's cleaning the room – the whole description covers five pages – makes the reader doubt her mental health. Obsessive tidiness implies obsessive thinking.

'In her apartment, doors carefully locked, bolted, and chained, she drew the blinds and changed into a cotton T shirt and terry cloth shorts.

She took out mops, brooms, vacuum cleaner, cans of soap and wax, bottles of detergent, brushes, dustpan, rags, sponges, whisks. She tied a scarf about her hair. She pulled on rubber gloves. She set to work.

In the bathroom, she scrubbed the tub, sink and toilet bowl with Ajax. Washed the toilet seat with Lysol. Removed the bathmat from the floor, got down on her knees, and cleaned the tile with a brush and Spic and Span.

Emptied the medicine cabinet of all her makeup, perfume, medical supplies and soap. Took out the shelves, washed them with Glass Plus and dried them. Replaced everything neatly, but not before wiping the dust from every jar, bottle, box, and tin'.

This 'studied detachment of tone is more poignantly effective than any amount of emotional rhetoric', Collin Wilson writes in his *The Strength to Dream*. To support his opinion, Wilson quotes Auden's poem *Musee de Beaux Arts*:

About suffering they were never wrong.
The Old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone is eating or opening the window
Or just walking dully along

The role of the interpreter in psychological literature, no matter whether it shows the workings of the mind explicitly or implicitly, cannot be underestimated. In both cases the rights of the interpreter are modelled by the text itself: the absence of the author's comment on the inner world depicted makes the addressee read actively rather than passively. Thus Hemingway's *Cat in the Rain* is traditionally interpreted as a symbol of loneliness and nostalgic restlessness, but the author has never framed the idea directly. The reader proposes this interpretation seemingly independently, basing upon implication and subtext.

Absolute good and evil, as, for example, in J. Fowles' *Eliduc*, which imitates literature of earlier periods (Cf. *good handler of arms, proud knight, splendid actions, ideal man, sincere face, perfect good manners etc*), are seldom presented in modern psychological literature. We can't hear the author's voice distinctly. A character becomes good or evil in relation to some other character or to a situation that may itself change. Wellek and Warren sum it up as follows: 'You can't measure people up, because the yard-measure itself keeps altering its length' [Wellek and Warren 1980: 281].

The readers of this manual are invited to interpret eight psychological stories, belonging to English and American writers of the 20th century. As 'the most obvious cause of a work of art is its creator' (Ibid.); the texts are preceded by short bibliographical sketches which will help the reader 'to discover the truth'.

An explanation in terms of the personality and the life of the writer has been one of the oldest and best-established methods of literary study. Two questions of literary biography are crucial. How far is the biographer justified in using the evidence of the works themselves for his purposes? How far are the results of literary biography relevant and important for an understanding of the works themselves?' One cannot, from fictional statements, draw any valid

inference as to the biography of any writer. Thus, for example, one may gravely doubt the usual view that Shakespeare passed through a period of depression, in which he wrote his tragedies and his bitter comedies. The relation between the private life and the work is not a simple relation of cause and effect. A work of art forms a unity with a different relationship to reality, than a book of memoirs or a diary. Even when a work of art contains elements which can be identified as biographical, these elements lose 'their specifically personal meaning and become simply concrete human material, integral elements of a work.' There is a quality that we may call *Miltonic* or *Keatsian* in the work of their authors. But this quality can be determined on the basis of the works themselves. The work of art is not a mere copy of life. Still there are 'parallelisms, oblique resemblances, topsy-turvy mirrors' [Wellek and Warren 1980: 75–79].

The author's mind undoubtedly casts light upon what he perceives, but the only means to judge about this perception is to study its representation, – a literary text.

3. WRITING A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

General Approaches

When writing about a literary work, take into consideration the difference between a plot summary and a critical analysis. A plot summary begins with no point of view; it merely recapitulates the facts. A critical analysis takes a viewpoint and attempts to prove its validity. Your task is to explain and evaluate.

Mind you are writing to a well-informed reader. Your audience has considerable knowledge of the subject about which you are writing.

Start analyzing the text in terms of composition (beginning, middle and end) to get a clearer sense of its movement. Ask yourself what each chapter (paragraph) accomplishes. Read closely the initial description of the text. Look for repeated words and ideas. Ponder well the final paragraph. Do not forget about the title.

If length is a problem, concentrate on shorter passages to explore the text in details. Your analysis of the passages can fall into several stages:

- a) A short statement of what the passage is about
- b) A search for an opposition or tension within the passage
- c) Analysis of the details of the passage, possibly relating them to the opposition already noted
- d) Analysis of the relations of the passage to the text as a whole
- e) A search for anything distinctive about the passage, particularly in the area of style [Peck 1995:5].

Following the procedure step by step you will achieve a sufficiently complex sense of the whole work.

Analyze each element of a literary work (plot, subject, theme, characterization, setting, point of view, and tone as an aspect of point of view, imagery), bearing in mind its organic integrity.

Pay close attention to the form of the work. Try to understand why the author chooses to write in the way he does. Take into consideration the author's choice of sounds, words, and sentence patterns. Focus on the implied plane of the work, found in word connotations. Discuss the view of life the work reveals, what the author values and what he condemns.

Tips on Readability

Before beginning to write, think of various points in the outline, make up your mind what you want to say under the headings and gradually expand each heading into a paragraph.

Identify a problem of interpretation, raising a specific question about the text. If your essay lacks a strong thesis, you will have nothing to assert. To come up with the thesis, get in the habit of *how* and *why* questions which are rather interpretative than dryly descriptive. A thesis statement should not be too broad, too specific or self-evident. You may also write a one-paragraph 'promise' of what your paper is going to be.

An essay consists of a number of paragraphs. All the sentences in each of the paragraph should be closely connected and deal with the same topic. As part of a larger unit, a paragraph should fit into it,

showing some reference to preceding and following paragraphs by introducing a series of ideas or by summing up a collection of statements. This means that a paragraph may have not only a topic sentence but also a linking sentence which takes up the thread of previous paragraphs or which frames the thesis to be developed in the text. Define topic sentences and transition sentences in each of the paragraphs.

Mind the length of paragraphs. Long paragraphs send off alarms in most readers' minds; very short paragraphs suggest insubstantiality and flightiness. A long succession of medium-length paragraphs proves monotonous. Vary your pace alive and vital. Pay attention to the variety of structure in paragraphs too.

There are three main parts in the essay – the beginning, the body, and the end.

The opening paragraph should appear to be natural. It can also be direct. Arrest the readers' attention with the very first sentence. There are many ways of beginning the essay, for example, general reflection, a quotation or a question that the composition will answer. You may also frame the thesis at the beginning of your work.

The middle section of the essay consists of the development of the opener's thesis. Study the text and record all the textual evidence you have discovered to prove the thesis you have worked out. Organize them into logically connected groups (characterization, setting, point of view etc.) and analyze how they interconnect. Decide the sequence in which to present them.

The ending of your essay should prove to the reader that the subject has been nicely rounded off and the whole is finished. Because your conclusion is the final idea that your reader will take from the work, it should be as grasping as the opening paragraph. Get your final point in sharp focus – rephrase the thesis, re-emphasize its validity, refer in some way to the opening paragraph, or generalize.

Stick to the motto: "Assert and support". Offer the careful argumentation to make your position convincing. Range back and forth through the plot in pursuit of textual evidence. Use the details of the plot to demonstrate a point: it is the larger significance of these details that concerns you, not the details for their sake. Summarize the meaning of the textual evidence presented in all paragraphs and tie the evidence to the main thesis of the essay. Argue by generalization

and refer to examples and quotations from the text. If you quote, analyze what you quote. The format of the whole paragraph should be 'text/analysis/conclusion' (Peck). Try to predict and answer the disagreements and questions that your reader might have about interpretation.

Write clearly and effectively. Choose the right words carefully, knowing the right word can sometimes replace phrases or even sentences. Oratory should never be asked to substitute for accuracy and truth. Avoid passive structures, 'there is/there are' sentences, clichés, and vague qualifiers, such as 'interesting', 'important', or 'unusual'. As pretentiousness is a stumbling block for beginning writers, 'don't use words you don't understand, tackle problems that are too big for you, or write sentences you can't explain; it is more important to make sense than to make a big, empty impression' [Bain, Beauty, and Hunter 1995: 2162].

Emphasize through position and proportion. A rhetorical principle is that required stress to be given to important elements in an essay at the expense of less important elements. Emphasis may be given to an idea in various parts of an essay. Emphasize words by repeating them or by placing them at the beginning or end of the sentence. Provide variety in the length of the sentences. After a number of long sentences introduce a short one to make the reader focus on the idea it contains. Use other kinds of emphasis, for example, through parallels and contrasts, or through imagery.

You will probably revise several drafts before preparing a final version.

PART II

WORKING WITH TEXTS

Sherwood Anderson

(1876–1941)

Sherwood Anderson was born in Camden, Ohio, and completed his education at the age of 14. His parents led a transient life, moving from one place to another after work. Anderson attended school only intermittently, while helping to support his family by working as a newsboy, housepainter, stock handler, and stable groom. At the age of 17 he moved to Chicago where he worked as a warehouse labourer and attended business classes at night. He served in the Spanish-American War (1898-9), married, and managed a paint factory. Then, apparently, he left family and job and went to pursue a literary career in Chicago.

Anderson's two first novels were *Windy McPherson's Son* (1916) and *Marching Men* (1917), both containing the psychological themes of inner lives of Midwestern villages, the pursuit of success and disillusionment. The individual tales of *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), and Anderson's short stories in other collections, *The Triumphs of the Egg* (1921), *Horses and Men* (1932), and *Death in the Woods* (1933), were also characterized by an interest in psychological process. Critics praised their casual development and complexity of motivation. Anderson wrote, among others, the novel *Dark Laughter* (1925) and newspaper pieces, which were collected in *Hello Towns* (1929), *Return to Winesburg* (1967) and *The Buck Fever Papers* (1971). During his lifetime he published two autobiographical works, *A Storyteller's Story* (1924) and semifictional *Tar: A Midwest Childhood* (1926). His *Memoirs* (1942) and *Letters* (1953) appeared posthumously.

Anderson's stories are sensitive, experimental, and poetic. He brought the techniques of modernism to American fiction. These techniques included a simple writing style, very much like ordinary spoken English; more emphasis on the form of the story than on its content; and a special use of time (in which past, present and future are fixed together, 'as in a dream') (High). Anderson framed a new idea of time in his *A Story-Teller's Story*. He wrote, 'I have come to think that the true history of life is a history of moments. It is only at rare moments that we live'. The influence of Anderson's flat, minimalist prose style, derived from everyday speech and evocative of a bleaker vision of life than had previously been characteristic

of American writing, could be seen in many writers, Hemingway and Faulkner among them.

Hands appeared in Anderson's best-known collection of *Winesburg, Ohio*, which consists of twenty-three thematically related sketches written in a simple, realistic language and illuminated by a muted lyricism. Anderson draws a picture of life in a typical small Midwestern town as seen through the eyes of its inhabitants. Like most of his characters, the inhabitants of Winesburg are baffled, puzzled and groping for some way to find their identity. The narrative is united by the appearance of George Willard, a young reporter, who is in revolt against the narrowness of the small-town life.

Hands

Upon the half decayed veranda of a small frame house that stood near the edge of a ravine near the town of Winesburg, Ohio, a fat little old man walked nervously up and down. Across a long field that had been seeded for clover but that had produced only a dense crop of yellow mustard weeds, he could see the public highway along which went a wagon filled with berry pickers returning from the fields. The berry pickers, youths and maidens, laughed and shouted boisterously. A boy clad in a blue shirt leaped from the wagon and attempted to drag after him one of the maidens, who screamed and protested shrilly. The feet of the boy in the road kicked up a cloud of dust that floated across the face of the departing sun. Over the long field came a thin girlish voice. "Oh, you Wing Biddlebaum, comb your hair, it's falling into your eyes," commanded the voice to the man, who was bald and whose nervous little hands fiddled about the bare white forehead as though arranging a mass of tangled locks.

Wing Biddlebaum, forever frightened and beset by a ghostly band of doubts, did not think of himself as in any way a part of the life of the town where he had lived for twenty years. Among all the people of Winesburg but one had come close to him. With George Willard, son of Tom Willard, the proprietor of the New Willard House, he had formed something like a friendship. George Willard was the reporter on the Winesburg Eagle and sometimes in the evenings he walked out along the highway to Wing Biddlebaum's house.

Now as the old man walked up and down on the veranda, his hands moving nervously about, he was hoping that George Willard would come and spend the evening with him. After the wagon containing the berry pickers had passed, he went across the field through the tall mustard weeds and climbing a rail fence peered anxiously along the road to the town. For a moment he stood thus, rubbing his hands together and looking up and down the road, and then, fear overcoming him, ran back to walk again upon the porch on his own house.

In the presence of George Willard, Wing Biddlebaum, who for twenty years had been the town mystery, lost something of his timidity, and his shadowy personality, submerged in a sea of doubts, came forth to look at the world. With the young reporter at his side, he ventured in the light of day into Main Street or strode up and down on the rickety front porch of his own house, talking excitedly. The voice that had been low and trembling became shrill and loud. The bent figure straightened. With a kind of wriggle, like a fish returned to the brook by the fisherman, Biddlebaum the silent began to talk, striving to put into words the ideas that had been accumulated by his mind during long years of silence.

Wing Biddlebaum talked much with his hands. The slender expressive fingers, forever active, forever striving to conceal themselves in his pockets or behind his back, came forth and became the piston rods of his machinery of expression.

The story of Wing Biddlebaum is a story of hands. Their restless activity, like unto the beating of the wings of an imprisoned bird, had given him his name. Some obscure poet of the town had thought of it. The hands alarmed their owner. He wanted to keep them hidden away and looked with amazement at the quiet inexpressive hands of other men who worked beside him in the fields, or passed, driving sleepy teams on country roads.

When he talked to George Willard, Wing Biddlebaum closed his fists and beat with them upon a table or on the walls of his house. The action made him more comfortable. If the desire to talk came to him when the two were walking in the fields, he sought out a stump or the top board of a fence and with his hands pounding busily talked with renewed ease.

The story of Wing Biddlebaum's hands is worth a book in itself. Sympathetically set forth it would tap many strange, beautiful quali-

ties in obscure men. It is a job for a poet. In Winesburg the hands had attracted attention merely because of their activity. With them Wing Biddlebaum had picked as high as a hundred and forty quarts of strawberries in a day. They became his distinguishing feature, the source of his fame. Also they made more grotesque an already grotesque and elusive individuality. Winesburg was proud of the hands of Wing Biddlebaum in the same spirit in which it was proud of Banker White's new stone house and Wesley Moyer's bay stallion, Tony Tip, that had won the two-fifteen trot at the fall races in Cleveland.

As for George Willard, he had many times wanted to ask about the hands. At times an almost overwhelming curiosity had taken hold of him. He felt that there must be a reason for their strange activity and their inclination to keep hidden away and only a growing respect for Wing Biddlebaum kept him from blurting out the questions that were often in his mind.

Once he had been on the point of asking. The two were walking in the fields on a summer afternoon and had stopped to sit upon a grassy bank. All afternoon Wing Biddlebaum had talked as one inspired. By a fence he had stopped and beating like a giant woodpecker upon the top board had shouted at George Willard, condemning his tendency to be too much influenced by the people about him, "You are destroying yourself," he cried. "You have the inclination to be alone and to dream and you are afraid of dreams. You want to be like others in town here. You hear them talk and you try to imitate them."

On the grassy bank Wing Biddlebaum had tried again to drive his point home. His voice became soft and reminiscent, and with a sigh of contentment he launched into a long rambling talk, speaking as one lost in a dream.

Out of the dream Wing Biddlebaum made a picture for George Willard. In the picture men lived again in a kind of pastoral golden age. Across a green open country came clean-limbed young men, some afoot, some mounted upon horses. In crowds the young men came to gather about the feet of an old man who sat beneath a tree in a tiny garden and who talked to them.

Wing Biddlebaum became wholly inspired. For once he forgot the hands. Slowly they stole forth and lay upon George Willard's

shoulders. Something new and bold came into the voice that talked. "You must try to forget all you have learned," said the old man. "You must begin to dream. From this time on you must shut your ears to the roaring of the voices."

Pausing in his speech, Wing Biddlebaum looked long and earnestly at George Willard. His eyes glowed. Again he raised the hands to caress the boy and then a look of horror swept over his face.

With a convulsive movement of his body, Wing Biddlebaum sprang to his feet and thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets. Tears came to his eyes. "I must be getting along home. I can talk no more with you," he said nervously.

Without looking back, the old man had hurried down the hillside and across a meadow, leaving George Willard perplexed and frightened upon the grassy slope. With a shiver of dread the boy arose and went along the road toward town. "I'll not ask him about his hands," he thought, touched by the memory of the terror he had seen in the man's eyes. "There's something wrong, but I don't want to know what it is. His hands have something to do with his fear of me and of everyone."

And George Willard was right. Let us look briefly into the story of the hands. Perhaps our talking of them will arouse the poet who will tell the hidden wonder story of the influence for which the hands were but fluttering pennants of promise.

In his youth Wing Biddlebaum had been a school teacher in a town in Pennsylvania. He was not then known as Wing Biddlebaum, but went by the less euphonic name of Adolph Myers. As Adolph Myers he was much loved by the boys of his school.

Adolph Myers was meant by nature to be a teacher of youth. He was one of those rare, little understood men who rule by a power so gentle that it passes as a lovable weakness. In their feeling for the boys under their charge such men are not unlike the finer sort of women in their love of men.

And yet that is but crudely stated. It needs the poet there. With the boys of his school, Adolph Myers had walked in the evening or had sat talking until dusk upon the schoolhouse steps lost in a kind of dream. Here and there went his hands, caressing the shoulders of the boys, playing about the tousled heads. As he talked his voice became soft and musical. There was a caress in that also. In a way the voice

and the hands, the stroking of the shoulders and the touching of the hair were a part of the schoolmaster's effort to carry a dream into the young minds. By the caress that was in his fingers he expressed himself. He was one of those men in whom the force that creates life is diffused, not centralized. Under the caress of his hands doubt and disbelief went out of the minds of the boys and they began also to dream.

And then the tragedy. A half-witted boy of the school became enamored of the young master. In his bed at night he imagined unspeakable things and in the morning went forth to tell his dreams as facts. Strange, hideous accusations fell from his loose-hung lips. Through the Pennsylvania town went a shiver. Hidden, shadowy doubts that had been in men's minds concerning Adolph Myers were galvanized into beliefs.

The tragedy did not linger. Trembling lads were jerked out of bed and questioned. "He put his arms about me," said one. "His fingers were always playing in my hair," said another.

One afternoon a man of the town, Henry Bradford, who kept a saloon, came to the schoolhouse door. Calling Adolph Myers into the school yard he began to beat him with his fists. As his hard knuckles beat down into the frightened face of the schoolmaster, his wrath became more and more terrible. Screaming with dismay, the children ran here and there like disturbed insects. "I'll teach you to put your hands on my boy, you beast," roared the saloon keeper, who, tired of beating the master, had begun to kick him about the yard.

Adolph Myers was driven from the Pennsylvania town in the night. With lanterns in their hands a dozen men came to the door of the house where he lived alone and commanded that he dress and come forth. It was raining and one of the men had a rope in his hands. They had intended to hang the schoolmaster, but something in his figure, so small, white, and pitiful, touched their hearts and they let him escape. As he ran away into the darkness they repented of their weakness and ran after him, swearing and throwing sticks and great balls of soft mud at the figure that screamed and ran faster and faster into the darkness.

For twenty years Adolph Myers had lived alone in Winesburg. He was but forty but looked sixty-five. The name of Biddlebaum he got from a box of goods seen at a freight station as he hurried

through an eastern Ohio town. He had an aunt in Winesburg, a black-toothed old woman who raised chickens, and with her he lived until she died. He had been ill for a year after the experience in Pennsylvania, and after his recovery worked as a day laborer in the fields, going timidly about and striving to conceal his hands. Although he did not understand what had happened he felt that the hands must be to blame. Again and again the fathers of the boys had talked of the hands. "Keep your hands to yourself," the saloon keeper had roared, dancing with fury in the schoolhouse yard.

Upon the veranda of his house by the ravine, Wing Biddlebaum continued to walk up and down until the sun had disappeared and the road beyond the field was lost in the grey shadows. Going into his house he cut slices of bread and spread honey upon them. When the rumble of the evening train that took away the express cars loaded with the day's harvest of berries had passed and restored the silence of the summer night, he went again to walk upon the veranda. In the darkness he could not see the hands and they became quiet. Although he still hungered for the presence of the boy, who was the medium through which he expressed his love of man, the hunger became again a part of his loneliness and his waiting. Lighting a lamp, Wing Biddlebaum washed the few dishes soiled by his simple meal and, setting up a folding cot by the screen door that led to the porch, prepared to undress for the night. A few stray white bread crumbs lay on the cleanly washed floor by the table; putting the lamp upon a low stool he began to pick up the crumbs, carrying them to his mouth one by one with unbelievable rapidity. In the dense blotch of light beneath the table, the kneeling figure looked like a priest engaged in some service of his church. The nervous expressive fingers, flashing in and out of the light, might well have been mistaken for the fingers of the devotee going swiftly through decade after decade of his rosary.

Probing for Meaning and Method

1. What prevails in the story – events, the 'atmosphere of the mind' or both?

2. What are the main and the minor conflicts? Does the excitement of the plot emerge from internal or external conflicts? What makes you come to this conclusion?

3. Who is the central character in the story? What does he look like? What impression does the author give of Wing Biddlebaum in the first paragraph? What features of his inner world are uncovered in the word-combinations: *walked nervously up and down* and *nervous little hands*? Look through the text and read out other words, denoting or implying his emotions. How does this word choice work to make the text effective?

4. What is the most distinctive feature in Wing Biddlebaum's appearance? What is the real reason for his hands' strange activity, according to you? Do you consider the descriptions of his hands suggestive? What do the descriptions imply? Does the story show the confrontation or the interdependence of the outward and the inward in the character?

To answer these questions, read, translate and interpret the sentences below. Pay special attention to the images the sentences convey:

a) In Winesburg the hands had attracted attention merely because of their activity. With them Wing Biddlebaum had picked as high as a hundred and forty quarts of strawberries in a day. They became his distinguishing feature, the source of his fame. Also they made more grotesque an already grotesque and elusive individuality. Winesburg was proud of the hands of Wing Biddlebaum in the same spirit in which it was proud of Banker White's new stone house and Wesley Moyer's bay stallion, Tony Tip, that had won the two-fifteen trot at the fall races in Cleveland.

b) Wing Biddlebaum talked much with his hands. The slender expressive fingers, forever active, forever striving to conceal themselves in his pockets or behind his back, came forth and became the piston rods of his machinery of expression.

c) Perhaps our talking of them will arouse the poet who will tell the hidden wonder story of the influence for which the hands were but fluttering pennants of promise.

d) He was one of those rare, little understood men who rule by a power so gentle that it passes as a lovable weakness. In their feeling for the boys

under their charge such men are not unlike the finer sort of women in their love of men.

e) In a way the voice and the hands, the stroking of the shoulders and the touching of the hair were a part of the schoolmaster's effort to carry a dream into the young minds. By the caress that was in his fingers he expressed himself. He was one of those men in whom the force that creates life is diffused, not centralized. Under the caress of his hands doubt and disbelief went out of the minds of the boys and they began also to dream.

5. What language means in the sentences quoted above point to the narrator's positive evaluation of Wing Biddlebaum? Does the narrator express his opinion directly, indirectly or both?

6. Do the hands alarm Wing Biddlebaum? Why does he 'want to keep them away'? Why did 'a look of horror' sweep over his face when he raised the hands to caress George Willard? Summarize the protagonist's life-story to answer these questions.

7. Wing Biddlebaum had to give up his previous occupation though his pupils loved him. What is the narrator's attitude to the episode? Comment on the subtext of the following sentence, 'Although he did not understand what had happened he felt that the hands must be to blame'.

8. Is Wing Biddlebaum old or young? How old is he? What interpretation does the author want us to take of the following observation, 'He was but forty but looked sixty-five'.

9. What are Wing Biddlebaum's personality traits? Does the author simply tell us what the character is like? Which of the traits does he show through external details, speech, deeds and thoughts? Is Wing Biddlebaum strong or weak in his beliefs and attitudes? What does the metaphoric image *his shadowy personality, submerged in a sea of doubts* imply? Wing Biddlebaum is referred to as *grotesque and elusive individuality*. Do you consider these epithets appropriate? Why or why not?

10. What are the protagonist's relations to other people? Do the people in Winesburg treat him with respect? Does he feel isolated? Lonely? How can you explain his loneliness? Is it his view on life? Inability to communicate? Anything else? Why does the narrator call

him *the town mystery*? Wing Biddlebaum's relations to George Willard are different. Why?

To answer the question, read, translate and interpret the following two passages in the text. Pay special attention to the parts underlined:

a) With the young reporter at his side, he ventured in the light of day into Main Street or strode up and down on the rickety front porch of his own house, talking excitedly. The voice that had been low and trembling became shrill and loud. The bent figure straightened. With a kind of wriggle, like a fish returned to the brook by the fisherman, Biddlebaum the silent began to talk, striving to put into words the ideas that had been accumulated by his mind during long years of silence.

b) By a fence he had stopped and beating like a giant woodpecker upon the top board had shouted at George Willard, condemning his tendency to be too much influenced by the people about him, "You are destroying yourself," he cried. "You have the inclination to be alone and to dream and you are afraid of dreams. You want to be like others in town here. You hear them talk and you try to imitate them."

c) Although he still hungered for the presence of the boy, who was the medium through which he expressed his love of man, the hunger became again a part of his loneliness and his waiting.

11. Is Wing Biddlebaum's name suggestive? If so, what is the character associated with? Find the answer in the text of the story.

12. What do you think about the title? Is the story really about hands, or do hands symbolize something else? If so, what?

13. Frame the theme of the story.

14. Give your stylistic commentary of the story

Suggestions for Short Writing

1. Write a four-paragraph analytical essay in which you summarize the protagonist's personal traits.

2. Write a two-paragraph essay on the implications of Wing Biddlebaum's name.

3. Trace the thematic and evaluative force of the central image of hands in the story.

Suggestions for Sustained Writing

Tackling the Story

Write an essay on the whole text of *Hands*.

Generalizing about Life

Write an essay in which you expand on the following poetic image in its reference to life:

The quick Dreams,
The passion-winged Ministers of thought
(P.B. Shelly: *Adonais*)

Considering the Nature of Literature

Write an essay in which you agree or disagree with the following idea:

It (education) has produced a vast population able to read but unable to distinguish what is worth reading (G.M. Trevelyan)

James Joyce

(1882–1941)

James (Augustine Aloysius) Joyce was born in Ireland and educated at Jesuit schools and University College, Dublin, where he studied modern languages. He lived most of his adult life in exile, in France and in Switzerland, fighting blindness and poverty and writing the books that were to influence strongly the literature of the 20th c. Joyce revolutionized the form of the English novel with the *stream of consciousness* technique. His ex-

perimental prose expressed his own vision of reality, much concerned with ‘ways of seeing’.

Joyce’s first published piece was an essay on Ibsen (*Ibsen’s New Drama*, 1900), written as an undergraduate. *Dubliners*, the first and only collection of technically conventional but delightfully evocative short stories, appeared in 1914. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), Joyce presented himself as a young man in the character of Stephen Dedalus, who was formed by the powerful forces of Irish national, political and religious feelings, but ‘gradually freed himself from the influence of these forces to follow his own nature and fate’ [Thornley and Gwyneth Roberts 1995: 149].

Joyce’s major novels *Ulysses* (1922) and the monumental, experimental and puzzling *Finnegans Wake* (1939) proved his preoccupation with language and were viewed by many critics as masterpieces.

Ulysses centres on Leopold Bloom’s day in Dublin, the people he meets and the thoughts that go through his mind. It is estimated that Bloom covers 18 miles of Dublin in his wanderings – on foot, by tram and horse-drawn carriage. Joyce experiments with language and mingles direct narrative with the unspoken and unconscious reactions of the characters. He creates a completely new style of writing which allows the reader to move inside the minds of the characters. Their thoughts and emotions are presented in a continuous stream, breaking all the usual rules of speech and punctuation.

Finnegans Wake continued these experiments with language. Here, not only sentences are mixed up but the forms of the words. In his *Book of Intriguing Words* P. Hellweg writes about “ten 100-letter words coined by Joyce and used in ‘Finnegans Wake’” [Hellweg 1993].

The difficulty in the language, in which Joyce is forcing as many associations as possible into each word, gives his readers great problems of understanding. No wonder, it was Joyce himself who said, ‘I expect nothing from the reader except that he should devote his life to studying my work’.

The story *Clay* appeared in the collection of *Dubliners* based around Joyce’s native city. Trying to ‘write a chapter in the moral history’ of his country, Joyce had chosen Dublin because it seemed to him ‘the centre of paralysis’. The stories, written in the style of ‘scrupulous meanness’, are arranged to present Dublin in four of its aspects – childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life. They are realistic on the surface but also carry a deep meaning, often in the form of ‘epiphanies’. Joyce, then, wants to say something more than to tell the story.

Clay

The matron had given her leave to go out as soon as the women's tea was over, and Maria looked forward to her evening out. The kitchen was spick and span: the cook said you could see yourself in the big copper boilers. The fire was nice and bright and on one of the side-tables were four very big barmbracks. These barmbracks seemed uncut; but if you went closer you would see that they had been cut into long thick even slices and were ready to be handed round at tea. Maria had cut them herself.

Maria was a very, very small person indeed, but she had a very long nose and a very long chin. She talked a little through her nose, always soothingly: '*Yes, my dear,*' and '*No, my dear*' She was always sent for when the women quarrelled over their tubs and always succeeded in making peace. One day the matron had said to her:

'Maria, you are a veritable peace-maker!'

And the sub-matron and two of the Board ladies had heard the compliment. And Ginger Mooney was always saying what she wouldn't do to the dummy who had charge of the irons if it wasn't for Maria. Every one was so fond of Maria.

The women would have their tea at six o'clock and she would be able to get away before seven. From Ballsbridge to the Pillar, twenty minutes; from the Pillar to Drumcondra, twenty minutes; and twenty minutes to buy the things. She would be there before eight. She took out her purse with the silver clasps and read again the words *A Present from Belfast*. She was very fond of that purse because Joe had brought it to her five years before when he and Alphy had gone to Belfast on a Whit-Monday trip. In the purse were two half-crowns and some coppers. She would have five shillings clear after paying tram fare. What a nice evening they would have, all the children singing! Only she hoped that Joe wouldn't come in drunk. He was so different when he took any drink.

Often he had wanted her to go and live with them; but she would have felt herself in the way (though Joe's wife was ever so nice with her) and she had become accustomed to the life of

laundry. Joe was a good fellow. She had nursed him and Alphy too; and Joe used often to say:

'Mamma is mamma, but Maria is my proper mother.'

After the break-up at home the boys had got her that position in the *Dublin by Lamplight* laundry, and she liked it. She used to have such a bad opinion of Protestants, but now she thought they were very nice people, a little quiet and serious, but still very nice people to live with. Then she had her plants in the conservatory and she liked looking after them. She had lovely ferns and wax-plants and, whenever anyone came to visit her, she always gave the visitor one or two slips from her conservatory. There was one thing she didn't like and that was the tracts on the walks; but the matron was such a nice person to deal with, so genteel.

When the cook told her everything was ready she went into the women's room and began to pull the big bell. In a few minutes the women began to come in by twos and threes, wiping their steaming hands in their petticoats and pulling down the sleeves of their blouses over their red steaming arms. They settled down before their huge mugs which the cook and the dummy filled up with hot tea, already mixed with milk and sugar in huge tin cans. Maria superintended the distribution of the barmbrack and saw that every woman got her four slices. There was a great deal of laughing and joking during the meal. Lizzie Fleming said Maria was sure to get the ring and, though Fleming had said that for so many Hallow Eves, Maria had to laugh and say she didn't want any ring or man either; and when she laughed her grey-green eyes sparkled with disappointed shyness and the tip of her nose nearly met the tip of her chin. Then Ginger Mooney lifted up her mug of tea and proposed Maria's health, while all the other women clattered with their mugs on the table, and said she was sorry she hadn't a sup of porter to drink it in. And Maria laughed again till the tip of her nose nearly met the tip of her chin and till her minute body nearly shook itself asunder, because she knew that Mooney meant well, though of course she had the notions of a common woman.

But wasn't Maria glad when the women had finished their tea and the cook and the dummy had begun to clear away the tea-things! She went into her little bedroom and, remembering that the next morning was a mass morning, changed the hand of the alarm from

seven to six. Then she took off her working skirt and her house-boots and laid her best skirt out on the bed and her tiny dress-boots beside the foot of the bed. She changed her blouse too and, as she stood before the mirror, she thought of how she used to dress for mass on Sunday morning when she was a young girl; and she looked with quaint affection at the diminutive body which she had so often adorned. In spite of its years she found it a nice tidy little body.

When she got outside the streets were shining with rain and she was glad of her old brown waterproof. The tram was full and she had to sit on the little stool at the end of the car, facing all the people, with her toes barely touching the floor. She arranged in her mind all she was going to do, and thought how much better it was to be independent and to have your own money in your pocket. She hoped they would have a nice evening. She was sure they would, but she could not help thinking what a pity it was Alphy and Joe were not speaking. They were always falling out now, but when they were boys together they used to be the best of friends; but such was life.

She got out of her tram at the Pillar and ferreted her way quickly among the crowds. She went into Downes's cake-shop but the shop was so full of people that it was a long time before she could get herself attended to. She bought a dozen of mixed penny cakes, and at last came out of the shop laden with a big bag. Then she thought what else would she buy: she wanted to buy something really nice. They would be sure to have plenty of apples and nuts. It was hard to know what to buy and all she could think of was cake. She decided to buy some plumcake, but Downes's plumcake had not enough almond icing on top of it, so she went over to a shop in Henry Street. Here she was a long time in suiting herself, and the stylish young lady behind the counter, who was evidently a little annoyed by her, asked her was it wedding-cake she wanted to buy. That made Maria blush and smile at the young lady; but the young lady took it all very seriously and finally cut a thick slice of plumcake, parcelled it up and said: 'Two-and-four, please.'

She thought she would have to stand in the Drumcondra tram because none of the young men seemed to notice her, but an elderly gentleman made room for her. He was a stout gentleman and

he wore a brown hard hat; he had a square red face and a greyish moustache. Maria thought he was a colonel-looking gentleman and she reflected how much more polite he was than the young men who simply stared straight before them. The gentleman began to chat with her about Hallow Eve and the rainy weather. He supposed the bag was full of good things for the little ones and said it was only right that the youngsters should enjoy themselves while they were young. Maria agreed with him and favoured him with demure nods and hems. He was very nice with her, and when she was getting out at the Canal Bridge she thanked him and bowed, and he bowed to her and raised his hat and smiled agreeably; and while she was going up along the terrace, bending her tiny head under the rain, she thought how easy it was to know a gentleman even when he has a drop taken.

Everybody said: 'O, *here's Maria!*' when she came to Joe's house. Joe was there, having come home from business, and all the children had their Sunday dresses on. There were two big girls in from next door and games were going on. Maria gave the bag of cakes to the eldest boy, Alphy, to divide, and Mrs. Donnelly said it was too good of her to bring such a big bag of cakes, and made all the children say: 'Thanks, Maria.'

But Maria said she had brought something special for papa and mamma, something they would be sure to like, and she began to look for her plumcake. She tried in Downes's bag and then in the pockets of her waterproof and then on the hallstand, but nowhere could she find it. Then she asked all the children had any of them eaten it – by mistake, of course – but the children all said no and looked as if they did not like to eat cakes if they were to be accused of stealing. Everybody had a solution for the mystery and Mrs. Donnelly said it was plain that Maria had left it behind her in the tram. Maria, remembering how confused the gentleman with the greyish moustache had made her, coloured with shame and vexation and disappointment. At the thought of the failure of her little surprise and of the two and fourpence she had thrown away for nothing she nearly cried outright.

But Joe said it didn't matter and made her sit down by the fire. He was very nice with her. He told her all that went on in

his office, repeating for her a smart answer which he had made to the manager. Maria did not understand why Joe laughed so much over the answer he had made, but she said that the manager must have been a very overbearing person to deal with. Joe said he wasn't so bad when you knew how to take him, that he was a decent sort so long as you didn't rub him the wrong way. Mrs. Donnelly played the piano for the children and they danced and sang. Then the two next-door girls handed round the nuts. Nobody could find the nutcrackers, and Joe was nearly getting cross over it and asked how did they expect Maria to crack nuts without a nutcracker. But Maria said she didn't like nuts and that they weren't to bother about her. Then Joe asked would she take a bottle of stout, and Mrs. Donnelly said there was port wine too in the house if she would prefer that. Maria said she would rather they didn't ask her to take anything: but Joe insisted.

So Maria let him have his way and they sat by the fire talking over old times and Maria thought she would put in a good word for Alphy. But Joe cried that God might strike him stone dead if ever he spoke a word to his brother again and Maria said she was sorry she had mentioned the matter. Mrs. Donnelly told her husband it was a great shame for him to speak that way of his own flesh and blood, but Joe said that Alphy was no brother of his and there was nearly being a row on the head of it. But Joe said he would not lose his temper on account of the night it was, and asked his wife to open some more stout. The two next-door girls had arranged some Hallow Eve games and soon everything was merry again. Maria was delighted to see the children so merry and Joe and his wife in such good spirits. The next-door girls put some saucers on the table and then led the children up to the table, blindfold. One got the prayer-book and the other three got the water; and when one of the next-door girls got the ring Mrs. Donnelly shook her finger at the blushing girl as much as to say: *O, I know all about it!* They insisted then on blindfolding Maria and leading her up to the table to see what she would get; and, while they were putting on the bandage, Maria laughed and laughed again till the tip of her nose nearly met the tip of her chin.

They led her up to the table amid laughing and joking, and she put her hand out in the air as she was told to do. She moved her hand about here and there in the air and descended on one of the saucers. She felt a soft wet substance with her fingers and was surprised that nobody spoke or took off her bandage. There was a pause for a few seconds; and then a great deal of scuffling and whispering. Somebody said something about the garden, and at last Mrs. Donnelly said something very cross to one of the next-door girls and told her to throw it out at once: that was no play. Maria understood that it was wrong that time and so she had to do it over again: and this time she got the prayer-book.

After that Mrs. Donnelly played Miss McCloud's Reel for the children, and Joe made Maria take a glass of wine. Soon they were all quite merry again, and Mrs. Donnelly said Maria would enter a convent before the year was out because she had got the prayer-book. Maria had never seen Joe so nice to her as he was that night, so full of pleasant talk and reminiscences. She said they were all very good to her.

At last the children grew tired and sleepy and Joe asked Maria would she not sing some little song before she went, one of the old songs. Mrs. Donnelly said '*Do, please, Maria!*' and so Maria had to get up and stand beside the piano. Mrs. Donnelly bade the children be quiet and listen to Maria's song. Then she played the prelude and said '*Now, Maria!*' and Maria, blushing very much, began to sing in a tiny quavering voice. She sang *I Dreamt that I Dwelt*, and when she came to the second verse she sang again:

'I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls
With vassals and serfs at my side,
And of all who assembled within those walls
That I was the hope and the pride.
'I had riches too great to count, could boast
Of a high ancestral name,
But I also dreamt, which pleased me most,
That you loved me still the same.'

But no one tried to show her her mistake; and when she had ended her song Joe was very much moved. He said that

there was no time like the long ago and no music for him like poor old Balfe, whatever other people might say; and his eyes ' filled up so much with tears that he could not find what he was looking for and in the end he had to ask his wife to tell him where the corkscrew was.

Probing for Meaning and Method

1. Summarize the content of the story in the form of a synopsis.

2. Who is the protagonist? Does Joyce inform us about Maria's personality by direct comment, by means of dialogue or by means of Maria's personal confessions?

3. What point of view does Joyce choose to develop his story? Is it a first-person narrative or a third-person narrative? Does Joyce intervene?

4. What is Maria's attitude to other people? What is her attitude to life? What is the author's opinion of Maria and the people surrounding her?

To answer these questions, read, translate and interpret the following remarks:

a) She was always sent for when the women quarrelled over their tubs and always succeeded in making peace

b) 'Maria, you are a veritable peace-maker!'

c) And Ginger Mooney was always saying what she wouldn't do to the dummy who had charge of the irons if it wasn't for Maria.

d) Every one was so fond of Maria.

e) He was very nice with her, and when she was getting out at the Canal Bridge she thanked him and bowed, and he bowed to her and raised his hat and smiled agreeably; and while she was going up along the terrace, bending her tiny head under the rain, she thought how easy it was to know a gentleman even when he has a drop taken.

f) She was very fond of that purse because Joe had brought it to her five years before when he and Alphy had gone to Belfast on a Whit-Monday trip.

g) Joe was a good fellow. She had nursed him and Alphy too; and Joe used often to say:

'Mamma is mamma, but Maria is my proper mother.'

h) What a nice evening they would have, all the children singing! Only she hoped that Joe wouldn't come in drunk.

i) ... she could not help thinking what a pity it was Alphy and Joe were not speaking. They were always falling out now, but when they were boys together they used to be the best of friends; but such was life.

j) ... they sat by the fire talking over old times and Maria thought she would put in a good word for Alphy. But Joe cried that God might strike him stone dead if ever he spoke a word to his brother again and Maria said she was sorry she had mentioned the matter.

5. Comment on the use of the words *nice*, *good*, *lovely*, *adorn* and *like* in Maria's speech. Do you consider these elements of speech mannerism implicit details? If so, what traits of Maria's personality do they hint at?

6. What do you know about Maria's personality as a result? Has she an inner strength or is she weak? Why does the author use the adjectives *little*, *tiny*, *small* and *diminutive* to describe her appearance? Do these characteristics reveal Maria's inner self? In what way? To answer the question, consult the dictionary and comment upon the implications of the adjectives mentioned.

7. Is Maria an interesting character demanding our emotional involvement or a type? What makes you come to this conclusion?

8. Do you think the title suggestive? What implications of the word *clay* are reconstructed from the context? What does clay symbolize in Hallow Eve games? Is anything wrong with Maria's choice? Why? How can you explain the characters' behaviour in the scene below?

They led her up to the table amid laughing and joking, and she put her hand out in the air as she was told to do. She moved her

hand about here and there in the air and descended on one of the saucers. She felt a soft wet substance with her fingers and was surprised that nobody spoke or took off her bandage. There was a pause for a few seconds; and then a great deal of scuffling and whispering. Somebody said something about the garden, and at last Mrs. Donnelly said something very cross to one of the next-door girls and told her to throw it out at once: that was no play. Maria understood that it was wrong that time and so she had to do it over again: and this time she got the prayer-book.

9. Who are the minor characters in the story? What part do they play in influencing the course of action and affecting the development of the protagonist? What pleasures and conflicts do Maria's relations with Joe's family cause her?

10. How do the characters of the story relate to one another? Are there any characters used in parallels here? How do the contrasts and parallels help you to understand the theme of the story? Frame the theme in writing.

11. Do the characters experience epiphanies? When, why and what do their epiphanies reveal to them and to us?

12. Give your stylistic commentary of the story.

Suggestions for Short Writing

1. Write a short paragraph, summarizing what you think the author's intention in the story is.

2. Write a short description of Maria's character, as seen from Joe's point of view.

3. Trace the thematic and evaluative force of implicit poetic details in the story.

Suggestions for Sustained Writing

Tackling the Story

Write an essay on the whole text of *Clay*.

Generalizing about Life

Write an essay in which you expand on the following idea, adapting it to your personal experience:

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare
(W. H. Davies: *Leisure*)

Considering the Nature of Literature

Write an essay in which you clarify the following poetic vision of writing:

Writing a book of poetry is like dropping a rose petal down the Grand Canyon and waiting for the echo (*Don Marquis*. In E. Anthony: *O Rare Don Marquis*)

D. H. Lawrence

(1885–1930)

David Herbert (Richards) Lawrence was born at Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, England, and educated at University College, Nottingham to become a teacher. His father was a coal-miner, his mother from a family with genteel aspirations. Emotional frictions between the parents and Lawrence's close relationship with his mother, left important traces in his later writing. In 1914 he married Frieda Weekley, ex-wife of his university professor, who was the model for Ursula Brangwen in *The Rainbow* (1915). A lifelong sufferer from tuberculosis, Lawrence died in 1930 in France, at the age of 44.

Though better known as a novelist, Lawrence's first-published works (1909) were poems. He believed in writing poetry that was immediate and true to the mysterious inner force which motivated it. His early poems reflect the influence of Ezra Pound and Imagist movement which reached its peak in the early teens of the twentieth century. Many of Lawrence's best-loved poems treat the physical and inner life of plants and animals; others are bitterly satiric and express his outrage at the puritanism and hypocrisy of conventional Anglo-Saxon society. His collections of poetry include *Look!*

We Have Come Through (1917), *Birds, Beasts, and Flowers* (1923), and *Pansies* (1929).

Lawrence was a rebellious and profoundly polemical writer with radical views, who regarded sex, the subconscious and nature as cures to what he considered the evils of modern industrialized society. Tremendously prolific, he was a continual source of controversy, often involved in widely publicized censorship. He achieved fame with the semi-autobiographical *Sons and Lovers* (1913), that draws on his childhood, his most famous novel, *The Rainbow*, and its sequel *Women in Love* (1917–1922). His travels in search of health prompted the essay *Mornings in Mexico* (1927). Lawrence's last novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, was published in Florence in 1928.

Although Lawrence's literary career spanned only two decades, the body of his work is considerable. He wrote essays, plays, and travel books. His short stories are generally considered to be among the best in the genre. In all of them, Lawrence 'is not above his characters, detached from them, moving them around like pieces on a chessboard; he is down among them, reacting to them as a human being reacts to other human beings – with affection, irritation, boredom, interest' [Wilson 1976: 169]

Lawrence's finest short story, '*The Prussian officer*' (1914), is about a young orderly. His officer, whose sadism is stimulated by the homosexual attraction for the youth, devises for him a series of humiliations. The soldier revolts, strangling the officer. Having achieved a kind of freedom, the young man dies of thirst after hiding in the woods. According to C. Wilson, the theme of the story may be framed as follows – 'never submit to indignity from other men, always fight back' [Ibid.].

The Prussian Officer

They had marched more than thirty kilometres since dawn, along the white, hot road where occasional thickets of trees threw a moment of shade, then out into the glare again. On either hand, the valley, wide and shallow, glittered with heat; dark green patches of rye, pale young corn, fallow and meadow and black pine woods spread in a dull, hot diagram under a glistening sky. But right in front the mountains ranged across, pale blue and very still, snow gleaming gently out of the deep atmosphere. And towards the mountains, on and on, the regiment marched between the rye fields and the meadows, between the scraggy fruit trees set regularly on

either side the high road. The burnished, dark green rye threw off a suffocating heat, the mountains drew gradually nearer and more distinct. While the feet of the soldiers grew hotter, sweat ran through their hair under their helmets, and their knapsacks could burn no more in contact with their shoulders, but seemed instead to give off a cold, prickly sensation.

He walked on and on in silence, staring at the mountains ahead, that rose sheer out of the land, and stood fold behind fold, half earth, half heaven, the heaven, the barrier with slits of soft snow, in the pale, bluish peaks.

He could now walk almost without pain. At the start, he had determined not to limp. It had made him sick to take the first steps, and during the first mile or so, he had compressed his breath, and the cold drops of sweat had stood on his forehead. But he had walked it off. What were they after all but bruises! He had looked at them, as he was getting up: deep bruises on the backs of his thighs. And since he had made his first step in the morning, he had been conscious of them, till now he had a tight, hot place in his chest, with suppressing the pain, and holding himself in. There seemed no air when he breathed. But he walked almost lightly.

The Captain's hand had trembled at taking his coffee at dawn: his orderly saw it again. And he saw the fine figure of the Captain wheeling on horseback at the farm-house ahead, a handsome figure in pale blue uniform with facings of scarlet, and the metal gleaming on the black helmet and the sword-scabbard, and dark streaks of sweat coining on the silky bay horse. The orderly felt he was connected with that figure moving so suddenly on horseback: he followed it like a shadow, mute and inevitable and damned by it. And the officer was always aware of the tramp of the company behind, the march of his orderly among the men.

The Captain was a tall man of about forty, grey at the temples. He had a handsome, finely knit figure, and was one of the best horsemen in the West. His orderly, having to rub him down, admired the amazing riding-muscles of his loins.

For the rest, the orderly scarcely noticed the officer any more than he noticed himself. It was rarely he saw his master's face: he did not look at it. The Captain had reddish brown, stiff hair, that he wore short upon his skull. His moustache was also cut short and

bristly over a full brutal mouth. His face was rather rugged, the checks thin. Perhaps the man was the more handsome for the deep lines in his face, the irritable tension of his brow, which gave him the look of a man who fights with life. His fair eyebrows stood bushy over light blue eyes that were always flashing with cold fire.

He was a Prussian aristocrat, haughty and overbearing. But his mother had been a Polish Countess. Having made too many gambling debts when he was young, he had ruined his prospects in the Army, and remained an infantry captain. He had never married: his position did not allow of it, and no woman had ever moved him to it. His time he spent riding—occasionally he rode one of his own horses at the races—and at the officers' club. Now and then he took himself a mistress. But after such an event, he returned to duty with his brow still more tense, his eyes still more hostile and irritable. With the men, however, he was merely impersonal, though a devil when roused; so that, on the whole, they feared him, but had no great aversion from him. They accepted him as the inevitable.

To his orderly he was at first cold and just and indifferent: he did not fuss over trifles. So that his servant knew practically nothing about him, except just what orders he would give, and how he wanted them obeyed. That was quite simple. Then the change gradually came.

The orderly was a youth of about twenty-two, of medium height, and well built. He had strong, heavy limbs, was swarthy, with a soft black, young moustache. There was something altogether warm and young about him. He had firmly marked eyebrows over dark, expressionless eyes, that seemed never to have thought, only to have received life direct through his senses, and acted straight from instinct.

Gradually the officer had become aware of his servant's young, vigorous, unconscious presence about him. He could not get away from the sense of the youth's person, while he was in attendance. It was like a warm flame upon the older man's tense, rigid body, that had become almost unliving, fixed. There was something so free and self-contained about him, and something in the young fellow's movement, that made the officer aware of him. And this irritated the Prussian. He did not choose to be touched into life by his servant. He might easily have changed his man, but he did not. He now very

rarely looked direct at his orderly, but kept his face averted, as if to avoid seeing him. And yet as the young soldier moved unthinkingly about the apartment, the elder watched him, and would notice the movement of his strong young shoulders under the blue cloth, the bend of his neck. And it irritated him. To see the soldier's young, brown, shapely peasant's hand grasp the loaf or the wine-bottle sent a flash of hate or of anger through the elder man's blood. It was not that the youth was clumsy: it was rather the blind, instinctive sureness of movement of an unhampered young animal that irritated the officer to such a degree.

Once, when a bottle of wine had gone over, and the red gushed out on to the tablecloth, the officer had started up with an oath, and his eyes, blue like fire, had held those of the confused youth for a moment. It was a shock for the young soldier. He felt something sink deeper, deeper into his soul, where nothing had ever gone before it. It left him rather blank and wondering. Some of his natural completeness in himself was gone, a little uneasiness took its place. And from that time an undiscovered feeling had held between the two men.

Henceforward the orderly was afraid of really meeting his master. His subconsciousness remembered those steely blue eyes and the harsh brows, and did not intend to meet them again. So he always stared past his master, and avoided him. Also, in a little anxiety, he waited for the three months to have gone, when his time would be up. He began to feel a constraint in the Captain's presence, and the soldier even more than the officer wanted to be left alone, in his neutrality as servant.

He had served the Captain for more than a year, and knew his duty. This he performed easily, as if it were natural to him. The officer and his commands he took for granted as he took the sun and the rain, and he served as a matter of course. It did not implicate him personally.

But now if he were going to be forced into a personal interchange with his master he would be like a wild thing caught, he felt he must get away.

But the influence of the young soldier's being had penetrated through the officer's stiffened discipline, and perturbed the man in him. He, however, was a gentleman, with long, fine hands and cul-

tivated movements, and was not going to allow such a thing as the stirring of his innate self. He was a man of passionate temper, who had always kept himself suppressed. Occasionally there had been a duel, an outburst before the soldiers. He knew himself to be always on the point of breaking out. But he kept himself hard to the idea of the Service. Whereas the young soldier seemed to live out his warm, full nature, to give it off in his very movements, which had a certain zest, such as wild animals have in free movement. And this irritated the officer more and more.

In spite of himself, the Captain could not regain his neutrality of feeling towards his orderly. Nor could he leave the man alone. In spite of himself, he watched him, gave him sharp orders, tried to take up as much of his time as possible. Sometimes he flew into a rage with the young soldier, and bullied him. Then the orderly shut himself off, as it were out of earshot, and waited, with sullen, flushed face, for the end of the noise. The words never pierced to his intelligence, he made himself, protectively, impervious to the feelings of his master.

He had a scar on his left thumb, a deep seam going across the knuckle. The officer had long suffered from it, and wanted to do something to it. Still it was there, ugly and brutal on the young, brown hand. At last the Captain's reserve gave way. One day, as the orderly was smoothing out the tablecloth, the officer pinned down this thumb with a pencil, asking:

'How did you come by that?'

The young man winced and drew back at attention.

'A wood axe, Herr Hauptmann,' he answered.

The officer waited for further explanation. None came. The orderly went about his duties. The elder man was sullenly angry. His servant avoided him. And the next day he had to use all his will-power to avoid seeing the scarred thumb. He wanted to get hold of it and – A hot flame ran in his blood.

He knew his servant would soon be free, and would be glad. As yet, the soldier had held himself off from the elder man. The Captain grew madly irritable. He could not rest when the soldier was away, and when he was present, he glared at him with tormented eyes. He hated those fine, black brows over the unmeaning, dark eyes, he was infuriated by the free movement of the handsome limbs, which

no military discipline could make stiff. And he became harsh and cruelly bullying, using contempt and satire. The young soldier only grew more mute and expressionless.

'What cattle were you bred by, that you can't keep straight eyes? Look me in the eyes when I speak to you.'

And the soldier turned his dark eyes to the other's face, but there was no sight in them: he stared with the slightest possible cast, holding back his sight, perceiving the blue of his master's eyes, but receiving no look from them. And the elder man went pale, and his reddish eyebrows twitched. He gave his order, barrenly.

Once he flung a heavy military glove into the young soldier's face. Then he had the satisfaction of seeing the black eyes flare up into his own, like a blaze when straw is thrown on a fire. And he had laughed with a little tremor and a sneer.

But there were only two months more. The youth instinctively tried to keep himself intact: he tried to serve the officer as if the latter were an abstract authority and not a man. All his instinct was to avoid personal contact, even definite hate. But in spite of himself the hate grew, responsive to the officer's passion. However, he put it in the background. When he had left the Army he could dare acknowledge it. By nature he was active, and had many friends. He thought what amazing good fellows they were. But, without knowing it, he was alone. Now this solitariness was intensified. It would carry him through his term. But the officer seemed to be going irritably insane, and the youth was deeply frightened.

The soldier had a sweetheart, a girl from the mountains, independent and primitive. The two walked together, rather silently. He went with her, not to talk, but to have his arm round her, and for the physical contact. This eased him, made it easier for him to ignore the Captain; for he could rest with her held fast against his chest. And she, in some unspoken fashion, was there for him. They loved each other.

The Captain perceived it, and was mad with irritation. He kept the young man engaged all the evenings long, and took pleasure in the dark look that came on his face. Occasionally, the eyes of the two men met, those of the younger sullen and dark, doggedly unalterable, those of the elder sneering with restless contempt.

The officer tried hard not to admit the passion that had got hold of him. He would not know that his feeling for his orderly was anything but that of a man incensed by his stupid, perverse servant. So, keeping quite justified and conventional in his consciousness, he let the other thing run on. His nerves, however, were suffering. At last he slung the end of a belt in his servant's face. When he saw the youth start back, the pain-tears in his eyes and the blood on his mouth, he had felt at once a thrill of deep pleasure and of shame.

But this, he acknowledged to himself, was a thing he had never done before. The fellow was too exasperating. His own nerves must be going to pieces. He went away for some days with a woman.

It was a mockery of pleasure. He simply did not want the woman. But he stayed on for his time. At the end of it, he came back in an agony of irritation, torment, and misery. 'He rode all the evening, then came straight in to supper. His orderly was out. The officer sat with his long, fine hands lying on the table, perfectly still, and all his blood seemed to be corroding.

At last his servant entered. He watched the strong, easy young figure, the fine eyebrows, the thick black hair. In a week's time the youth had got back his old well-being. The hands of the officer twitched and seemed to be full of mad flame. The young man stood at attention, unmoving, shut off.

The meal went in silence. But the orderly seemed eager. He made a clatter with the dishes.

'Are you in a hurry?' asked the officer, watching the intent, warm face of his servant. The other did not reply.'

'Will you answer my question?' said the Captain.

'Yes, sir,' replied the orderly, standing with his pile of deep Army plates. The Captain waited, looked at him, then asked again:

'Are you in a hurry?'

'Yes, sir,' came the answer, that sent a flash through the listener.

'For what?'

'I was going out, sir.'

'I want you this evening.'

There was a moment's hesitation. The officer had a curious stiffness of countenance.

'Yes, sir,' replied the servant, in his throat.

'I want you tomorrow evening also – in fact you may consider your evenings occupied, unless I give you leave.'

The mouth with the young moustache set close.

'Yes, sir,' answered the orderly, loosening his lips for a moment.

He again turned to the door.

'And why have you a piece of pencil in your ear?'

The orderly hesitated, then continued on his way without answering. He set the plates in a pile outside the door, took the stump of pencil from his ear, and put it in his pocket. He had been copying a verse for his sweetheart's birthday card. He returned to finish clearing the table. The officer's eyes were dancing, he had a little, eager smile.

'Why have you a piece of pencil in your ear?' he asked.

The orderly took his hands full of dishes. His master was standing near the great green stove, a little smile on his face, his chin thrust forward. When the young soldier saw him his heart suddenly ran hot. He felt blind. Instead of answering, he turned dazedly to the door. As he was crouching to set down the dishes, he was pitched forward by a kick from behind. The pots went in a stream down the stairs, he clung to the pillar of the banisters. And as he was rising he was kicked heavily again and again, so that he clung sickly to the post for some moments. His master had gone swiftly into the room and closed the door. The maid-servant downstairs looked up the staircase and made a mocking face at the crockery disaster.

The officer's heart was plunging. He poured himself a glass of wine, part of which he spilled on the floor, and gulped the remainder, leaning against the cool, green stove. He heard his man collecting the dishes from the stairs. Pale, as if intoxicated, he waited. The servant entered again. The Captain's heart gave a pang, as of pleasure, seeing the young fellow bewildered and uncertain on his feet, with pain.

'Schoner!' he said.

The soldier was a little slower in coming to attention.

'Yes, sir!'

The youth stood before him, with pathetic young moustache, and fine eyebrows very distinct on his forehead of dark marble.

'I asked you a question.' 'Yes, sir.'

The officer's tone bit like acid.

'Why had you a pencil in your ear?'

Again the servant's heart ran hot, and he could not breathe. With dark, strained eyes, he looked at the officer, as if fascinated. And he stood there sturdily planted, unconscious. The withering smile came into the Captain's eyes, and he lifted his foot.

'I—forgot it—sir,' panted the soldier, his dark eyes fixed on the other man's dancing blue ones.

'What was it doing there?'

He saw the young man's breast heaving as he made an effort for words.

'I had been writing.'

'Writing what?'

Again the soldier looked him up and down. The officer could hear him panting. The smile came into the blue eyes. The soldier worked his dry throat, but could not speak. Suddenly the smile lit like a flame on the officer's face, and a kick came heavily against the orderly's thigh. The youth moved a pace sideways. His face went dead, with two black, staring eyes.

'Well?' said the officer.

The orderly's mouth had gone dry, and his tongue rubbed in it as on dry brown-paper. He worked his throat. The officer raised his foot. The servant went stiff.

'Some poetry, sir,' came the crackling, unrecognizable sound of his voice.

'Poetry, what poetry?' asked the Captain, with a sickly smile.

Again there was the working in the throat. The Captain's heart had suddenly gone down heavily, and he stood sick and tired.

'For my girl, sir,' he heard the dry, inhuman sound.

'Oh!' he said, turning away. 'Clear the table.'

'Click!' went the soldier's throat; then again, 'click!' and then the half-articulate:

'Yes, sir.'

The young soldier was gone, looking old, and walking heavily.

The officer, left alone, held himself rigid, to prevent himself from thinking. His instinct warned him that he must not think. Deep inside him was the intense gratification of his passion, still working powerfully. Then there was a counter-action, a horrible breaking down of something inside him, a whole agony of reaction. He stood

there for an hour motionless, a chaos of sensations, but rigid with a will to keep blank his consciousness, to prevent his mind grasping. And he held himself so until the worst of the stress had passed, when he began to drink, drank himself to an intoxication, till he slept obliterated. When he woke in the morning he was shaken to the base of his nature. But he had fought off the realization of what he had done. He had prevented his mind from taking it in, had suppressed it along with his instincts, and the conscious man had nothing to do with it. He felt only as after a bout of intoxication, weak, but the affair itself all dim and not to be recovered. Of the drunkenness of his passion he successfully refused remembrance. And when his orderly appeared with coffee, the officer assumed the same self he had had the morning before. He refused the event of the past night—denied it had ever been—and was successful in his denial. He had not done any such thing—not he himself. Whatever there might be lay at the door of a stupid, insubordinate servant.

The orderly had gone about in a stupor all the evening. He drank some beer because he was parched, but not much, the alcohol made his feeling come back, and he could not bear it. He was dulled, as if nine-tenths of the ordinary man in him were inert. He crawled about disfigured. Still, when he thought of the kicks, he went sick, and when he thought of the threat of more kicking, in the room afterwards, his heart went hot and faint, and he panted, remembering the one that had come. He had been forced to say, 'For my girl'. He was much too done even to want to cry. His mouth hung slightly open, like an idiot's. He felt vacant, and wasted. So, he wandered at his work, painfully, and very slowly and clumsily, fumbling blindly with the brushes, and finding it difficult, when he sat down, to summon the energy to move again. His limbs, his jaw, were slack and nerveless. But he was very tired. He got to bed at last, and slept inert, relaxed, in a sleep that was rather stupor than slumber, a dead night of stupefaction shot through with gleams of anguish.

In the morning were the manoeuvres. But he woke even before the bugle sounded. The painful ache in his chest, the dryness of his throat, the awful steady feeling of misery made his eyes come awake and dreary at once. He knew, without thinking, what had

happened. And he knew that the day had come again, when he must go on with his round. The last bit of darkness was being pushed out of the room. He would have to move his inert body and go on. He was so young, and had known so little trouble, that he was bewildered. He only wished it would stay night, so that he could lie still, covered up by the darkness. And yet nothing would prevent the day from coming, nothing would save him from having to get up and saddle the Captain's horse, and make the Captain's coffee. It was there, inevitable. And then, he thought, it was impossible. Yet they would not leave him free. He must go and take the coffee to the Captain. He was too stunned to understand it. He only knew it was inevitable—inevitable, however long he lay inert.

At last, after heaving at himself, for he seemed to be a mass of inertia, he got up. But he had to force every one of his movements from behind, with his will. He felt lost, and dazed, and helpless. Then he clutched hold of the bed, the pain was so keen. And looking at his thighs he saw the darker bruises on his swarthy flesh, and he knew that if he pressed one of his fingers on one of the bruises, he should faint. But he did not want to faint—he did not want anybody to know. No one should ever know. It was between him and the Captain. There were only the two people in the world now—himself and the Captain.

Slowly, economically, he got dressed and forced himself to walk. Everything was obscure, except just what he had his hands on. But he managed to get through his work. The very pain revived his dull senses. The worst remained yet. He took the tray and went up to the Captain's room. The officer, pale and heavy, sat at the table. The orderly, as he saluted, felt himself put out of existence. He stood still for a moment submitting to his own nullification—then he gathered himself, seemed to regain himself, and then the Captain began to grow vague, unreal, and the younger soldier's heart beat up. He clung to this situation—that the Captain did not exist—so that he himself might live. But when he saw his officer's hand tremble as he took the coffee, he felt everything falling shattered. And he went away, feeling as if he himself were coming to pieces, disintegrated. And when the Captain was there on horseback, giving orders, while he himself stood, with rifle and knapsack, sick with pain, he felt as if he must shut his eyes on everything. It was only the long agony

of marching with a parched throat that filled him with one single, sleep-heavy intention: to save himself.

II

He was getting used even to his parched throat. That the snowy peaks were radiant among the sky, that the whity-green glacier-river twisted through its pale shoals, in the valley below, seemed almost supernatural. But he was going mad with fever and thirst. He plodded on uncomplaining. He did not want to speak, not to anybody. There were two gulls, like flakes of water and snow, over the river. The scent of green rye soaked in sunshine came like a sickness. And the march continued, monotonously, almost like a bad sleep.

At the next farm-house, which stood low and broad near the high road, tubs of water had been put out. The soldiers clustered round to drink. They took off their helmets, and the steam mounted from their wet hair. The Captain sat on horseback, watching. He needed to see his orderly. His helmet threw a dark shadow over his light, fierce eyes, but his moustache and mouth and chin were distinct in the sunshine. The orderly must move under the presence of the figure of the horseman. It was not that he was afraid, or cowed. It was as if he was disembowelled, made empty, like an empty shell. He felt himself as nothing, a shadow creeping under the sunshine. And, thirsty as he was, he could scarcely drink, feeling the Captain near him. He would not take off his helmet to wipe his wet hair. He wanted to stay in shadow, not to be forced into consciousness. Starting, he saw the light heel of the officer prick the belly of the horse; the Captain cantered away, and he himself could relapse into vacancy.

Nothing, however, could give him back his living place in the hot, bright morning. He felt like a gap among it all. Whereas the Captain was prouder, overriding. A hot flash went through the young servant's body. The Captain was firmer and prouder with life, he himself was empty as a shadow. Again the flash went through him, dazing him out. But his heart ran a little firmer.

The company turned up the hill, to make a loop for the return. Below, from among the trees, the farm-bell clanged. He saw the labourers, mowing bare-foot at the thick grass, leave off their work and go downhill, their scythes hanging over their shoulders, like long, bright claws curving down behind them. They seemed like dream-people, as if they had no relation to himself. He felt as in a blackish dream; as if all the other things were there and had form, but he himself was only a consciousness, a gap that could think and perceive.

The soldiers were tramping silently up the glaring hill-side. Gradually his head began to revolve, slowly, rhythmically. Sometimes it was dark before his eyes, as if he saw this world through a smoked glass, frail shadows and unreal. It gave him a pain in his head to walk.

The air was too scented, it gave no breath. All the lush green-stuff seemed to be issuing its sap, till the air was deathly, sickly with the smell of greenness. There was the perfume of clover, like pure honey and bees. Then there grew a faint acrid tang—they were near the beeches: and then a queer clattering noise, and a suffocating, hideous smell; they were passing a flock of sheep, a shepherd in a black smock, holding his crook. Why should the sheep huddle together under this fierce sun? He felt that the shepherd would not see him, though he could see the shepherd.

At last there was the halt. They stacked rifles in a conical stack, put down their kit in a scattered circle around it, and dispersed a little, sitting on a small knoll high on the hill-side. The chatter began. The soldiers were steaming with heat, but were lively. He sat still, seeing the blue mountains rising upon the land, twenty kilometres away. There was a blue fold in the ranges, then out of that, at the foot, the broad, pale bed of the river, stretches of whity-green water between pinkish-grey shoals among the dark pine woods. There it was, spread out a long way off. And it seemed to come downhill, the river. There was a raft being steered, a mile away. It was a strange country. Nearer, a red-roofed, broad farm with white base and square dots of windows crouched beside the wall of beech foliage on the wood's edge. There were long strips of rye and clover and pale green corn. And just at his feet, below the knoll, was a darkish bog, where globe flowers stood breathless still on their slim

stalks. And some of the pale gold bubbles were burst, and a broken fragment hung in the air. He thought he was going to sleep.

Suddenly something moved into this coloured mirage before his eyes. The Captain, a small, light-blue and scarlet figure, was trotting evenly between the strips of corn, along the level brow of the hill. And the man making flag-signals was coming on. Proud and sure moved the horseman's figure, the quick, bright thing, in which was concentrated all the light of this morning, which for the rest lay a fragile, shining shadow. Submissive, apathetic, the young soldier sat and stared. But as the horse slowed to a walk, coming up the last steep path, the great flash flared over the body and soul of the orderly. He sat waiting. The back of his head felt as if it were weighted with a heavy piece of fire. He did not want to eat. His hands trembled slightly as he moved them. Meanwhile the officer on horseback was approaching slowly and proudly. The tension grew in the orderly's soul. Then again, seeing the Captain ease himself on the saddle, the flash blazed through him.

The Captain looked at the patch of light blue and scarlet, and dark heads, scattered closely on the hill-side. It pleased him. The command pleased him. And he was feeling proud. His orderly was among them in common subjection. The officer rose a little on his stirrups to look. The young soldier sat with averted, dumb face. The Captain relaxed on his seat. His slim-legged, beautiful horse, brown as a beech nut, walked proudly uphill. The Captain passed into the zone of the company's atmosphere: a hot smell of men, of sweat, of leather. He knew it very well. After a word with the lieutenant, he went a few paces higher, and sat there, a dominant figure, his sweat-marked horse swishing its tail, while he looked down on his men, on his orderly, a nonentity among the crowd.

The young soldier's heart was like fire in his chest, and he breathed with difficulty. The officer, looking downhill, saw three of the young soldiers, two pails of water between them, staggering across a sunny green field. A table had been set up under a tree, and there the slim lieutenant stood, importantly busy. Then the Captain summoned himself to an act of courage. He called his orderly.

The flame leapt into the young soldier's throat, as he heard the command, and he rose blindly, stifled. He saluted, standing below the officer. He did not look up. But there was the flicker in the Captain's voice.

'Go to the inn and fetch me...' the officer gave his commands. 'Quick!' he added.

At the last word, the heart of the servant leapt with a flash, and he felt the strength come over his body. But he turned in mechanical obedience, and set off at a heavy run downhill, looking almost like a bear, his trousers bagging over his military boots. And the officer watched this blind, plunging run all the way.

But it was only the outside of the orderly's body that was obeying so humbly and mechanically. Inside had gradually accumulated a core into which all the energy of that young life was compact and concentrated. He executed his commission, and plodded quickly back uphill. There was a pain in his head as he walked that made him twist his features unknowingly. But hard there in the centre of his chest was himself, himself, firm, and not to be plucked to pieces.

The Captain had gone up into the wood. The orderly plodded through the hot, powerfully smelling zone of the company's atmosphere. He had a curious mass of energy inside him now. The Captain was less real than himself. He approached the green entrance to the wood. There, in the half-shade, he saw the horse standing, the sunshine and the flickering shadow of leaves dancing over his brown body. There was a clearing where timber had lately been felled. Here, in the gold-green shade beside the brilliant cup of sunshine, stood two figures, blue and pink, the bits of pink showing out plainly. The Captain was talking to his lieutenant.

The orderly stood on the edge of the bright clearing, where great trunks of trees, stripped and glistening, lay stretched like naked, brown-skinned bodies. Chips of wood littered the trampled floor, like splashed light, and the bases of the felled trees stood here and there, with their raw, level tops. Beyond was the brilliant, sunlit green of a beech.

'Then I will ride forward,' the orderly heard his Captain say. The lieutenant saluted and strode away. He himself went for-

ward. A hot flash passed through his belly, as he tramped towards his officer.

The Captain watched the rather heavy figure of the young soldier stumble forward, and his veins, too, ran hot. This was to be man to man between them. He yielded before the solid, stumbling figure with bent head. The orderly stooped and put the food on a level-sawn tree-base. The Captain watched the glistening, sun-inflamed, naked hands. He wanted to speak to the young soldier, but could not. The servant propped a bottle against his thigh, pressed open the cork, and poured out the beer into the mug. He kept his head bent. The Captain accepted the mug. 'Hot!' he said, as if amiably.

The flame sprang out of the orderly's heart, nearly suffocating him.

'Yes, sir,' he replied, between shut teeth.

And he heard the sound of the Captain's drinking, and he clenched his fists, such a strong torment came into his wrists. Then came the faint clang of the closing of the pot-lid. He looked up. The Captain was watching him. He glanced swiftly away. Then he saw the officer stoop and take a piece of bread from the tree-base. Again the flash of flame went through the young soldier, seeing the stiff body stoop beneath him, and his hands jerked. He looked away. He could feel the officer was nervous. The bread fell as it was being broken. The officer ate the other piece. The two men stood tense and still, the master laboriously chewing his bread, the servant staring with averted face, his fist clenched.

Then the young soldier started. The officer had pressed open the lid of the mug again. The orderly watched the lid of the mug, and the white hands that clenched the handle, as if he were fascinated. It was raised. The youth followed it with his eyes. And then he saw the thin, strong throat of the elder man moving up and down as he drank, the strong jaw working. And the instinct which had been jerking at the young man's wrists suddenly jerked free. He jumped, feeling as if it were rent in two by a strong flame.

The spur of the officer caught in a tree-root, he went down backwards with a crash, the middle of his back thudding sickeningly against a sharp-edged tree-base, the pot flying away. And in a

second the orderly, with serious, earnest young face, and underlip between his teeth, had got his knee in the officer's chest and was pressing the chin backward over the farther edge of the tree-stump, pressing, with all his heart behind in a passion of relief, the tension of his wrists exquisite with relief. And with the base of his palms he shoved at the chin, with all his might. And it was pleasant, too, to have that chin, that hard jaw already slightly rough with beard, in his hands. He did not relax one hair's breadth, but, all the force of all his blood exulting in his thrust, he shoved back the head of the other man, till there was a little 'cluck' and a crunching sensation. Then he felt as if his head went to vapour. Heavy convulsions shook the body of the officer, frightening and horrifying the young soldier. Yet it pleased him, too, to repress them. It pleased him to keep his hands pressing back the chin, to feel the chest of the other man yield in expiration to the weight of his strong, young knees, to feel the hard twitchings of the prostrate body jerking his own whole frame, which was pressed down on it.

But it went still. He could look into the nostrils of the other man, the eyes he could scarcely see. How curiously the mouth was pushed out, exaggerating the full lips, and the moustache bristling up from them. Then, with a start, he noticed the nostrils gradually filled with blood. The red brimmed, hesitated, ran over, and went in a thin trickle down the face to the eyes.

It shocked and distressed him. Slowly he got up. The body twitched and sprawled there, inert. He stood and looked at it in silence. It was a pity *it* was broken. It represented more than the thing which had kicked and bullied him. He was afraid to look at the eyes. They were hideous now, only the whites showing, and the blood running to them. The face of the orderly was drawn with horror at the sight. Well, it was so. In his heart he was satisfied. He had hated the face of the Captain. It was extinguished now. There was a heavy relief in the orderly's soul. That was as it should be. But he could not bear to see the long, military body lying broken over the tree-base, the fine fingers crisped. He wanted to hide it away.

Quickly, busily, he gathered it up and pushed it under the felled tree-trunks, which rested their beautiful, smooth length either end

on logs. The face was horrible with blood. He covered it with the helmet. Then he pushed the limbs straight and decent, and brushed the dead leaves off the fine cloth of the uniform. So, it lay quite still in the shadow under there. A little strip of sunshine ran along the breast, from a chink between the logs. The orderly sat by it for a few moments. Here his own life also ended.

Then, through his daze, he heard the lieutenant, in a loud voice, explaining to the men outside the wood, that they were to suppose the bridge on the river below was held by the enemy. Now they were to march to the attack in such and such a manner. The lieutenant had no gift of expression. The orderly, listening from habit, got muddled.

And when the lieutenant began it all again he ceased to hear.

He knew he must go. He stood up. It surprised him that the leaves were glittering in the sun, and the chips of wood reflecting white from the ground. For him a change had come over the world. But for the rest it had not—all seemed the same. Only he had left it. And he could not go back. It was his duty to return with the beer-pot and the bottle. He could not. He had left all that. The lieutenant was still hoarsely explaining. He must go, or they would overtake him. And he could not bear contact with any one now.

He drew his fingers over his eyes, trying to find out where he was. Then he turned away. He saw the horse standing in the path. He went up to it and mounted. It hurt him to sit in the saddle. The pain of keeping his seat occupied him as they cantered through the wood. He would not have minded anything, but he could not get away from the sense of being divided from the others. The path led out of the trees. On the edge of the wood he pulled up and stood watching. There in the spacious sunshine of the valley soldiers were moving in a little swarm. Every now and then, a man harrowing on a strip of fallow shouted to his oxen, at the turn. The village and the white-towered church were small in the sunshine. And he no longer belonged to it – he sat there, beyond, like a man outside in the dark. He had gone out from everyday life into the unknown and he could not, he even did not want to go back.

Turning from the sun-glazing valley, he rode deep into the wood. Tree-trunks, like people standing grey and still, took notice as he went. A doe, herself a moving bit of sunshine and shadow, went running through the flecked shade. There were bright green rents in the foliage. Then it was all pine wood, dark and cool. And he was sick with pain, he had an intolerable great pulse in his head, and he was sick. He had never been ill in his life. He felt lost, quite dazed with all this.

Trying to get down from the horse, he fell, astonished at the pain and his lack of balance. The horse shifted uneasily. He jerked its bridle and sent it cantering jerkily away. It was his last connexion with the rest of things.

But he only wanted to lie down and not be disturbed. Stumbling through the trees, he came on a quiet place where beeches and pine trees grew on a slope. Immediately he had laid down and closed his eyes, his consciousness went racing on without him. A big pulse of sickness beat in him as if it throbbed through the whole earth. He was burning with dry heat. But he was too busy, too tearingly active in the incoherent race of delirium to observe.

III

He came to with a start. His mouth was dry and hard, his heart beat heavily, but he had not the energy to get up. His heart beat heavily. Where was he? – the barracks? – at home? There was something knocking. And, making an effort, he looked round – trees, and litter of greenery, and reddish, bright, still pieces of sunshine on the floor. He did not believe he was himself, he did not believe what he saw. Something was knocking. He made a struggle towards consciousness, but relapsed. Then he struggled again. And gradually his surroundings fell into relationship with himself. He knew, and a great pang of fear went through his heart. Somebody was knocking. He could see the heavy, black rags of a fir tree overhead. Then everything went black. Yet he did not believe he had closed his eyes. He had not. Out of the blackness sight slowly emerged again. And someone was knocking. Quickly, he saw the blood-disfigured face of his Captain, which he hated. And he held

himself still with horror. Yet, deep inside him, he knew that it was so, the Captain should be dead. But the physical delirium got hold of him. Someone was knocking. He lay perfectly still, as if dead, with fear. And he went unconscious.

When he opened his eyes again he started seeing something creeping swiftly up a tree-trunk. It was a little bird. And the bird was whistling overhead. Tap-tap-tap – it was the small, quick bird rapping the tree-trunk with its beak, as if its head were a little round hammer. He watched it curiously. It shifted sharply, in its creeping fashion. Then, like a mouse, it slid down the bare trunk. Its swift creeping sent a flash of revulsion through him. He raised his head. It felt a great weight. Then, the little bird ran out of the shadow across a still patch of sunshine, its little head bobbing swiftly, its white legs twinkling brightly for a moment. How neat it was in its build, so compact, with pieces of white on its wings. There were several of them. They were so pretty – but they crept like swift, erratic mice, running here and there among the beech-mast.

He lay down again exhausted, and his consciousness lapsed. He had a horror of the little creeping birds. All his blood seemed to be darting and creeping in his head. And yet he could not move.

He came to with a further ache of exhaustion. There was the pain in his head, and the horrible sickness, and his inability to move. He had never been ill in his life. He did not know where he was or what he was. Probably he had got sunstroke. Or what else? – he had silenced the Captain for ever – some time ago – oh, a long time ago. There had been blood on his face, and his eyes had turned upwards. It was all right, somehow. It was peace. But now he had got beyond himself. He had never been here before. Was it life, or not life? He was by himself. They were on a big, bright place those others, and he was outside. The town, all the country, a big bright place of light: and he was outside, here, in the darkened open beyond, where each thing existed alone. But they would all have to come out there sometime, those others. Little, and left behind him, they all were. There had been father and mother and sweetheart. What did they all matter? This was the open land.

He sat up. Something scuffled. It was a little brown squirrel running in lovely undulating bounds over the floor, its red tail completing the undulation of its body – and then, as it sat up, furling and

unfurling. He watched it, pleased. It ran on again, friskily, enjoying itself. It flew wildly at another squirrel, and they were chasing each other, and making little scolding, chattering noises. The soldier wanted to speak to them. But only a hoarse sound came out of his throat. The squirrels burst away – they flew up the trees. And then he saw the one peeping round at him half-way up a tree-trunk. A start of fear went through him, though in so far as he was conscious, he was amused. It still stayed, its little keen face staring at him half-way up the tree-trunk, its little ears pricked up, its clawey little hands clinging to the bark, its white breast reared. He started from it in panic.

Struggling to his feet, he lurched away. He went on walking, walking, looking for something—for a drink. His brain felt hot and inflamed for want of water. He stumbled on. Then he did not know anything. He went unconscious as he walked. Yet he stumbled on, his mouth open.

When, to his dumb wonder, he opened his eyes on the world again, he no longer tried to remember what it was. There was thick, golden light behind golden-green glitterings, and tall, grey-purple shafts, and darkness further off, surrounding him, growing deeper. He was conscious of a sense of arrival. He was amid the reality, on the real, dark bottom. But there was the thirst burning in his brain. He felt lighter, not so heavy. He supposed it was newness. The air was muttering with thunder. He thought he was walking wonderfully swiftly and was coming straight to relief—or was it to water?

Suddenly he stood still with fear. There was a tremendous flare of gold, immense – just a few dark trunks like bars between him and it. All the young level wheat was burnished gold glaring on its silky green. A woman, full-skirted, a black cloth on her head for head-dress, was passing like a block of shadow through the glistening, green corn, into the full glare. There was a farm, too, pale blue in shadow, and the timber black. And there was a church spire, nearly fused away in the gold. The woman moved on, away from him. He had no language with which to speak to her. She was the bright, solid unreality. She would make a noise of words that would confuse him, and her eyes would look at him without seeing him. She was crossing there to the other side. He stood against a tree.

When at last he turned, looking down the long, bare grove whose flat bed was already filling dark, he saw the mountains in a wonderlight, not far away, and radiant. Behind the soft, grey ridge of the nearest range the further mountains stood golden and pale grey, the snow all radiant like pure, soft gold. So still, gleaming in the sky, fashioned pure out of the ore of the sky, they shone in their silence. He stood and looked at them, his face illuminated. And like the golden, lustrous gleaming of the snow he felt his own thirst bright in him. He stood and gazed, leaning against a tree. And then everything slid away into space.

During the night the lightning fluttered perpetually, making the whole sky white. He must have walked again. The world hung livid round him for moments, fields a level sheen of grey-green light, trees in dark bulk, and the range of clouds black across a white sky. Then the darkness fell like a shutter, and the night was whole. A faint flutter of a half-revealed world, that could not quite leap out of the darkness!—Then there again stood a sweep of pallor for the land, dark shapes looming, a range of clouds hanging overhead. The world was a ghostly shadow, thrown for a moment upon the pure darkness, which returned ever whole and complete.

And the mere delirium of sickness and fever went on inside him—his brain opening and shutting like the night—then sometimes convulsions of terror from something with great eyes that stared round a tree—then the long agony of the march, and the sun decomposing his blood—then the pang of hate for the Captain, followed by a pang of tenderness and ease. But everything was distorted, born of an ache and resolving into an ache.

In the morning he came definitely awake. Then his brain flamed with the sole horror of thirstiness! The sun was on his face, the dew was steaming from his wet clothes. Like one possessed, he got up. There, straight in front of him, blue and cool and tender, the mountains ranged across the pale edge of the morning sky. He wanted them – he wanted them alone—he wanted to leave himself and be identified with them. They did not move, they were still and soft, with white, gentle markings of snow. He stood still, mad with suffering, his hands crisping and clutching. Then he was twisting in a paroxysm on the grass.

He lay still, in a kind of dream of anguish. His thirst seemed to have separated itself from him, and to stand apart, a single demand. Then the pain he felt was another single self. Then there was the clog of his body, another separate thing. He was divided among all kinds of separate beings. There was some strange, agonized connection between them, but they were drawing further apart. Then they would all split. The sun, drilling down on him, was drilling through the bond. Then they would all fall, fall through the everlasting lapse of space. Then again, his consciousness reasserted itself. He roused on to his elbow and stared at the gleaming mountains. There they ranked, all still and wonderful between earth and heaven. He stared till his eyes went black, and the mountains, as they stood in their beauty, so clean and cool, seemed to have it, that which was lost in him.

IV

When the soldiers found him, three hours later, he was lying with his face over his arm, his black hair giving off heat under the sun. But he was still alive. Seeing the open, black mouth the young soldiers dropped him in horror.

He died in the hospital at night, without having seen again.

The doctors saw the bruises on his legs, behind, and were silent.

The bodies of the two men lay together, side by side, in the mortuary, the one white and slender, but laid rigidly at rest, the other looking as if every moment it must rouse into life again, so young and unused, from a slumber.

Probing for Meaning and Method

1. Give a brief summary of the events presented.
2. Comment on the exposition (orientation), the 'when, where, who and what' of the story. What puts the story into a context?
3. Comment on the complicating action of the story. What main events provide the 'what happened' element? What is the climax of the story?
4. Comment on the denouement (resolution) of the story. What events provide the 'what finally happened' element?
5. Speak on the main characters. Read out the words which name explicitly contrasting qualities of the Captain and his orderly. Dwell on the elements pointing to their:
 - a) looks;
 - b) modes of dress;
 - c) feelings to each other;
 - d) relations with women;
 - e) perception of military service and discipline;
 - f) attitude to nature.
6. Comment on the details that imply the same ideas rather than state them outright.
7. What imagery helps to feel the contrasting characters and their agonies more acutely? What epithets are charged with opposing connotations? Do any metaphors and similes contribute to the same idea? Is the effect of opposition reinforced by repetition? What words naming emotions give the idea of the main characters' relations?

To answer the questions, read, translate and interpret the paragraphs below:

a) Gradually the officer had become aware of his servant's young, vigorous, unconscious presence about him. He could not get away from the sense of the youth's person, while he was in attendance. It was like a warm flame upon the older man's tense, rigid body, that had become almost unliving, fixed. There was something so free and self-contained about him, and something in the young fellow's movement, that made the officer aware of him. And this irritated the Prussian.

b) To see the soldier's young, brown, shapely peasant's hand grasp the loaf or the wine-bottle sent a flash of hate or of anger through the elder man's blood. It was not that the youth was clumsy: it was rather the blind, instinctive sureness of movement of an unhampered young animal that irritated the officer to such a degree.

c) Once, when a bottle of wine had gone over, and the red gushed out on to the tablecloth, the officer had started up with an oath, and his eyes, blue like fire, had held those of the confused youth for a moment. It was a shock for the young soldier. He felt something sink deeper, deeper into his soul, where nothing had ever gone before it. It left him rather blank and wondering. Some of his natural completeness in himself was gone, a little uneasiness took its place. And from that time an undiscovered feeling had held between the two men.

d) He was a man of passionate temper, who had always kept himself suppressed. Occasionally there had been a duel, an outburst before the soldiers. He knew himself to be always on the point of breaking out. But he kept himself hard to the idea of the Service. Whereas the young soldier seemed to live out his warm, full nature, to give it off in his very movements, which had a certain zest, such as wild animals have in free movement. And this irritated the officer more and more.

e) He could not rest when the soldier was away, and when he was present, he glared at him with tormented eyes. He hated those fine, black brows over the unmeaning, dark eyes, he was infuriated by the free movement of the handsome limbs, which no military discipline could make stiff. And he became harsh and cruelly bullying, using contempt and satire. The young soldier only grew more mute and expressionless.

8. Which of the details above do you consider the key-features of the characters? Summarize the features to oppose two different positions in life.

9. Do you consider the main characters simple or complex? Why or why not?

10. Speak on the description of nature in the story. What impressive visual images make the reader actively engaged in seeing and feeling? Pick out auditory, tactile and olfactory images, helping the author to create an image of nature? What kind of image is it? Sol-

emn? Divine? Noble? What tropes contribute to this image? Do you find any symbolic indication of how nature is described?

11. Give your idea of the place nature occupies in the hierarchy *man-nature* as it is depicted in the story? Does nature prevail or submit to man? Why does the orderly want 'to leave himself and be identified with' the mountains?

To answer the questions, read, translate and interpret the following remarks:

a) It surprised him that the leaves were glittering in the sun, and the chips of wood reflecting white from the ground. For him a change had come over the world. But for the rest it had not—all seemed the same. Only he had left it.

b) He stared till his eyes went black, and the mountains, as they stood in their beauty, so clean and cool, seemed to have it, that which was lost in him.

c) There, straight in front of him, blue and cool and tender, the mountains ranged across the pale edge of the morning sky. He wanted them – he wanted them alone—he wanted to leave himself and be identified with them.

12. Speak on the title of the story. Do you regard the officer the protagonist? What connotations does the word "officer" suggest? Tyrannical oppression? Humiliation? What associations make the title trigger? Consult the dictionary and comment upon the meaning of the noun 'nullification'. Why does the author use this noun to characterize the orderly's inner state? Does this word provide a deeper understanding of the officer's character too? Why? What other language media add to the same impression? Compare your own ideas with the author's views on 'the militarization of military life'.

13. Do you think the details of the officer's death antithetical to Lawrence's presentation of his characters before this tragic event? How do you understand the following sentence, 'Here his own life also ended'? Read out the sentences containing the same idea and comment on the idea itself. Why does the author 'make' the orderly

die? Is he suggesting that resistance can be justified unless it causes death?

14. Are the author's likes and dislikes obvious? Whose side is he on? What makes you come to this conclusion? How can you interpret the final sentence of the story?

The bodies of the two men lay together, side by side, in the mortuary, the one white and slender, but laid rigidly at rest, the other looking as if every moment it must rouse into life again, so young and unused, from a slumber.

Do the author's positions echo some of your sentiments and thoughts?

15. How could you define the author's tone: neutral? Sceptical? Sad? Do you consider his vision of life pessimistic? Why or why not? Prove your idea by quoting.

16. What generalization can you draw from the observations above? Frame the subject and the theme of the story.

17. Give your stylistic commentary of the story.

Suggestions for Short Writing

1. Write an outline of the story arranging the events in chronological order and dating them as precisely as possible. Write a three-paragraph analysis of why the events are structured as they are.

2. Trace your views of the Prussian officer and of the orderly from the first paragraph to the final event, following both consistencies and changes.

3. Trace the thematic and evaluative force of imagery in the story.

Suggestions for Sustained Writing

Tackling the Story

Write an essay on the whole text of *The Prussian Officer*.

Generalizing about Life

Write an essay in which you defend or attack one of the following positions:

• Either be wholly slaves or wholly free (J. Dryden: *The Hind and the Panther*)

• It is easy – terribly easy – to shake a man's faith in himself. To take advantage of that to break a man's spirit is devil's work (G.B. Shaw: *Candida*)

Considering the Nature of Literature

Write an argumentative essay to clarify the following poetic lines:

Why does my Muse only speak when
she is unhappy?
She does not, I only listen when I am
unhappy
When I am happy I live and despise
writing
For my Muse this cannot be
dispiriting
(S. Smith: *My Muse*)

Francis Scott Fitzgerald

(1896–1940)

Francis Scott (Key) Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota. His first writing to appear in print was a detective story in the school newspaper when he was thirteen. During 1911–1913 he attended the Newman School, a Catholic school in New Jersey, and in 1913 entered Princeton University. He wrote the scripts and lyrics for the Princeton Triangle Club musicals and was a contributor to humour and literary magazines. In 1917 he left before graduating to take up a commission in the US Army.

The Great Gatsby

Chapter 6

In 1919 Fitzgerald commenced his career as a writer of stories for the mass-circulation magazines. His early commercial stories about young love introduced a fresh character: the independent, determined young American woman who appeared in *The Offshore Pirate* and *Bernice Bobs Her Hair*. Fitzgerald's more ambitious stories are *May Day* and *The Diamond as Big as the Ritz*. His first autobiographical book, *The Side of Paradise* (1920), reflected his experiences at Princeton University and was almost immediate success. In 1920 he married Zelda Sayre, herself an aspiring writer, in New York. There he wrote his second novel, *The Beautiful and the Damned* (1922), less well received. Seeking tranquillity for his work Fitzgerald went to France where during the summer and autumn of 1925 he wrote what many consider his best novel, *The Great Gatsby*.

Fitzgerald's fiction, remarkable for its rich symbolic nature, was extremely popular in the twenties. It was modern and easy to read. Then, in 1929, America's economy collapsed. This happened at a time when Fitzgerald himself began to have serious health problems. In *The Crack-Up* (published in 1945, after his death), he describes this period of troubles. Fitzgerald published his fourth novel, *Tender is the Night*, in 1934.

The chief themes of Fitzgerald's work are aspiration, love and idealism, which he regarded as defining American character. Another major theme is mutability or loss. Many young people in the post-world War I period had lost their American ideals. Fitzgerald's best books form a kind of spiritual history of the 'Lost Generation'. His clear, lyrical, colourful, witty style evokes the emotions associated with time and place.

The Great Gatsby, a novel about a self-made millionaire lost in soulless society, combines symbolism and psychological realism. Jay Gatsby builds up his life on the illusion that wealth and position however wrongly attained will make Daisy, the woman of his choice, leave her husband and join him. He believes in the 'natural goodness' of money, whilst Daisy believes in 'class', as a guiding principle. The collapse of these and other illusions leading to an accident, murder, and suicide symbolizes the hollowness of the accepted social values. Gatsby tries and fails to change the world of hard materialistic people into the ideal world of his fantasy.

The story is told by Daisy's cousin, Nick Caraway.

ABOUT THIS TIME an ambitious young reporter from New York arrived one morning at Gatsby's door and asked him if he had anything to say.

'Anything to say about what?' inquired Gatsby politely.

'Why – any statement to give out.'

It transpired after a confused five minutes that the man had heard Gatsby's name around his office in a connection which he either wouldn't reveal or didn't fully understand. This was his day off and with laudable initiative he had hurried out 'to see.'

It was a random shot, and yet the reporter's instinct was right. Gatsby's notoriety, spread about by the hundreds who had accepted his hospitality and so become authorities upon his past, had increased all summer until he fell just short of being news. Contemporary legends such as the 'underground pipe-line to Canada' attached themselves to him, and there was one persistent story that he didn't live in a house at all, but in a boat that looked like a house and was moved secretly up and down the Long Island shore. Just why these inventions were a source of satisfaction to James Gatz of North Dakota isn't easy to say.

James Gatz – that was really, or at least legally, his name. He had changed it at the age of seventeen and at the specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his career – when he saw Dan Cody's yacht drop anchor over the most insidious flat on Lake Superior. It was James Gatz who had been loafing along the beach that afternoon in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants, but it was already Jay Gatsby who borrowed a rowboat, pulled out the *Tuolomee*, and informed Cody that a wind might catch him and break him up in half an hour.

I suppose he'd had the name ready for a long time, even then. His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people – his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God – a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that – and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just

the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end.

For over a year he had been beating his way along the south shore of Lake Superior as a clam-digger and a salmon-fisher or in any other capacity that brought him food and bed. His brown, hardening body lived naturally through the half-fierce, half-lazy work of the bracing days. He knew women early, and since they spoiled him he became contemptuous of them, of young virgins because they were ignorant, of the others because they were hysterical about things which in his overwhelming self-absorption he took for granted.

But his heart was in a constant, turbulent riot. The most grotesque and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night. A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain while the clock ticked on the wash-stand and the moon soaked with wet light his tangled clothes upon the floor. Each night he added to the pattern of his fancies until drowsiness dosed down upon some vivid scene with an oblivious embrace. For a while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing.

An instinct towards his future glory had led him, some months before, to the small Lutheran College of St Olaf's in southern Minnesota. He stayed there two weeks, dismayed at its ferocious indifference to the drums of his destiny, to destiny itself, and despising the janitor's work with which he was to pay his way through. Then he drifted back to Lake Superior, and he was still searching for something to do on the day that Dan Cody's yacht dropped anchor in the shallows alongshore.

Cody was fifty years old then, a product of the Nevada silver fields, of the Yukon, of every rush for metal since seventy-five. The transactions in Montana copper that made him many times a millionaire found him physically robust but on the verge of soft-mindedness, and, suspecting this, an infinite number of women tried to separate him from his money. The none too savoury ramifications by which Ella Kaye, the newspaper woman, played Madame de Maintenon to his weakness and sent him to sea in a yacht, were common property of the turgid journalism of 1902. He had been coasting along all too hospitable

shores for five years when he turned up as James Gatz's destiny in Little Girl Bay.

To young Gatz, resting on his oars and looking up at the railed deck, that yacht represented all the beauty and glamour in the world. I suppose he smiled at Cody – he had probably discovered that people liked him when he smiled. At any rate Cody asked him a few questions (one of them elicited the brand new name) and found that he was quick and extravagantly ambitious. A few days later he took him to Duluth and bought him a blue coat, six pairs of white duck trousers, and a yachting cap. And when the *Tuolomee* left for the West Indies and the Barbary Coast Gatsby left too.

He was employed in a vague personal capacity – while he remained with Cody he was in turn steward, mate, skipper, secretary, and even jailor, for Dan Cody sober knew what lavish doings Dan Cody drunk might soon be about, and he provided for such contingencies by reposing more and more trust in Gatsby. The arrangement lasted five years, during which the boat went three times around the Continent. It might have lasted indefinitely except for the fact that Ella Kaye came on board one night in Boston and a week later Dan Cody inhospitably died.

I remember the portrait of him up in Gatsby's bedroom, a grey, florid man with a hard, empty face – the pioneer debauchee, who during one phase of American life brought back to the Eastern seaboard the savage violence of the frontier brothel and saloon. It was indirectly due to Cody that Gatsby drank so little. Sometimes in the course of gay parties women used to rub champagne into his hair; for himself he formed the habit of letting liquor alone.

And it was from Cody that he inherited money – a legacy of twenty-five thousand dollars. He didn't get it. He never understood the legal device that was used against him, but what remained of the millions went intact to Ella Kaye. He was left with his singularly appropriate education; the vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man.

He told me all this very much later, but I've put it down here with the idea of exploding those first wild rumours about his antecedents, which weren't even faintly true. Moreover he told it to me at a time of confusion, when I had reached the point of believing everything and nothing about him. So I take advantage of this short halt,

while Gatsby, so to speak, caught his breath, to clear this set of misconceptions away.

It was a halt, too, in my association with his affairs. For several weeks I didn't see him or hear his voice on the phone – mostly I was in New York, trotting around with Jordan and trying to ingratiate myself with her senile aunt – but finally I went over to his house one Sunday afternoon. I hadn't been there two minutes when somebody brought Tom Buchanan in for a drink. I was startled, naturally, but the really surprising thing was that it hadn't happened before.

They were a party of three on horseback – Tom and a man named Sloane and a pretty woman in a brown riding-habit, who had been there previously.

'I'm delighted to see you,' said Gatsby, standing on his porch. 'I'm delighted that you dropped in.'

As though they cared!

'Sit right down. Have a cigarette or a cigar.' He walked around the room quickly, ringing bells. 'I'll have something to drink for you in just a minute.'

He was profoundly affected by the fact that Tom was there. But he would be uneasy anyhow until he had given them something, realising in a vague way that that was all they came for. Mr Sloane wanted nothing. A lemonade? No, thanks. A little champagne? Nothing at all, thanks... I'm sorry -

'Did you have a nice ride?'

'Very good roads around here.'

'I suppose the automobiles -'

Yeah.'

Moved by an irresistible impulse, Gatsby turned to Tom, who had accepted the introduction as a stranger.

'I believe we've met somewhere before, Mr Buchanan.'

'Oh, yes,' said Tom, gruffly polite, but obviously not remembering. 'So we did. I remember very well.'

'About two weeks ago.'

'That's right. You were with Nick here.'

'I know your wife,' continued Gatsby, almost aggressively.

'That so?'

Tom turned to me.

You live near here, Nick?'

'Next door.'

'That so?'

Mr Sloane didn't enter into the conversation, but lounged back haughtily in his chair; the woman said nothing either – until unexpectedly, after two highballs, she became cordial.

'We'll all come over to your next party, Mr Gatsby,' she suggested. 'What do you say?'

'Certainly; I'd be delighted to have you.'

'Be ver' nice,' said Mr Sloane, without gratitude. 'Well – think ought to be starting home.'

'Please don't hurry,' Gatsby urged them. He had control of himself now, and he wanted to see more of Tom. 'Why don't you – why don't you stay for supper? I wouldn't be surprised if some other people dropped in from New York.'

'You come to supper with *me*,' said the lady enthusiastically. 'Both of you.'

This included me. Mr Sloane got to his feet.

'Come along,' he said – but to her only.

'I mean it,' she insisted. 'I'd love to have you. Lots of room.'

Gatsby looked at me questioningly. He wanted to go, and he didn't see that Mr Sloane had determined he shouldn't.

'I'm afraid I won't be able to,' I said.

'Well, you come,' she urged, concentrating on Gatsby.

Mr Sloane murmured something close to her ear.

'We won't be late if we start now,' she insisted aloud.

'I haven't got a horse,' said Gatsby. 'I used to ride in the army, but I've never bought a horse. I'll have to follow you in my car. Excuse me for just a minute.'

The rest of us walked out on the porch, where Sloane and the lady began an impassioned conversation aside.

'My God, I believe the man's coming,' said Tom. 'Doesn't he know she doesn't want him?'

'She says she does want him.'

'She has a big dinner party and he won't know a soul there.' He frowned. 'I wonder where in the devil he met Daisy. By God, I may be old-fashioned in my ideas, but women run around too much these days to suit me. They meet all kinds of crazy fish.'

Suddenly Mr Sloane and the lady walked down the steps and mounted their horses.

'Come on,' said Mr Sloane to Tom, 'we're late. We've got to go.' And then to me: 'Tell him we couldn't wait, will you?'

Tom and I shook hands, the rest of us exchanged a cool nod, and they trotted quickly down the drive, disappearing under the August foliage just as Gatsby, with hat and light overcoat in hand, came out the front door.

Tom was evidently perturbed at Daisy's running around alone, for on the following Saturday night he came with her to Gatsby's party. Perhaps his presence gave the evening its peculiar quality of oppressiveness – it stands out in my memory from Gatsby's other parties that summer. There were the same people, or at least the same sort of people, the same profusion of champagne, the same many-coloured, many-keyed commotion, but I felt an unpleasantness in the air, a pervading harshness that hadn't been there before. Or perhaps I had merely grown used to it, grown to accept West Egg as a world complete in itself, with its own standards and its own great figures, second to nothing because it had no consciousness of being so, and now I was looking at it again, through Daisy's eyes. It is invariably saddening to look through new eyes at things upon which you have expended your own powers of adjustment.

They arrived at twilight, and, as we strolled out among the sparkling hundreds, Daisy's voice was playing murmurous tricks in her throat.

'These things excite me *so*' she whispered. 'If you want to kiss me any time during the evening, Nick, just let me know and I'll be glad to arrange it for you. Just mention my name. Or present a green card. I'm giving out green –'

'Look around,' suggested Gatsby.

I'm looking around. I'm having a marvellous –'

'You must see the faces of many people you've heard about.'

Tom's arrogant eyes roamed the crowd.

'We don't go around very much,' he said; 'in fact, I was just thinking I don't know a soul here.'

'Perhaps you know that lady,' Gatsby indicated a gorgeous, scarcely human orchid of a woman who sat in state under a white-plum tree. Tom

and Daisy stared, with that particularly unreal feeling that accompanies the recognition of a hitherto ghostly celebrity of the movies.

'She's lovely,' said Daisy.

'The man bending over her is her director.'

He took them ceremoniously from group to group:

'Mrs Buchanan... and Mr Buchanan –' After an instant's hesitation he added: 'the polo player.'

'Oh, no,' objected Tom quickly, 'not me.'

But evidently the sound of it pleased Gatsby, for Tom remained 'the polo player' for the rest of the evening.

'I've never met so many celebrities,' Daisy exclaimed. 'I liked that man – what was his name? – with the sort of blue nose.'

Gatsby identified him, adding that he was a small producer.

'Well, I liked him anyhow.'

'I'd a little rather not be the polo player,' said Tom pleasantly, 'I'd rather look at all these famous people in – in oblivion.'

Daisy and Gatsby danced. I remember being surprised by his graceful, conservative fox-trot – I had never seen him dance before. Then they sauntered over to my house and sat on the steps for half an hour, while at her request, I remained watchfully in the garden. 'In case there's a fire, or a flood,' she explained, 'or any act of God.'

Tom appeared from his oblivion as we were sitting down to supper together. 'Do you mind if I eat with some people over here?' he said. 'A fellow's getting off some funny stuff.'

'Go ahead,' answered Daisy genially, 'and if you want to take down any addresses here's my little gold pencil.'... She looked around after a moment and told me the girl was 'common but pretty,' and I knew that except for the half-hour she'd been alone with Gatsby she wasn't having a good time.

We were at a particularly tipsy table. That was my fault – Gatsby had been called to the phone, and I'd enjoyed these same people only two weeks before. But what had amused me then turned septic on the air now.

'How do you feel, Miss Baedeker?'

The girl addressed was trying, unsuccessfully, to slump against my shoulder. At this inquiry she sat up and opened her eyes.

'Wha'??'

A massive and lethargic woman, who had been urging Daisy to play golf with her at the local club tomorrow, spoke in Miss Baedeker's defence:

'Oh, she's all right now. When she's had five or six cocktails she always starts screaming like that I tell her she ought to leave it alone.'

'I do leave it alone,' affirmed the accused hollowly.

'We heard you yelling, so I said to Doc Civet here: "There's somebody that needs your help, Doc."

'She's much obliged, I'm sure,' said another friend, without gratitude, 'but you got her dress all wet when you stuck her head in the pool.'

'Anything I hate is to get my head stuck in a pool,' mumbled Miss Baedeker. 'They almost drowned me once over in New Jersey.'

'Then you ought to leave it alone,' countered Doctor Civet.

'Speak for yourself!' cried Miss Baedeker violently. 'Your hand shakes. I wouldn't let you operate on me!'

It was like that. Almost the last thing I remember was standing with Daisy and watching the moving-picture director and his Star. They were still under the white-plum tree and their faces were touching except for a pale, thin ray of moonlight between. It occurred to me that he had been very slowly bending towards her all evening to attain this proximity, and even while I watched I saw him stoop one ultimate degree and kiss at her cheek.

'I like her,' said Daisy, 'I think she's lovely.'

But the rest offended her – and inarguably, because it wasn't a gesture but an emotion. She was appalled by West Egg, this unprecedented 'place' that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village – appalled by its raw vigour that chafed under the old euphemisms and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a short-cut from nothing to nothing. She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand.

I sat on the front steps with them while they waited for their car. It was dark here; only the bright door sent ten square feet of light volleying out into the soft black morning. Sometimes a shadow moved against a dressing-room blind above, gave way to another shadow, an indefinite procession of shadows, that rouged and powdered in an invisible glass.

'Who is this Gatsby anyhow?' demanded Tom suddenly. 'Some big bootlegger?'

'Where'd you hear that?' I inquired.

'I didn't hear it. I imagined it. A lot of these newly rich people are just big bootleggers, you know.'

'Not Gatsby,' I said shortly.

He was silent for a moment. The pebbles of the drive crunched under his feet.

'Well, he certainly must have strained himself to get this menagerie together.'

A breeze stirred the grey haze of Daisy's fur collar.

'At least they are more interesting than the people we know,' she said with an effort.

'You didn't look so interested.'

'Well, I was.'

Tom laughed and turned to me.

'Did you notice Daisy's face when that girl asked her to put her under a cold shower?'

Daisy began to sing with the music in a husky, rhythmic whisper, bringing out a meaning in each word that it had never had before and would never have again. When the melody rose, her voice broke up sweetly, following it, in a way contralto voices have, and each change tipped out a little of her warm human magic upon the air.

'Lots of people come who haven't been invited,' she said suddenly. 'That girl hadn't been invited. They simply force their way in and he's too polite to object.'

'I'd like to know who he is and what he does,' insisted Tom. 'And I think I'll make a point of finding out.'

'I can tell you right now,' she answered. 'He owned some drug-stores, a lot of drug-stores. He built them up himself.'

The dilatory limousine came rolling up the drive.

'Good-night, Nick,' said Daisy.

Her glance left me and sought the lighted top of the steps, where *Three O'clock in the Morning*, a neat, sad little waltz of that year, was drifting out the open door. After all, in the very casualness of Gatsby's party there were romantic possibilities totally absent from her world. What was it up there in the song that seemed to be calling her back inside? What would happen now in the dim, incalculable

hours? Perhaps some unbelievable guest would arrive, a person infinitely rare and to be marvelled at, some authentically radiant young girl who with one fresh glance at Gatsby, one moment of magical encounter, would blot out those five years of unwavering devotion.

I stayed late that night, Gatsby asked me to wait until he was free, and I lingered in the garden until the inevitable swimming party had run up, chilled and exalted, from the black beach, until the lights were extinguished in the guest-rooms overhead. When he came down the steps at last the tanned skin was drawn unusually tight on his face, and his eyes were bright and tired.

'She didn't like it,' he said immediately.

'Of course she did.'

'She didn't like it,' he insisted. 'She didn't have a good time.'

He was silent, and I guessed at his unutterable depression.

'I feel far away from her,' he said. 'It's hard to make her understand.'

You mean about the dance?'

'The dance?' He dismissed all the dances he had given with a snap of his fingers. 'Old sport, the dance is unimportant.'

He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: 'I never loved you.' After she had obliterated four years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken. One of them was that, after she was free, they were to go back to Louisville and be married from her house – just as if it were five years ago.

'And she doesn't understand,' he said. 'She used to be able to understand. We'd sit for hours -'

He broke off and began to walk up and down a desolate path of fruit rinds and discarded favours and crushed flowers.

'I wouldn't ask too much of her,' I ventured. 'You can't repeat the past.'

'Can't repeat the past?' he cried incredulously. 'Why of course you can!'

He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand.

'I'm going to fix everything just the way it was before,' he said, nodding determinedly. 'She'll see.'

He talked a lot about the past, and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered since then, but if he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was...

... One autumn night, five years before, they had been walking down the street when the leaves were falling, and they came to a place where there were no trees and the sidewalk was white with moonlight. They stopped here and turned towards each other. Now it was a cool night with that mysterious excitement in it which comes at the two changes of the year. The quiet lights in the houses were burning out into the darkness and there was a stir and bustle among the stars. Out of the corner of his eye Gatsby saw that the blocks of the sidewalks really formed a ladder and mounted to a secret place above the trees - he could climb to it, if he climbed alone, and once there he could suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder.

His heart beat faster and faster as Daisy's white face came up to his own. He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning-fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her. At his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete.

Through all he said, even through his appalling sentimentality, I was reminded of something – an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words, that I had heard somewhere a long time ago. For a moment a phrase tried to take shape in my mouth and my lips parted like a dumb man's, as though there was more struggling upon them than a wisp of startled air. But they made no sound, and what I had almost remembered was uncommunicable forever.

Probing for Meaning and Method

1. Give the main events of the extract under study. How does the author indicate place, time, the names of characters and the relationships between them?

2. Does the extract present a piece of narration, description or character drawing? Comment on the use of the artistic means which contribute to these forms of discourse.

3. What conflicts can you trace in the story? What is the main conflict? What are the minor conflicts? How are the conflicts related? What causes them? Are they internal or external?

4. Does the extract concentrate on a single character? Reproduce Gatsby's life story and define his present state of mind. Does Fitzgerald produce a complex picture, indicating in a psychologically convincing way the various impulses that determine Gatsby's actions? What determines his course of actions? Is he driven by obsessive love? Ambitions?

To deduce Gatsby's motives read, translate and interpret the following remarks:

(a) His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people – his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God – a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that – and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end.

(b) An instinct towards his future glory had led him, some months before, to the small Lutheran College of St Loaf's in southern Minnesota. He stayed there two weeks, dismayed at its ferocious indifference to the drums of his destiny, to destiny itself, and despising the janitor's work with which he was to pay his way through.

(c) 'Can't repeat the past?' he cried incredulously. 'Why of course you can!' ...He talked a lot about the past, and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered since then, but if he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was...

(d) One autumn night, five years before, they had been walking down the street when the leaves were falling, and they came to a place where there were no trees and the sidewalk was white with moonlight... Out of the corner

of his eye Gatsby saw that the blocks of the sidewalks really formed a ladder and mounted to a secret place above the trees – he could climb to it, if he climbed alone, and once there he could suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder.

(e) His heart beat faster and faster as Daisy's white face came up to his own. He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning-fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her. At his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete.

5. What qualities of Gatsby's character can be clearly observed? Is he kind or severe? Sentimental or practically-minded? Rude or polite and tender? Does the author show the character or tell us about him? A combination of what features makes him a complex creation? Prove your standpoint by the text.

6. Do you consider Gatsby a static character or a dynamic character? Why or why not?

7. What minor characters are used as contrasts or parallels to Gatsby? What comments do the characters make that indicate their personalities? What comments of the characters indicate the relationships between them? What do we learn about the characters as a result? What features do they embody? Do they represent similar or different values of life?

8. Who interprets Gatsby's actions? What are the narrator's relationships to Gatsby? Daisy? Tom? What comments does the narrator make about them?

9. Can you trace the narrator's views about the society? To answer the question, read, translate and interpret the following remarks:

(a) There were the same people, or at least the same sort of people, the same profusion of champagne, the same many-coloured, many-keyed commotion, but I felt an unpleasantness in the air, a pervading harshness that hadn't been there before.

(b) She was appalled by West Egg, this unprecedented 'place' that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village – appalled by its raw vigour that chafed under the old euphemisms and by the too obtrusive

fate that herded its inhabitants along a short-cut from nothing to nothing. She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand.

(c) Sometimes a shadow moved against a dressing-room blind above, gave way to another shadow, an indefinite procession of shadows, that rouged and powdered in an invisible glass.

10. Which of the characters are presented in a comic way? Comment upon the description of 'a particularly tipsy table'.

11. Are we influenced by the narrator's point of view from the start? What tone does the narrator adopt: matter-of-fact? Ironical? Sarcastic? Do you think it is the same as the author's?

12. Give your idea of Gatsby, summarizing your answers to the previous questions. Be ready with your special comments on his position in life. Is he an outsider in the world of the rich? Has he managed to live up to that image of fortune and glamour he creates for himself? Why or why not? What social belief does he symbolize? Base your answer on the corresponding historical and cultural context.

13. What is the theme as you see it? Can you identify any sub-themes?

14. Examine some of Fitzgerald's metaphors and vivid sensuous images. What extracts are they mostly included into? Why so?

15. Give your stylistic commentary of the story.

Suggestions for Short Writing

1. Write a character sketch of Gatsby. Try to accentuate the details that indicate the complexity of his personality.

2. Write a three-paragraph analysis of the narrator's character. Base your analysis on specific episodes and attitudes in the story.

3. Trace the thematic and evaluative force of social environment in the story.

Suggestions for Sustained Writing

Tackling the Story

Write an essay on the whole text of *The Great Gatsby*

Generalizing about Life

Write an essay in which you resolve the apparent contradiction in the following paradox:

Human kind
Cannot bear very much reality
(T.S. Eliot: *Collected Poems*)

Considering the Nature of Literature

Write an essay in which you expand on the following idea:

A writer lives, at best, in a state of astonishment. Beneath any feeling he has of the good or the evil of the world lies a deeper one of wonder at it all. To transmit that feeling, he writes.

(W. Sansom: *Blue Skies, Brown Studies 'From a Writer's Notebook'*)

Ernest Hemingway

(1899–1961)

Ernest Hemingway was born in Oak Park, Illinois, and developed in his youth a passion for hunting and adventure. After graduating from high school he worked as a reporter for the Kansas City Star, and then volunteered for service in World War I. He was wounded while serving on an ambulance crew in Italy. After his return to the United States, he became a reporter for Canadian and American newspapers.

During the twenties, Hemingway became a member of the group of expatriate Americans in Paris, which he described in his first important work, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). Equally successful was *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), the study of an American ambulance officer's disillusionment in the war. Hemingway used his experiences as a reporter during the civil war in Spain as the background for his most ambitious novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). Among his later works, the most outstanding is the short novel, *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952). This story of an old fisherman's

lonely struggle with a fish and the sea, of the man's victory in defeat, is a beautiful allegory of human life.

Hemingway spoke for the 'Lost generation', those writers who after the First World war with all its physical and psychological consequences started from a basically disillusioned attitude bordering on nihilism. Their realism became a passionate attempt at revealing the fundamental nature of man. In many of his works Hemingway develops the concept of 'Nada' ('nothingness' in Spanish) – the inability to become active in the real world, the loss of hope, the desire for sleep, or even for an easy death. Hemingway's hero must always fight against the Nada. His themes are heroism, stoicism, courage and honesty in a collapsing world, the relationship between people and the power of love.

Hemingway's style is simple, straightforward and concentrated. His sentences are short, deceptively simple and carefully structured. His language is rarely emotional. The outer world is usually a metaphor for the spiritual life of his characters. Hemingway's predilection for understatement is particularly effective in his short stories which mix psychological realism and symbolism. Some of them are collected in *Men without Women* (1927) and *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories* (1938).

Cat in the Rain, one of the stories most often reprinted and admired by the readers, is traditionally treated as a symbol of a lonely tormented soul. The story is highly characteristic of Hemingway's individual style and proves his skilful usage of detail.

Cat in the Rain

There were only two Americans stopping at the hotel. They did not know any of the people they passed on the stairs on their way to and from their room. Their room was on the second floor facing the sea. It also faced the public garden and the war monument. There were big palms and green benches in the public garden. In the good weather there was always an artist with his easel. Artists liked the way the palms grew and the bright colors of the hotels facing the gardens and the sea. Italians came from a long way off to look up at the war monument. It was made of bronze and glistened in the rain. It was raining. The rain dripped from the palm trees. Water stood in pools on the gravel paths. The sea broke in a long line in the rain and slipped back down the beach to come up and break again in a long line in the rain. The motor cars were gone from the square by the war

monument. Across the square in the doorway of the cafe a waiter stood looking out at the empty square.

The American wife stood at the window looking out. Outside right under their window a cat was crouched under one of the dripping green tables. The cat was trying to make herself so compact that she would not be dripped on.

"I'm going down and get that kitty," the American wife said.

"I'll do it," her husband offered from the bed.

"No, I'll get it. The poor kitty out trying to keep dry under a table."

The husband went on reading, lying propped up with the two pillows at the foot of the bed.

"Don't get wet," he said.

The wife went downstairs and the hotel owner stood up and bowed to her as she passed the office. His desk was at the far end of the office. He was an old man and very tall.

"Il piove,"¹ the wife said. She liked the hotel-keeper.

"Si, si, Signora, brutto tempo"². It's very bad weather."

He stood behind his desk in the far end of the dim room. The wife liked him. She liked the deadly serious way he received any complaints. She liked his dignity. She liked the way he wanted to serve her. She liked the way he felt about being a hotel-keeper. She liked his old, heavy face and big hands.

Liking him she opened the door and looked out. It was raining harder. A man in a rubber cape was crossing the empty square to the cafe. The cat would be around to the right. Perhaps she could go along under the eaves. As she stood in the doorway an umbrella opened behind her. It was the maid who looked after their room.

"You must not get wet," she smiled, speaking Italian. Of course, the hotel-keeper had sent her. With the maid holding the umbrella over her, she walked along the gravel path until she was under their window. The table was there, washed bright green in the rain, but the cat was gone. She was suddenly disappointed. The maid looked up at her.

"Ha perduto qualche cosa, Signora?"³

"There was a cat," said the American girl.

¹ Il piove (*итал.*) – Дождь идет.

² Si, si, Signora, brutto tempo, (*итал.*) – Да, да, синьора, погода скверная.

³ Ha perduto qualche cosa, Signora? (*итал.*) – Вы потеряли что-нибудь, синьора?

"A cat?"

"Si, il gatto¹."

"A cat?" the maid laughed. "A cat in the rain?"

"Yes," she said, "under the table." Then, "Oh, I wanted it so much. I wanted a kitty."

When she talked English the maid's face tightened.

"Come, Signora," she said. "We must get back inside. You will be wet."

"I suppose so," said the American girl.

They went back along the gravel path and passed in the door. The maid stayed outside to close the umbrella. As the American girl passed the office, the padrone bowed from his desk. Something felt very small and tight inside the girl. The padrone made her feel very small and at the same time really important. She had a momentary feeling of being of supreme importance. She went on up the stairs. She opened the door of the room. George was on the bed, reading.

"Did you get the cat?" he asked, putting the book down.

"It was gone."

"Wonder where it went to," he said, resting his eyes from reading.

She sat down on the bed.

"I wanted it so much," she said. "I don't know why I wanted it so much. I wanted that poor kitty. It isn't any fun to be a poor kitty out in the rain."

George was reading again.

She went over and sat in front of the mirror of the dressing table looking at herself with the hand glass. She studied her profile, first one side and then the other. Then she studied the back of her head and her neck.

"Don't you think it would be a good idea if I let my hair grow out?" she asked, looking at her profile again.

George looked up and saw the back of her neck, clipped close like a boy's.

"I like it the way it is."

"I get so tired of it," she said. "I get so tired of looking like a boy."

George shifted his position in the bed. He hadn't looked away from her since she started to speak.

"You look pretty darn nice," he said.

She laid the mirror down on the dresser and went over to the window and looked out. It was getting dark.

"I want to pull my hair back tight and smooth and make a big knot at the back that I can feel," she said. "I want to have a kitty to sit on my lap and purr when I stroke her."

"Yeah?" George said from the bed.

"And I want to eat at a table with my own silver and I want candles. And I want it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in front of a mirror and I want a kitty and I want some new clothes."

"Oh, shut up and get something to read," George said. He was reading again.

His wife was looking out of the window. It was quite dark now and still raining in the palm trees.

"Anyway, I want a cat," she said, "I want a cat. I want a cat now. If I can't have long hair or any fun, I can have a cat,"

George was not listening. He was reading his book. His wife looked out of the window where the light had come on in the square.

Someone knocked at the door.

"Avanti,"¹ George said. He looked up from his book.

In the doorway stood the maid. She held a big tortoise-shell cat pressed tight against her and swung down against her body.

"Excuse me," she said, "the padrone asked me to bring this for the Signora."

Probing for Meaning and Method

1. What are the main events depicted in the text? When and where does the story occur?

2. Who is the protagonist? Does the author give her a name? Why not? Does the anonymity enhance the protagonist's typicality and ordinariness?

¹ Si, il gatto (*итал.*) – Да, кошка.

¹ Avanti (*итал.*) – Войдите.

3. What can you say about the protagonist's psychological state? What are her dominant traits and what is their function in the plot? How do they help to establish the conflicts in the plot? Who is in conflict with whom?

4. Does the author characterize the protagonist implicitly or explicitly? What actions, speech mannerisms, gestures and modes of dress reveal her inner self?

5. Read out the sentences containing the word 'want'. How many times is it repeated in the story? Is it a key-word in the protagonist's speech? Why? Do you find any motivations in the protagonist's desires? Are these motivations convincing? Do you find the protagonist lonely like a cat in the rain or selfish and self-centred? Is she happy in her family life? Pick out elements of characterization that might prove your opinion.

6. What contrasting or parallel characters help the author to represent the protagonist's emotional state? What background do they make for her character? How will you formulate the protagonist's attitude towards those who surround her?

To answer these questions, read, translate and interpret the following passages in the text:

a) She studied her profile, first one side and then the other. Then she studied the back of her head and her neck.

"Don't you think it would be a good idea if I let my hair grow out?" she asked, looking at her profile again.

George looked up and saw the back of her neck, clipped close like a boy's.

"I like it the way it is."

"I get so tired of it," she said. "I get so tired of looking like a boy."

George shifted his position in the bed. He hadn't looked away from her since she started to speak.

"You look pretty darn nice," he said.

b) The padrone made her feel very small and at the same time really important. She had a momentary feeling of being of supreme importance.

7. Where and when does the action take place? What sensuous qualities does Hemingway give to the setting? What does it look like, sound like, feel like? What descriptive images participate in this de-

scription? What relationship does the place have to characterization? Does it have any effect on the characters?

8. What atmosphere does the author create in the story? Is it pain, oppression, discomfort, weariness or anything else? Why does Hemingway create this particular atmosphere? Does he want to convince us of any of his views? What stylistic devices does he call for to create it? What words are repeated in the exposition of the story? What expectations do they arouse? What does the rain seem to represent? Do you consider this image symbolic? Why or why not?

9. What social environment is portrayed in the work? What does the author seem to think about the manners, customs and codes of conduct in society? Is he ambivalent? Approving? Disapproving? What makes you think so? Does the social environment determine the characters' behaviour? Does it entrap them?

10. What theme does Hemingway develop? Is the theme presented directly or indirectly? What poetic details help you to see the theme? Underline the events, dialogues and aspects of setting that seem to develop the theme? What are the implications of the title in this connection? Interpret the final paragraph of the story from the viewpoint of the theme.

11. Give your stylistic commentary of the story

Suggestions for Short Writing

1. Briefly retell the story from the point of view of any of the following characters:

- the American wife,
- her husband,
- the hotel owner,
- the maid.

2. Write for or against one of these two interpretations of the American wife or show why neither is satisfactory:

- She is a lonely suffering person, missing care and love.
- She is an egoistic person, caring for nobody but herself.

3. Trace the thematic and evaluative force of repetition in the story.

Suggestions for Sustained Writing

Tackling the Story

Write an essay on the whole text of *Cat in the Rain*.

Generalizing about Life

Write an essay in which you form your own opinion of the following general observation of life:

We have no more rights to consume happiness without producing it than to consume wealth without producing it.

(G.B. Shaw: *Candida*)

Considering the Nature of Literature

Write an essay in which you agree or disagree with the following idea:

No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader

(R. Frost: *Figure a Poem Makes*)

Katherine Mansfield

(1888–1923)

Katherine Mansfield (pseudonym of Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp) was born in Wellington, New Zealand, and was sent to London in 1903 to complete her education at Queen's College. Returning to New Zealand in 1906 she began to write. Several 'Vignettes' were accepted in the Australian monthly *Native Companion* in 1907, and in 1908 she returned to London determined on a literary career. She published in an *avant-garde* quarterly *Rhythm* but her health was poor: she was suffering from tuberculosis. She died at the age of thirty-four, the author of just three books of short stories (a fourth and fifth would appear after her death).

Her first collection, *In a German Pension* (1911), was followed by *Prelude*, a story published singly in 1918. Like much of her best work it

was centred on her childhood in New Zealand. Others appeared in *Bliss and Other Stories* (1919), *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922), the last work published during her lifetime. Posthumous works included *Poems* (1923), *Something Childish and Other Stories* (1924), and *A Fairy Story* (1932). *The Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (1945) was an omnibus volume.

Mansfield is generally acknowledged as one of the finest writers of her period and a key figure in the development of the short story. Her best works are impressionistic sketches that have scarcely any backbone of plot. They retain their relevance through their ability to raise discomfiting questions about identity. Mansfield offers strong and vivid lessons in entering the expansiveness of the interior life. An admirer of the art of Chekhov and de Maupassant she reveals the poetry of feeling, preferring subdued tones. She 'moves so freely in and out of the minds of her characters that they end up existing on the same level, leaving no way of gauging the author's attitude to her subject' (Shaw). A strategic use of symbol and metaphor enables Mansfield to balance sympathy and judgement.

Her First Ball, published in the first collection of Mansfield's short prose, is a perfect example of her penetrating and relentless intelligence, balanced by a delicate sense of form – qualities that ideally suited her chosen genre, the short story. The author's message, as usual, is left in implication.

Her First Ball

Exactly when the ball began Leila would have found it hard to say. Perhaps her first real partner was the cab. It did not matter that she shared the cab with the Sheridan girls and their brother. She sat back in her own little corner of it, and the bolster on which her hand rested felt like the sleeve of an unknown young man's dress suit; and away they bowled, past waltzing lamp-posts and houses and fences and trees.

"Have you really never been to a ball before, Leila? But, my child, how too weird--" cried the Sheridan girls.

"Our nearest neighbour was fifteen miles," said Leila softly, gently opening and shutting her fan.

Oh dear, how hard it was to be indifferent like the others! She tried not to smile too much; she tried not to care. But every single thing was so new and exciting ... Meg's tuberose, Jose's long loop of

amber, Laura's little dark head, pushing above her white fur like a flower through snow. She would remember for ever. It even gave her a pang to see her cousin Laurie throw away the wisps of tissue paper he pulled from the fastenings of his new gloves. She would like to have kept those wisps as a keepsake, as a remembrance. Laurie leaned forward and put his hand on Laura's knee.

"Look here, darling," he said. "The third and the ninth as usual, Twig?"

Oh, how marvellous to have a brother! In her excitement Leila felt that if there had been time, if it hadn't been impossible, she couldn't have helped crying because she was an only child, and no brother had ever said "Twig?" to her; no sister would ever say, as Meg said to Jose that moment, "I've never known your hair go up more successfully than it has to-night!"

But, of course, there was no time. They were at the drill hall already; there were cabs in front of them and cabs behind. The road was bright on either side with moving fan-like lights, and on the pavement gay couples seemed to float through the air; little satin shoes chased each other like birds.

"Hold on to me, Leila; you'll get lost," said Laura.

"Come on, girls, let's make a dash for it," said Laurie.

Leila put two fingers on Laura's pink velvet cloak, and they were somehow lifted past the big golden lantern, carried along the passage, and pushed into the little room marked "Ladies." Here the crowd was so great there was hardly space to take off their things; the noise was deafening. Two benches on either side were stacked high with wraps. Two old women in white aprons ran up and down tossing fresh armfuls. And everybody was pressing forward trying to get at the little dressing-table and mirror at the far end.

A great quivering jet of gas lighted the ladies' room. It couldn't wait; it was dancing already. When the door opened again and there came a burst of tuning from the drill hall, it leaped almost to the ceiling.

Dark girls, fair girls were patting their hair, tying ribbons again, tucking handkerchiefs down the fronts of their bodices, smoothing marble-white gloves. And because they were all laughing it seemed to Leila that they were all lovely.

"Aren't there any invisible hairpins?" cried a voice. "How most extraordinary! I can't see a single invisible hairpin."

"Powder my back, there's a darling," cried some one else.

"But I must have a needle and cotton. I've torn simply miles and miles of the frill," wailed a third.

Then, "Pass them along, pass them along!" The straw basket of programmes was tossed from arm to arm. Darling little pink-and-silver programmes, with pink pencils and fluffy tassels. Leila's fingers shook as she took one out of the basket. She wanted to ask some one, "Am I meant to have one too?" but she had just time to read: "Waltz 3. 'Two, Two in a Canoe.' Polka 4. 'Making the Feathers Fly,'" when Meg cried, "Ready, Leila?" and they pressed their way through the crush in the passage towards the big double doors of the drill hall.

Dancing had not begun yet, but the band had stopped tuning, and the noise was so great it seemed that when it did begin to play it would never be heard. Leila, pressing close to Meg, looking over Meg's shoulder, felt that even the little quivering coloured flags strung across the ceiling were talking. She quite forgot to be shy; she forgot how in the middle of dressing she had sat down on the bed with one shoe off and one shoe on and begged her mother to ring up her cousins and say she couldn't go after all. And the rush of longing she had had to be sitting on the veranda of their forsaken upcountry home, listening to the baby owls crying "More pork" in the moonlight, was changed to a rush of joy so sweet that it was hard to bear alone. She clutched her fan, and, gazing at the gleaming, golden floor, the azaleas, the lanterns, the stage at one end with its red carpet and gilt chairs and the band in a corner, she thought breathlessly, "How heavenly; how simply heavenly!"

All the girls stood grouped together at one side of the doors, the men at the other, and the chaperones in dark dresses, smiling rather foolishly, walked with little careful steps over the polished floor towards the stage.

"This is my little country cousin Leila. Be nice to her. Find her partners; she's under my wing," said Meg, going up to one girl after another.

Strange faces smiled at Leila – sweetly, vaguely. Strange voices answered, "Of course, my dear." But Leila felt the girls didn't really

see her. They were looking towards the men. Why didn't the men begin? What were they waiting for? There they stood, smoothing their gloves, patting their glossy hair and smiling among themselves. Then, quite suddenly, as if they had only just made up their minds that that was what they had to do, the men came gliding over the parquet. There was a joyful flutter among the girls. A tall, fair man flew up to Meg, seized her programme, scribbled something; Meg passed him on to Leila. "May I have the pleasure?" He ducked and smiled. There came a dark man wearing an eyeglass, then cousin Laurie with a friend, and Laura with a little freckled fellow whose tie was crooked. Then quite an old man – fat, with a big bald patch on his head – took her programme and murmured, "Let me see, let me see!" And he was a long time comparing his programme, which looked black with names, with hers. It seemed to give him so much trouble that Leila was ashamed. "Oh, please don't bother," she said eagerly. But instead of replying the fat man wrote something, glanced at her again. "Do I remember this bright little face?" he said softly. "Is it known to me of yore?" At that moment the band began playing; the fat man disappeared. He was tossed away on a great wave of music that came flying over the gleaming floor, breaking the groups up into couples, scattering them, sending them spinning ...

Leila had learned to dance at boarding school. Every Saturday afternoon the boarders were hurried off to a little corrugated iron mission hall where Miss Eccles (of London) held her "select" classes. But the difference between that dusty-smelling hall – with calico texts on the walls, the poor terrified little woman in a brown velvet toque with rabbit's ears thumping the cold piano, Miss Eccles poking the girls' feet with her long white wand – and this was so tremendous that Leila was sure if her partner didn't come and she had to listen to that marvellous music and to watch the others sliding, gliding over the golden floor, she would die at least, or faint, or lift her arms and fly out of one of those dark windows that showed the stars.

"Ours, I think--" Some one bowed, smiled, and offered her his arm; she hadn't to die after all. Some one's hand pressed her waist, and she floated away like a flower that is tossed into a pool.

"Quite a good floor, isn't it?" drawled a faint voice close to her ear.

"I think it's most beautifully slippery," said Leila.

"Pardon!" The faint voice sounded surprised. Leila said it again. And there was a tiny pause before the voice echoed, "Oh, quite!" and she was swung round again.

He steered so beautifully. That was the great difference between dancing with girls and men, Leila decided. Girls banged into each other, and stamped on each other's feet; the girl who was gentleman always clutched you so.

The azaleas were separate flowers no longer; they were pink and white flags streaming by.

"Were you at the Bells' last week?" the voice came again. It sounded tired. Leila wondered whether she ought to ask him if he would like to stop.

"No, this is my first dance," said she.

Her partner gave a little gasping laugh. "Oh, I say," he protested.

"Yes, it is really the first dance I've ever been to." Leila was most fervent. It was such a relief to be able to tell somebody. "You see, I've lived in the country all my life up till now ...

At that moment the music stopped, and they went to sit on two chairs against the wall. Leila tucked her pink satin feet under and fanned herself, while she blissfully watched the other couples passing and disappearing through the swing doors.

"Enjoying yourself, Leila?" asked Jose, nodding her golden head.

Laura passed and gave her the faintest little wink; it made Leila wonder for a moment whether she was quite grown up after all. Certainly her partner did not say very much. He coughed, tucked his handkerchief away, pulled down his waistcoat, took a minute thread off his sleeve. But it didn't matter. Almost immediately the band started and her second partner seemed to spring from the ceiling.

"Floor's not bad," said the new voice. Did one always begin with the floor? And then, "Were you at the Neaves' on Tuesday?" And again Leila explained. Perhaps it was a little strange that her partners were not more interested. For it was thrilling. Her first ball! She was only at the beginning of everything. It seemed to her that she had never known what the night was like before. Up till now it had been dark, silent, beautiful very often – oh yes – but mournful somehow.

Solemn. And now it would never be like that again – it had opened dazzling bright.

"Care for an ice?" said her partner. And they went through the swing doors, down the passage, to the supper room. Her cheeks burned, she was fearfully thirsty. How sweet the ices looked on little glass plates and how cold the frosted spoon was, iced too! And when they came back to the hall there was the fat man waiting for her by the door. It gave her quite a shock again to see how old he was; he ought to have been on the stage with the fathers and mothers. And when Leila compared him with her other partners he looked shabby. His waistcoat was creased, there was a button off his glove, his coat looked as if it was dusty with French chalk.

"Come along, little lady," said the fat man. He scarcely troubled to clasp her, and they moved away so gently, it was more like walking than dancing. But he said not a word about the floor. "Your first dance, isn't it?" he murmured.

"How did you know?"

"Ah," said the fat man, "that's what it is to be old!" He wheezed faintly as he steered her past an awkward couple. "You see, I've been doing this kind of thing for the last thirty years."

"Thirty years?" cried Leila. Twelve years before she was born!

"It hardly bears thinking about, does it?" said the fat man gloomily. Leila looked at his bald head, and she felt quite sorry for him.

"I think it's marvellous to be still going on," she said kindly.

"Kind little lady," said the fat man, and he pressed her a little closer, and hummed a bar of the waltz. "Of course," he said, "you can't hope to last anything like as long as that. No-o," said the fat man, "long before that you'll be sitting up there on the stage, looking on, in your nice black velvet. And these pretty arms will have turned into little short fat ones, and you'll beat time with such a different kind of fan – a black bony one." The fat man seemed to shudder. "And you'll smile away like the poor old dears up there, and point to your daughter, and tell the elderly lady next to you how some dreadful man tried to kiss her at the club ball. And your heart will ache, ache" – the fat man squeezed her closer still, as if he really was sorry for that poor heart – "because no one wants to kiss you now. And you'll say how unpleasant these polished floors are to walk on, how

dangerous they are. Eh, Mademoiselle Twinkletoes?" said the fat man softly.

Leila gave a light little laugh, but she did not feel like laughing. Was it – could it all be true? It sounded terribly true. Was this first ball only the beginning of her last ball, after all? At that the music seemed to change; it sounded sad, sad; it rose upon a great sigh. Oh, how quickly things changed! Why didn't happiness last for ever? For ever wasn't a bit too long.

"I want to stop," she said in a breathless voice. The fat man led her to the door.

"No," she said, "I won't go outside. I won't sit down. I'll just stand here, thank you." She leaned against the wall, tapping with her foot, pulling up her gloves and trying to smile. But deep inside her a little girl threw her pinafore over her head and sobbed. Why had he spoiled it all?

"I say, you know," said the fat man, "you mustn't take me seriously, little lady."

"As if I should!" said Leila, tossing her small dark head and sucking her underlip ...

Again the couples paraded. The swing doors opened and shut. Now new music was given out by the bandmaster. But Leila didn't want to dance any more. She wanted to be home, or sitting on the veranda listening to those baby owls. When she looked through the dark windows at the stars, they had long beams like wings ...

But presently a soft, melting, ravishing tune began, and a young man with curly hair bowed before her. She would have to dance, out of politeness, until she could find Meg. Very stiffly she walked into the middle; very haughtily she put her hand on his sleeve. But in one minute, in one turn, her feet glided, glided. The lights, the azaleas, the dresses, the pink faces, the velvet chairs, all became one beautiful flying wheel. And when her next partner bumped her into the fat man and he said, "Pardon," she smiled at him more radiantly than ever. She didn't even recognise him again.

Probing for Meaning and Method

1. Define the subject of the story. Does the author focus on the events or characterization? How many events are depicted? What are they? When and where do they take place?

2. Who is the protagonist? What do you know about Leila's life? Is it her first ball? Has she ever danced before? What kind of experience was it?

3. What expectations are aroused in the exposition? How do you understand the following remark, 'Exactly when the ball began Leila would have found it hard to say'. What figurative language does the author use to uncover Leila's inner state in the very first lines of the text?

4. What sensuous and figurative images help the author to characterize Leila's momentary feelings later in the story? Are any of the images recurrent? Why? Which of these images are hyperbolic? Why does the author resort to hyperbole so often? What is the function of exclamatory sentences and emotionally charged words in Leila's inner speech? What other language means help the author to prove that 'every single thing was so new and exciting' for Leila?

5. How could you define Leila's inner state? Joy? Bliss? Hilarity? Excitement? Does her perception of the situation change in the course of the story?

To answer these questions, read, translate and interpret the paragraphs below. Pay special attention to the words, phrases and sentences underlined:

a) Meg's tuberoses, Jose's long loop of amber, Laura's little dark head, pushing above her white fur like a flower through snow. She would remember for ever. It even gave her a pang to see her cousin Laurie throw away the wisps of tissue paper he pulled from the fastenings of his new gloves. She would like to have kept those wisps as a keepsake, as a remembrance.

b) A great quivering jet of gas lighted the ladies' room. It couldn't wait; it was dancing already. When the door opened again and there came a burst of tuning from the drill hall, it leaped almost to the ceiling.

c) Leila, pressing close to Meg, looking over Meg's shoulder, felt that even the little quivering coloured flags strung across the ceiling were talking.

d) The azaleas were separate flowers no longer; they were pink and white flags streaming by.

e) Leila was sure if her partner didn't come and she had to listen to that marvellous music and to watch the others sliding, gliding over the golden floor, she would die at least, or faint, or lift her arms and fly out of one of those dark windows that showed the stars.

f) "Quite a good floor, isn't it?" drawled a faint voice close to her ear. "I think it's most beautifully slippery." said Leila.

g) Very stiffly she walked into the middle; very haughtily she put her hand on his sleeve. But in one minute, in one turn, her feet glided, glided. The lights, the azaleas, the dresses, the pink faces, the velvet chairs, all became one beautiful flying wheel.

6. Who do you consider Leila's antagonist and why? Do the opposing characters' physical traits, ways of speaking and modes of dress reveal their inner selves? Why does the man call Leila 'Madoiselle Twinkletoes'? Comment on the use of the stylistic device the author employs here. What mostly defines the characters' different attitudes to life? Personality traits? Life experience? Age? Does the author name the reason of this difference directly or indirectly? What adjective is repeated in the man's description? Why?

7. What does the story imply about the relationship of age and perception of life? Do you agree that Leila's elderly partner overtly enunciates the theme of the story, "Of course ...you can't hope to last anything like as long as that"? Why does Leila forget this message? Is her forgetting good, bad or natural? Is she too shallow or too young to think of serious things?

8. Comment on the title of the story. What is the function of the word 'first' in it? Does the title seem symbolic to you? If it does, what does it symbolize?

9. Does the story remind you of an episode from a classic Russian novel? Which episode and which novel are they?

10. Is it possible to guess Mansfield's attitude to the protagonist? What is this attitude, according to you? Why do you think so?

11. Give your stylistic commentary of the story.

Suggestions for Short Writing

1. Rewrite the story as if you were Leila's elderly partner.
2. Write a three-paragraph analysis of Leila as a dynamic character.
3. Trace the thematic and evaluative force of opposing characters in the story.

Suggestions for Sustained Writing

Tackling the Story

Write an essay on the whole text of *Her First Ball*.

Generalizing about Life

Write an essay on the following provocative phrase:

Any first experience is only the beginning of your last experience, after all.
(A. MacLeish)

Considering the Nature of Literature

Write an essay in which you compare the following highly relevant observations:

- a) Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree.
(Ezra Pound: *How to Read*)
- b) A poem should be wordless as the flight of birds.
(A. MacLeish: *Streets in the Moon*)

Muriel Spark

(1918–2006)

Muriel (Sarah) Spark was born in Edinburgh. She attended James Gillespie's High School for Girls – a formative time that she considered a most fortunate experience for a future writer. Her first poems appeared regularly in the school magazine, and she was crowned 'Queen of Poetry' in 1932.

After some years in Africa (1936–44) she returned to Britain and worked in political intelligence at the Foreign Office. From 1947 to 1949 she edited *Poetry Review*, publishing a volume of poems, *The Fanfarlo*, in 1952. After various works of literary criticism and biography, she published *The Comforters* (1957), which displayed her talent for irony and black humour. It was followed by *Memento Mori* (1959), about old age, and *The Ballad of Peckam Rye* (1960), about underworld life, which established her reputation as satirical novelist with a sharp oblique humour and a detached, elegant style.

Spark is best known for *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961). This novel about an eccentric schoolmistress in Edinburgh during the 1930s carries several of the author's trademarks: a taut, controlled style, precise characterization, and an accurate wit. No less famous is *Girls of Slender Means* (1963), a black comedy set in Kensington at the close of the war.

For 12 years, from 1967, Muriel Spark lived in Rome. Cultural pursuits and social engagements in the Italian capital contributed much to her lifelong interest in people and places. During this time Spark wrote some of her finest works: *The Public Image* (1968), *The Driver's Seat* (1970), and *The Take Over* (1976). Her other novels are *Loitering with Intent* (1981), a discussion of good, evil, and the writer's mind, *Reality and Dreams* (2000), *Aiding and Abetting* (2004). Her 22nd novel, *The Finishing School* (2004), takes a satirical look at creative writing in the classroom.

Spark's shorter fiction has been collected in *The Stories of Muriel Spark* (1985). She has also written poetry and literary criticism. Extensive reading and research resulted in her writing critical studies on Mary Shelley, Emily Brontë, and William Wordsworth.

Spark's archive at the National Library of Scotland contains evidence of the impression the author made on her many readers over the years, and hundreds of fan letters are testament to the popularity of her books. She used the collection extensively to write her autobiography, *Curriculum Vitae* (2001).

The Dark Glasses, told in the first-person singular, produces the impression of an authentic monologue. Typical of Spark's theme and style, it

is directed against the mediocre and gives a wryly-satirical commentary on modern life. A unique blend of realism and allegory helps the reader to get the author's message.

The Dark Glasses

Coming to the edge of the lake we paused to look at our reflections in the water. It was then I recognised her from the past, her face looking up from the lake. She had not stopped talking.

I put on my dark glasses to shield my eyes from the sun and conceal my recognition from her eyes.

"Am I boring you?" she said.

"No, not a bit, Dr. Gray."

"Sure?"

It is discouraging to put on sun glasses in the middle of someone's intimate story. But they were necessary, now that I had recognised her, and was excited, and could only honourably hear what she had to say from a point of concealment.

"Must you wear those glasses?"

"Well, yes. The glare."

"The wearing of dark glasses," she said, "is a modern psychological phenomenon. It signifies the trend towards impersonalisation, the weapon of the modern Inquisitor, it —"

"There's a lot in what you say." But I did not remove my glasses, for I had not asked for her company in the first place, and there is a limit to what one can listen to with the naked eye.

We walked round the new concrete verge of the old lake, and she continued the story of how she was led to give up general medical practice and take up psychology; and I looked at her as she spoke through my dark glasses, and because of the softening effect these have upon things I saw her again as I had seen her looking up from the lake, and again as in my childhood.

At the end of the thirties Leesden End was an L-shaped town. Our house stood near the top of the L. At the other extreme was the market. Mr. Simmonds, the oculist, had his shop on the horizontal leg, and he lived there above the shop with his mother and sister. All

the other shops in the row were attached to each other, but Mr. Simmonds' stood apart, like a real house, with a lane on either side.

I was sent to have my eyes tested. He took me into the darkened interior and said, "Sit down, dear." He put his arm round my shoulder. His forefinger moved up and down on my neck. I was thirteen and didn't like to be rude to him. Dorothy Simmonds, his sister, came downstairs just then; she came upon us silently and dressed in a white overall. Before she had crossed the room to switch on a dim light Mr. Simmonds removed his arm from my shoulder with such a jerk that I knew for certain he had not placed it there in innocence.

I had seen Miss Simmonds once before, at a garden fete, where she stood on a platform in a big hat and blue dress, and sang "Sometimes between long shadows on the grass," while I picked up wind-fall apples, all of which seemed to be rotten. Now in her white overall she turned and gave me a hostile look, as if I had been seducing her brother. I felt sexually in the wrong, and started looking round the dark room with a wide-eyed air.

"Can you read?" said Mr. Simmonds.

I stopped looking round. I said, "Read what?"— for I had been told I would be asked to read row after row of letters. The card which hung beneath the dim light showed pictures of trains and animals.

"Because if you can't read we have pictures for illiterates."

This was Mr. Simmonds' joke. I giggled. His sister smiled and dabbed her right eye with her handkerchief.

She had been to London for an operation on her right eye.

I recall reading the letters correctly down to the last few lines, which were too small. I recall Mr. Simmonds squeezing my arm as I left the shop, turning his sandy freckled face in a backward glance to see for certain that his sister was not watching.

My grandmother said, "Did you see —"

"— Mr. Simmonds' sister?" said my aunt.

"Yes, she was there all the time," I said, to make it definite.

My grandmother said, "They say she's going —"

"— blind in one eye," said my aunt.

"And with the mother bedridden upstairs—" my grandmother said.

"— she must be a saint," said my aunt.

Presently – it may have been within a few days or a few weeks – my reading glasses arrived, and I wore them whenever I remembered to do so.

I broke the glasses by sitting on them during my school holidays two years later.

My grandmother said, after she had sighed, "It's time you had your eyes tested –"

"– eyes tested in any case," said my aunt when she had sighed.

I washed my hair the night before and put a wave in it. Next morning at eleven I walked down to Mr. Simmonds' with one of my grandmother's long hat-pins in my blazer pocket. The shop front had been done up, with gold lettering on the glass door: Basil Simmonds, Optician, followed by a string of letters which, so far as I remember, were F. B. O. A., A. I. C., and others.

"You're quite the young lady, Joan," he said, looking at my new breasts.

I smiled and put my hand in my blazer pocket.

He was smaller than he had been two years ago. I thought he must be about fifty or thirty. His face was more freckled than ever and his eyes were flat blue as from a box of paints. Miss Simmonds appeared silently in her soft slippers. "You're quite the young lady, Joan," she said from behind her green glasses, for her right eye had now gone blind and the other was said to be troubling her.

We went into the examination room. She glided past me and switched on the dim light above the letter card. I began to read out the letters while Basil Simmonds stood with folded hands. Someone came into the front shop. Miss Simmonds slid off to see who it was and her brother tickled my neck. I read on. He drew me towards him. I put my hand into my blazer pocket. He said, "Oh!" and sprang away as the hat-pin struck through my blazer and into his thigh. Miss Simmonds appeared in the doorway in her avenging white overall. Her brother, who had been rubbing his thigh in a puzzled way, pretended to be dusting a mark off the front of his trousers.

"What's wrong? Why did you shout?" she said.

"No, I didn't shout."

She looked at me, then returned to attend to the person in the shop, leaving the intervening door wide open. She was back again almost immediately. My examination was soon over. Mr. Simmonds saw me out at the front door and gave me a pleading unhappy look. I felt like a traitor and I considered him horrible.

For the rest of the holidays I thought of him as "Basil", and by asking questions and taking more interest than usual in the conversation around me I formed an idea of his private life. "Dorothy," I speculated, "and Basil." I let my mind dwell on them until I saw a picture of the rooms above the shop. I hung round at tea-time and, in order to bring the conversation round to Dorothy and Basil, told our visitors I had been to get my eyes tested.

"The mother bedridden all these years and worth a fortune. But what good is it to her?"

"What chance is there for Miss Simmonds now, with that eye?"

"She'll get the money. He will get the bare legal minimum only."

"No, they say he's to get everything. In trust."

"I believe Mrs. Simmonds has left everything to her daughter."

My grandmother said, "She should divide her fortune –"

"– equally between them," said my aunt. "Fair's fair."

I invented for myself a recurrent scene in which brother and sister emerged from their mother's room and, on the narrow landing, allowed their gaze to meet in unspoken combat over their inheritance. Basil's flat-coloured eyes did not themselves hold any expression, but by the forward thrust of his red neck he indicated his meaning; Dorothy made herself plain by means of a corkscrew twist of the head–round and up – and the glitter of her one good eye through the green glasses.

I was sent for to try on my new reading glasses. I had the hat-pin with me. I was friendly to Basil while I tested the new glasses in the front shop. He seemed to want to put a hand on my shoulder, hovered, but was afraid. Dorothy came downstairs and appeared before us just as his hand wavered. He protracted the wavering gesture into one which adjusted the stem of my glasses above my ear.

"Auntie says to try them properly," I said, "while I'm about it." This gave me an opportunity to have a look round the front premises.

"You'll only want them for your studies," Basil said.

"Oh, I sometimes need glasses even when I'm not reading," I said. I was looking through a door into a small inner office, darkened by a tree outside in the lane. The office contained a dumpy green safe, an old typewriter on a table, and a desk in the window with a ledger on it. Other ledgers were placed –

"Nonsense," Dorothy was saying. "A healthy girl like you –you hardly need glasses at all. For reading, to save your eyes, perhaps yes. But when you're not reading..."

I said, "Grandmother said to inquire after your mother."

"She's failing," she said.

I took to giving Basil a charming smile when I passed him in the street on the way to the shops. This was very frequently. And on these occasions he would be standing at his shop door awaiting my return; then I would snub him. I wondered how often he was prepared to be won and rejected within the same ten minutes.

I took walks before supper round the back lanes, ambling right round the Simmonds' house, thinking of what was going on inside. One dusky time it started to rain heavily, and I found I could reasonably take shelter under the tree which grew quite close to the grimy window of the inner office. I could just see over the ledge and make out a shape of a person sitting at the desk. Soon, I thought, the shape will have to put on the light.

After five minutes' long waiting time the shape arose and switched on the light by the door. It was Basil, suddenly looking pink-haired. As he returned to the desk he stooped and took from the safe a sheaf of papers held in the teeth of a large clip. I knew he was going to select one sheet of paper from the sheaf, and that this one document would be the exciting, important one. It was like reading a familiar book: one knew what was coming, but couldn't bear to miss a word. He did extract one long sheet of paper, and hold it up. It was typewritten with a paragraph in handwriting at the bottom on the side visible from the window. He laid it side by side with another sheet of paper which was lying on the desk. I pressed close up to the window, intending to wave and smile if I was seen, and call out that I was sheltering from the rain which was now coming down in thumps. But he kept his eyes on the two sheets of paper. There were other papers lying about the desk; I could not see what was on them. But I was

quite convinced that he had been practising handwriting on them, and that he was in the process of forging his mother's will.

Then he took up the pen. I can still smell the rain and hear it thundering about me, and feel it dripping on my head from the bough overhanging above me. He raised his eyes and looked out at the rain. It seemed his eyes rested on me at my station between the tree and the window. I kept still and close to the tree like a hunted piece of nature, willing myself to be the colour of bark and leaves and rain. Then I realised how much more clearly I could see him than he me, for it was growing dark.

He pulled a sheet of blotting paper towards him. He dipped his pen in the ink and started writing on the bottom of the sheet of paper before him, comparing it from time to time with the one he had taken out of the safe. I was not surprised, but I was thrilled, when the door behind him slowly opened. It was like seeing the film of the book. Dorothy advanced on her creeping feet, and he did not hear, but formed the words he was writing, on and on. The rain pelted down regardless. She was looking crookedly, through her green glasses with her one eye, over his shoulder at the paper.

"What are you doing?" she said.

He jumped up and pulled the blotting paper over his work. Her one eye through her green glasses glinted upon him, though I did not actually see it do so, but saw only the dark green glass focused with a squint on to his face.

"I'm making up the accounts," he said, standing with his back to the desk, concealing the papers, I saw his hand reach back and tremble among them.

I shivered in my soaking wet clothes. Dorothy looked with her eye at the window. I slid sideways to avoid her and ran all the way home.

Next morning I said, "I've tried to read with these glasses. It's all a blur. I suppose I'll *have* to take them back?"

"Didn't you notice anything wrong when you tried –"

" – tried them on in the shop?"

"No. But the shop's so dark. *Must* I take them back?"

I took them into Mr. Simmonds early that afternoon.

"I tried to read with them this morning, but it's all a blur." It was true that I had smeared them with cold cream first.

Dorothy was beside us in no-time. She peered one-eyed at the glasses, then at me.

"Are you constipated?" she said.

I maintained silence. But I felt she was seeing everything through her green glasses.

"Put them on," Dorothy said.

"Try them on," said Basil.

They were ganged up together. Everything was going wrong, for I had come here to see how matters stood between them after the affair of the will. Basil gave me something to read. "It's all right now," I said, "but it was all a blur when I tried to read this morning."

"Better take a dose," Dorothy said.

I wanted to get out of the shop with my glasses as quickly as possible, but the brother said, "I'd better test your eyes again while you're here just to make sure."

He seemed quite normal. I followed him into the dark interior. Dorothy switched on the light. They both seemed normal. The scene in the little office last night began to lose its conviction. As I read out the letters on the card in front of me I was thinking of Basil as "Mr. Simmonds" and Dorothy as "Miss Simmonds", and feared their authority, and was in the wrong.

"That seems to be all right," Mr. Simmonds said. "But wait a moment." He produced some coloured slides with lettering on them. Miss Simmonds gave me what appeared to be a triumphant one-eyed leer, and as one who washes her hands of a person, started to climb the stairs. Plainly, she knew I had lost my attraction for her brother.

But before she turned the bend in the stairs she stopped and came down again. She went to a row of shelves and shifted some bottles. I read on. She interrupted:

"My eye-drops, Basil. I made them up this morning. Where are they?"

Mr. Simmonds was suddenly watching her as if something inconceivable was happening.

"Wait, Dorothy. Wait till I've tested the girl's eyes."

She had lifted down a small brown bottle. "I want my eye-drops. I wish you wouldn't displace – Are these they?"

I noted her correct phrase, "Are these they?" and it seemed just over the border of correctness. Perhaps, after all, this brother and sister were strange, vicious, in the wrong.

She had raised the bottle and was reading the label with her one good eye. "Yes, this is mine. It has my name on it," she said.

Dark Basil, dark Dorothy. There was something wrong after all. She walked upstairs with her bottle of eye-drops. The brother put his hand on my elbow and heaved me to my feet, forgetting his coloured slides.

"There's nothing wrong with your eyes. Off you go." He pushed me into the front shop. His flat eyes were wide open as he handed me my glasses. He pointed to the door. "I'm a busy man," he said.

From upstairs came a long scream. Basil jerked open the door for me, but I did not move. Then Dorothy, upstairs, screamed and screamed and screamed. Basil put his hands to his head, covering his eyes. Dorothy appeared on the bend of the stairs, screaming, doubled-up, with both hands covering her good eye.

I started screaming when I got home, and was given a sedative. By evening everyone knew that Miss Simmonds had put the wrong drops in her eyes.

"Will she go blind in that eye, too?" people said.

"The doctor says there's hope."

"There will be an inquiry."

"She was going blind in that eye in any case," they said.

"Ah, but the pain..."

"Whose mistake, hers or his?"

"Joan was there at the time. Joan heard the screams. We had to give her a sedative to calm –"

" – calm her down."

"But who made the mistake?"

"She usually makes up the eye-drops herself. She's got a dispenser's –"

" – dispenser's certificate, you know."

"Her name was on the bottle, Joan says."

"Who wrote the name on the bottle? That's the question. They'll find out from the handwriting. If it was Mr. Simmonds he'll be disqualified."

"She always wrote the names on the bottles. She'll be put off the dispensers' roll, poor thing."

"They'll lose their licence".

"I got eye-drops from them myself only three weeks ago. If I'd have known what I know now, I'd never have—"

"The doctor says they can't find the bottle, it's got lost."

"No the sergeant says definitely they've got the bottle. The handwriting is hers. She must have made up the drops herself, poor thing."

"Deadly nightshade, same thing."

"Stuff called atropine. Belladonna. Deadly nightshade."

"It should have been stuff called eserine. That's what she usually had, the doctor says."

"Dr. *Gray* says?"

"Yes, Dr. Gray."

"Dr. Gray says if you switch from eserine to atropine —"

It was put down to an accident. There was a strong hope that Miss Simmonds' one eye would survive. It was she who had made up the prescription. She refused to discuss it.

I said, "The bottle may have been tampered with, have you thought of that?"

"Joan's been reading books."

The last week of my holidays old Mrs. Simmonds died above the shop and left all her fortune to her daughter. At the same time I got tonsillitis and could not return to school.

I was attended by our woman doctor, the widow of the town's former doctor who had quite recently died. This was the first time I had seen Dr. Gray, although I had known the other Dr. Gray, her husband, whom I missed. The new Dr. Grey was a sharp-faced athletic woman. She was said to be young. She came to visit me every day for a week. After consideration I decided she was normal and in the right, though dull.

Through the feverish part of my illness I saw Basil at the desk through the window and I heard Dorothy scream. While I was convalescent I went for walks, and always returned by the lane beside the Simmonds' house. There had been no bickering over the mother's

will. Everyone said the eye-drop affair was a terrible accident. Miss Simmonds had retired and was said to be going rather dotty.

I saw Dr. Gray leaving the Simmonds' at six o'clock one evening. She must have been calling on poor Miss Simmonds. She noticed me at once as I emerged from the lane.

"Don't loiter about, Joan. It's getting chilly."

The next evening I saw a light in the office window. I stood under the tree and looked. Dr. Gray sat upon the desk with her back to me quite close. Mr. Simmonds sat in his chair talking to her, tilting back his chair. A bottle of sherry stood on the table. They each had a glass half-filled with sherry. Dr. Gray swung her legs, she was in the wrong, sexy, like our morning help who sat on the kitchen table swinging her legs.

But then she spoke. "It will take time," she said. "A very difficult patient, of course."

Basil nodded. Dr. Gray swung her legs, and looked professional. She was in the right, she looked like our games mistress who sometimes sat on a desk swinging her legs.

Before I returned to school I saw Basil one morning at his shop door. "Reading glasses all right now?" he said.

"Oh yes, thank you."

"There's nothing wrong with your sight. Don't let your imagination run away with you."

I walked on certain that he had known my guilty suspicions all along.

"I took up psychology during the war. Up till then I was in general practice."

I had come to the summer school to lecture on history and she on psychology. Psychiatrists are very often ready to talk to strangers about their inmost lives. This is probably because they spend so much time hearing out their patients. I did not recognise Dr. Gray, except as a type, when I had attended her first lecture on "the psychic manifestations of sex." She spoke of child poltergeists, and I was bored, and took refuge in observing the curious language of her profession. I noticed the word "arousement". "Adolescents in a state of sexual arousalment," she said, "may become possessed of almost psychic insight."

Alter lunch, since the Eng. Lit. people had gone off to play tennis, she tacked on to me and we walked to the lake across the lawns, past the rhododendrons. This lake had once been the scene of a love mad duchess's death.

"... during the war. Before that I was in general practice. It's strange", she said, "how I came to take up psychology. My second husband had a breakdown and was under a psychiatrist. Of course, he's incurable, but I decided... It's strange, but that's how I came to take it up. It saved *my* reason. My husband is still in a home. His sister of course, became quite incurable. *He* has his lucid moments. I did not realise it, of course, when I married, but there was what I'd now call an oedipus-transference on his part and..."

How tedious I found these phrases! We had come to the lake I stooped over it and myself looked back at myself though the dark water. I looked at Dr. Gray's reflection and recognised her. I put on my dark glasses, then.

"Am I boring you?" she said.

"No, carry on."

"Must you wear those glasses?... it is a modern psychological phenomenon... the trend towards impersonalisation... the modern Inquisitor."

For a while, she watched her own footsteps, as we walked round the lake. Then she continued her story. "... an optician. His sister was blind—*going* blind when I first attended her. Only the one eye was affected. Then there was an accident, one of those *psychological* accidents. She was a trained dispenser, but she mixed herself the wrong eye-drops. Now it's very difficult to make a mistake like that, normally. But subconsciously she wanted to, she *wanted* to. But she wasn't normal, she was not normal.

"I'm not saying she was," I said.

"What did you say?"

"I'm sure she wasn't a normal person," I said, "if you say so."

"It can all be explained psychologically, as we've tried to show to my husband. We've told him and told him, and given him every sort of treatment—shock, insulin, everything. And after all, the stuff didn't have any effect on his sister immediately, and when she did go blind it was caused by acute glaucoma. She would probably have lost her sight in any case. Well, she went off her head completely and

accused her brother of having put the wrong drug in the bottle deliberately. This is the interesting part from the psychological point of view — she said she had seen something that he didn't want her to see, something disreputable. She said he wanted to blind the eye that saw it. She said..."

We were walking round the lake for the second time. When we came to the spot where I had seen her face reflected I stopped and looked over the water. "I'm boring you."

"No, no."

"I wish you would take off those glasses."

I took them off for a moment. I rather liked her for her innocence in not recognising me, though she looked hard and said. "There's a subconscious reason why you wear them."

"Dark glasses hide dark thoughts," I said.

"Is that a saying?"

"Not that I've heard. But it is one now."

She looked at me anew. But she didn't recognise me. These fishers of the mind have *no* eye for outward things. Instead, she was "recognising" my mind: I daresay I came under some category of hers.

I had my glasses on again, and was walking on.

"How did your husband react to his sister's accusations?" I said.

"He was remarkably kind."

"Kind?"

"Oh, yes, in the circumstances. Because she started up a lot of gossip in the neighbourhood. It was only a small town. It was a long time before I could persuade him to send her to a home for the blind where she could be looked after. There was a terrible bond between them. Unconscious incest."

"Didn't you know that when you married him? I should have thought it would have been obvious."

She looked at me again. "I had not studied psychology at that time," she said.

I thought, neither had I.

We were silent for the third turn about the lake. Then she said. "Well, I was telling you how I came to study psychology and practise it. My husband had this breakdown after his sister went away. He had delusions. He kept imagining he saw eyes looking at him everywhere.

He still sees them from time to time. But *eyes*, you see. That's significant. Unconsciously he felt he had blinded his sister. Because unconsciously he wanted to do so. He keeps confessing that he did so."

"And attempted to forge the will?" I said.

She stopped. "What are you saying?"

"Does he admit that he tried to forge his mother's will?"

"I haven't mentioned anything about a will."

"Oh, I thought you had."

"But, in fact, that was his sister's accusation. What made you say that? How did you know?"

"I must be psychic," I said.

She took my arm. I had become a most endearing case history.

"You must be psychic indeed", she said. "You must tell me more about yourself. Well, that's the story of my taking up my present profession. When my husband started having these delusions and making these confessions I felt I had to understand the workings of the mind. And I began to study them. It has been fruitful. It has saved my own reason."

"Did it ever occur to you that the sister's story might be true?" I said. "Especially as he admits it."

She took away her arm and said, "Yes, I considered the possibility. I must admit I considered it well."

She saw me watching her face. She looked as if she were pleading some personal excuse.

"Oh do," she said, "please take off those glasses."

"Why don't you believe his own confession?"

"I'm a psychiatrist and we seldom believe confessions." She looked at her watch as if to suggest I had started the whole conversation and was boring her.

I said, "He might have stopped seeing eyes if you'd taken him at his word."

She shouted. "What are you saying? What are you thinking of? He wanted to give a statement to the police, do you realise..."

"You know he's guilty," I said.

"As his wife," she said, "I know he's guilty. But as a psychiatrist I must regard him as innocent. That's why I took up the subject."

She suddenly turned angry and shouted, "You damned inquisitor, I've met your type before."

I could hardly believe she was shouting, who previously had been so calm. "Oh, it's not my business," I said, and took off my glasses to show willing.

I think it was then she recognised me".

Probing for Meaning and Method

1. Summarize the main events of the story. Do you think its tragic end was inevitable? What conflicts cause this tragedy? Who is to blame for it? Justify your answer by the text.

2. Who is the protagonist? Collect all information about her scattered in the text.

3. Does Spark introduce her own voice or are the events presented from the viewpoint of the protagonist? Can we consider Joan a naive narrator? What makes you think so?

4. What helps Joan to reveal 'the skeleton in the cupboard'? Do you agree with Dr. Gray's opinion, "Adolescents in a state of sexual arousal ... may become possessed of almost psychic insight"? Why or why not?

5. Explain Joan's behaviour. What are her dominating motifs? Showing curiosity? Searching for adventures? Longing for justice? Taking revenge? A combination of these motifs? Any other motifs? Comment on the function of the modal verbs *must* and *have to* in Joan's speech. Why are they italicized?

Next morning I said, "I've tried to read with these glasses. It's all a blur. I suppose I'll *have to* take them back?"

"Didn't you notice anything wrong when you tried —"

"— tried them on in the shop?"

"No. But the shop's so dark. *Must* I take them back?"

6. Is Joan's talk to Dr. Gray a consciously staged show or is it her nature? Why doesn't Joan want to remove her sun glasses? Which explanation of this fact seems more persuasive to you: Joan's (a) or Dr. Gray's (b):

a) But I did not remove my glasses, for I had not asked for her company in the first place, and there is a limit to what one can listen to with the naked eye.

b) "The wearing of dark glasses," she said, "is a modern psychological phenomenon. It signifies the trend towards impersonalisation, the weapon of the modern Inquisitor..."

Can Joan serve as «moral centre» in the work? Why or why not?

7. Are there any signals of Joan's subjective attitude to the events and people surrounding her: evaluative words, implications or allusions? How will you formulate her attitude toward Basil Simmonds, Dorothy Simmonds and Dr Gray? What is her opinion of their moral and psychological nature?

8. What is wrong with Basil and Dorothy Simmonds? What do you know about their private lives? Why does Joan characterize them as *Dark Basil*, *Dark Dorothy*?

What implications of the adjective *dark* are relevant in the context? What other adjectives, referring to Basil and Dorothy, convey the same idea? Which of them are repeated? Why?

Comment on the function of the epithet *rotten* in the sentence below. Can we treat it as an associative detail? What does the detail contribute to the character's image?

I had seen Miss Simmonds once before, at a garden fete, where she stood on a platform in a big hat and blue dress, and sang "Sometimes between long shadows on the grass," while I picked up windfall apples, all of which seemed to be rotten.

9. Are Basil and Dorothy parallel or opposing characters? How would you interpret the following remark, 'They were ganged up together.' Comment on the meaning of the phrasal verb *gang up* here.

10. How does Joan express her opinion of Dr Gray? How would you describe this characterization? Is it critical? Ironic? Sardonic? What language media prove your position? Interpret the subtext of the following descriptions:

a) Dr. Gray swung her legs, she was in the wrong, sexy, like our morning help who sat on the kitchen table swinging her legs.

b) Dr. Gray swung her legs, and looked professional.

c) The new Dr. Grey was a sharp-faced athletic woman. She was said to be young.

11. Read out the sentences containing the adjectives *gloomy*, *dusky* and *grimy*. Consult the dictionary and say whether the adjectives belong to the same semantic field. If so, why? What do they contribute to the development of the theme? What personality traits do the details formed by the adjectives imply? Whose traits are they? How do the events depicted support your idea of the characters?

12. What characters and objects does the adjective *dark* refer to in the text? How many times is it repeated? In what strong positions is it used? What new shades of meaning are added to the title words by each case of repetition? What is the final meaning of the title when you interpret it after reading the story? How do both the denotative and connotative meanings of the adjective function in the story? Comment on the title in the context of the whole story. How is the title connected with the theme?

13. Can we say that the composition of the story adds to the formation of the author's idea? Compare the introductory paragraph and the concluding paragraph. How do they contribute to the story's coherence?

14. What tone is domineering in the story? Detached, intimate, matter-of-fact, or any other? What words, phrases or sentences reveal it? What attitude to the subject of narration does the tone imply?

15. What are the most obvious ironies in the story? Are they verbal? Situational? Why does the protagonist sound ironic? Is she disappointed or simply realistic?

16. What is the theme of the story? Does the author frame it explicitly or implicitly? Explain the following remark, "Dark Glasses hide dark thoughts".

17. Give your stylistic commentary of the story.

Suggestions for Short Writing

1. Rearrange the episodes in the story in chronological order.
2. Write about the effect the story had on you as a reader.
3. Trace the thematic and evaluative force of irony in the story.

Suggestions for Sustained Writing

Tackling the Story

Write an essay on the whole text of *The Dark Glasses*.

Generalizing about Life

Organize an essay around this central idea:

The love of money is the root of all evil.
(*The Bible*)

Considering the Nature of Literature

Write an essay to explain why you agree or disagree with the following opinion:

Literature flourishes best when it is half a trade and half an art.
(W. R. Inge: *Victorian Age*)

Susan Hill

(1942–)

Susan (Elizabeth) Hill was born in Scarborough and studied at King's College, London. Her first novel, *The Enclosure*, was published in 1961 when she was still a student. She worked as a freelance journalist between 1963 and 1968. In 1996 she started her own publishing company, editing and publishing a quarterly literary journal, *Books and Company*, in 1998.

She won a Somerset Maugham Award for *I'm the King of the Castle* (1970), a disturbing novel about the fears and fantasies of childhood. In *the Springtime of the Year* (1974) she explores the aftermath of a woman's bereavement. *The Woman in Black*, signalling its literary heritage through its title (a playful reversal of Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*) and through its references to Dickens's *Great Expectations*, appeared in 1983. In 1993, *Mrs De Winter* was published as a sequel to Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*, further demonstrating Hill's ability to work within and beyond traditional literary styles and conventions. Her other novels are *Air and Angels* (1991), *The Mist in the Mirror* (1993) and *The Service of Clouds* (1998).

Susan Hill is the author of memoirs, books for children, radio plays, and a number of books of non-fiction. She has published several anthologies of short stories including *The Albatross* (1971) and two volumes of *The Penguin Book of Modern Women's Short Stories* (1991, 1997). Her most recent books are *The Various Haunts of Men* (2004) and *Pure in Heart* (2005), both about the adventures of Detective Chief Inspector Simon Serrailler.

Susan Hill's writing reveals an enviable capacity for generating and maintaining suspense through the deployment of fast moving, agile plots. Certain patterns, images and devices can be seen recurring through her varied fiction. Typically Hill's writings revolve around wealthy, well-to-do families of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Many of these families are broken, and the protagonists appear isolated, or awkward in the company of others. Hill's 'romantic image' of an aristocratic England is rarely conventionally 'romantic', because it is filled with dark images of death, loss and haunting.

A Bit of Singing and Dancing, one of Hill's most perceptive and sensitive explorations into the psychology of family relationship, makes us recall T.C. Eliot's idea: "Liberty is a different kind of pain from prison". The story illustrates the author's concerns and style, famous for compression, nuances of characterization, and a masterful use of the unsaid.

A Bit of Singing and Dancing

There was no one else on the beach so late in the afternoon. She walked very close to the water, where there was a rim of hard, flat sand, easier on her feet than the loose shelves of shingle, which folded one on top of the other, up to the storm wall. She thought, I

can stay out here just as long as I like. I can do anything I choose, anything at all, for now I am answerable only to myself.

But it was an unpromising afternoon, already half dark, an afternoon for early tea and banked-up fires and entertainment on television. And a small thrill went through her as she realized that that, too, was entirely up to her, she could watch whichever programme she chose, or not watch any at all. There had not been an evening for the past eleven years when the television had stayed off and there was silence to hear the ticking of the clock and the central heating pipes.

'It is her only pleasure,' she used to say, 'She sees things she would otherwise be quite unable to see, the television has given her a new lease of life. You're never too old to learn.' But the truth her mother had watched variety shows, Morecambe and Wise and the Black and White Minstrels, whereas she herself would have chosen BBC 2 and something cultural or educational.

'I like a bit of singing and dancing, it cheers you up, Esme, it takes you out of yourself. I like a bit of spectacular.'

But tonight there might be a play or a film about Arabia or the Archipelagoes, or a master class for cellists, tonight she would please herself for the first time. Because it was two weeks now, since her mother's death, a decent interval.

It was February. It was a cold evening. As far as she could see, the beach and the sea and the sky were all grey, merging into one another in the distance. On the day of her mother's funeral it had been blowing a gale, with sleet, she had looked round at all their lifeless, pinched faces under the black hats and thought, this is right, this is fitting, that we should all of us seem bowed and old and disconsolate. Her mother had a right to a proper grief, a proper mourning.

She had wanted to leave the beach and walk back, her hands were stiff with cold inside the pockets of her navy-blue coat – navy, she thought, was the correct first step away from black. She wanted to go back and toast scones and eat them with too much butter, of which her mother would have strongly disapproved. *We* never had it, *we* were never allowed to indulge ourselves in rich foods, and besides, they've been discovering more about heart disease in relation to butter, haven't you read that in the newspapers, Esme? I'm surprised you don't pay attention to these things. I pay attention. I don't believe in butter at every meal – butter on this, butter with that.'

Every morning her mother had read two newspapers from cover to cover – the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mirror*, and marked out with a green ball point pen news items in which she thought that her daughter ought to take an interest. She said, 'I like to see both sides of every question.' And so, whichever side her daughter or some visitor took, on some issue of the day, she was informed enough by both her newspapers to take the opposing view. An argument, she had said, sharpened the mind.

'I do not intend to become a cabbage, Esme, just because I am forced to be bedridden.'

She had reached the breakwater. A few gulls circled, bleating, in the gunmetal sky, and the waterline was strewn with fishheads, the flesh all picked away. She thought, I am free, I may go on or go back, or else stand here for an hour, I am mistress of myself. It was a long time since she had been out for so long, she could not quite get used to it, this absence of the need to look at her watch, to scurry home. But after a while, because it was really very damp and there was so little to see, she did turn, and then the thought of tomorrow, and the outing she had promised herself to buy new clothes. It would take some months for her mother's will to be proven, the solicitor had explained to her, things were generally delayed, but there was no doubt that they would be settled to her advantage and really, Mrs Fanshaw had been very careful, very prudent, and so she would not be in want. Meanwhile, perhaps an advance for immediate expenses? Perhaps a hundred pounds?

When the will was read, her first reaction had been one of admiration, she had said, 'The cunning old woman' under her breath, and then put her hand up to her mouth, afraid of being overheard. 'The cunning old woman.' For Mildred Fanshaw had saved up £6,000, scattered about in bank and savings accounts. Yet they had always apparently depended upon Esme's salary and the old age pension, they had had to be careful, she said, about electricity and extra cream and joints of beef. 'Extravagance,' Mrs. Fanshaw said, 'it is a cardinal sin. That is where all other evils stem from, Esme. Extravagance. We should all live within our means.'

And now here was £6,000. For a moment or two it had gone to her head, she had been quite giddy with plans, she would buy a car and learn to drive, buy a washing machine and a television set, she would

have a holiday abroad and get properly fitting underwear and eat out in a restaurant now and again, she would...

But she was over fifty, she should be putting money on one side herself now, saving for her own old age, and besides, even the idea of spending made her feel guilty, as though her mother could hear, now, what was going on inside her head, just as, in life, she had known her thoughts from the expression on her face.

She had reached the steps leading up from the beach. It was almost dark.

She shivered, then, in a moment of fear and bewilderment at her new freedom, for there was nothing she had to do, she could please herself about everything, anything, and this she could not get used to. Perhaps she ought not to stay here, perhaps she could try and sell the house, which was really far too big for her, perhaps she ought to get a job and a small flat in London. London was the city of opportunity ...

She felt flushed and a little drunk then, she felt that all things were possible, the future was in her power, and she wanted to shout and sing and dance, standing alone in the February twilight, looking at the deserted beach. All the houses along the seafront promenade had blank, black windows, for this was a summer place, in February it was only half alive.

She said, 'And that is what I have been. But I am fifty-one years old and look at the chances before me.'

Far out on the shingle bank the green warning light flashed on-on-off, on-on-off. It had been flashing the night of her mother's stroke, she had gone to the window and watched it and felt comforted at three a.m. in the aftermath of death. Now, the shock of that death came to her again like a hand slapped across her face, she thought, my mother is not here, my mother is in a box in the earth, and she began to shiver violently, her mind crawling with images of corruption, she started to walk very quickly along the promenade and up the hill towards home.

When she opened the front door she listened, and everything was quite silent, quite still. There had always been the voice from upstairs, 'Esme?' and each time she had wanted to say, 'Who else would it be?' and bitten back the words, only said, 'Hello, it's me.' Now, again, she called, 'It's me. Hello,' and her voice echoed softly up the dark stair well, when she heard it, it was a shock, for what kind of

woman was it who talked to herself and was afraid of an empty house? What kind of woman?

She went quickly into the sitting-room and drew the curtains and then poured herself a small glass of sherry, the kind her mother had preferred. It was shock, of course, they had told her, all of them, her brother-in-law and her Uncle Cecil and cousin George Golightly, when they had come back for tea and ham sandwiches after the funeral.

'You will feel the real shock later. Shock is always delayed.' Because she had been so calm and self-possessed, she had made all the arrangements so neatly, they were very surprised.

'If you ever feel the need of company, Esme – and you will – of course you must come to us. Just a telephone call, that's all we need, just a little warning in advance. You are sure to feel strange.'

Strange. Yes. She sat by the electric fire. Well, the truth was she had got herself thoroughly chilled, walking on the beach like that, so late in the afternoon. It had been her own fault.

After a while, the silence of the house oppressed her, so that when she had taken a second glass of sherry and made herself a poached egg on toast, she turned on the television and watched a variety show, because it was something cheerful, and she needed taking out of herself. There would be time enough for the educational programmes when she was used to this new life. But a thought went through her head, backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, it was as though she were reading from a tape.

'She is upstairs. She is still in her room. If you go upstairs you will see her. Your mother.' The words danced across the television screen, intermingling with the limbs of dancers, issuing like spume out of the mouths of comedians and crooners, they took on the rhythm of the drums and the double basses. 'Upstairs. In her room. Upstairs. In her room.'

Your mother. Your mother. Your mother.

Upstairs ...'

She jabbed at the push button on top of the set and the pictures shrank and died, there was silence, and then she heard her own heart beating and the breath coming out of her in little gasps. She scolded herself for being morbid, neurotic. Very well then, she said, go upstairs and see for yourself.

Very deliberately and calmly she went out of the room and climbed the stairs, and went into her mother's bedroom. The light from the street lamp immediately outside the window shone a pale triangle of light down onto the white runner on the dressing table, the white lining of the curtains and the smooth white cover of the bed. Everything had gone. Her mother might never have been here. Esme had been very anxious not to hoard reminders and so, the very day after the funeral, she had cleared out and packed up clothes, linen, medicine, papers, spectacles, she had ruthlessly emptied the room of her mother.

Now, standing in the doorway, smelling lavender polish and dust, she felt ashamed, as though she wanted to be rid of all memory, as though she had wanted her mother to die. She said, but that is what I did want, to be rid of the person who bound me to her for fifty years. She spoke aloud into the bedroom, 'I wanted you dead.' She felt her hands trembling and held them tightly together, she thought, I am a wicked woman. But the sherry she had drunk began to have some effect now, her heart was beating more quietly, and she was able to walk out into the room and draw the curtains, even though it was now unnecessary to scold herself for being so hysterical.

In the living room, she sat beside the fire reading a historical biography until eleven o'clock – when her mother was alive she had always been in bed by ten – and the fears had quite left her, she felt entirely calm. She thought, it is only natural, you have had a shock, you are bound to be affected. That night she slept extremely well.

When she answered the front doorbell at eleven fifteen the following morning and found Mr. Amos Curry, hat in hand, upon the step, inquiring about a room, she remembered a remark her Uncle Cecil had made to her on the day of the funeral. 'You will surely not want to be here all on your own, Esme, in this great house. You should take a lodger.'

Mr. Amos Curry rubbed his left eyebrow with a nervous finger, a gesture of his because he was habitually shy. 'A room to let,' he said, and she noticed that he wore gold cuff links and very well-polished shoes. 'I understand from the agency ... a room to let with breakfast.'

'I know nothing of any agency. I think you have the wrong address.'

He took out a small loose-leaf notebook. 'Number 23, Park Close.'

'Oh no, I'm so sorry, we are ...' she corrected herself, 'I am twenty-three Park *Walk*.'

A flush of embarrassment began to seep up over his face and neck like an ink stain, he loosened his collar a little until she felt quite sorry for him, quite upset.

'An easy mistake, a perfectly understandable mistake. Mr. ... Please do not feel at all ...'

'... Curry. Amos Curry.'

'... embarrassed.'

'I am looking for a quiet room with breakfast. It seemed so hopeful. Park Close. Such a comfortable address.'

She thought, he is a very clean man, very neat and spruce, he has a gold incisor tooth and he wears gloves. Her mother had always approved of men who wore gloves. 'So few do, nowadays. Gloves and hats. It is easy to pick out a gentleman.'

Mr. Curry also wore a hat.

'I do apologize, Madam, I feel so ... I would not have troubled...'

'No...no, please...'

'I must look for Park Close, Number 23.'

'It is just around the bend, to the left, a few hundred yards. A very secluded road.'

'Like this. This road is secluded. I thought as I approached this house, how suitable, I should ... I feel one can tell, a house has a certain... But I am so sorry.'

He settled his hat upon his neat grey hair, and then raised it again politely, turning away.

She took in a quick breath. She said, 'What exactly...that is to say, if you are looking for a room with breakfast, I wonder if I...'

Mr. Amos Curry turned back.

He held a small pickled onion delicately on the end of his fork. 'There is,' he said, 'the question of my equipment.'

Esme Fanshaw heard his voice as though it issued from the wireless – there was a distortion about it, a curious echo. She shook her head. He is not real, she thought ... But he was here, Mr. Amos

Curry, in a navy-blue pin stripe suit and with a small neat darn just below his shirt collar. He was sitting at her kitchen table – for she had hesitated to ask him into the dining room, which in any case was rarely used, the kitchen had seemed a proper compromise. He was here. She had made a pot of coffee, and then, after an hour, a cold snack of beef and pickles, bread and butter, her hands were a little moist with excitement. She thought again how rash she had been, she said, he is a total stranger, someone from the street, a casual caller, I know nothing at all about him. But she recognized the voice of her mother, then, and rebelled against it. Besides, it was not true, for Mr. Curry had told her a great deal. She thought, this is how life should be, I should be daring. I should allow myself to be constantly surprised. Each day I should be ready for some new encounter. That is how to stay young. She was most anxious to stay young.

In his youth, Mr. Curry had been abroad a great deal, had lived, he said, in Ceylon, Singapore and India. 'I always keep an open mind, Miss Fanshaw, I believe in the principle of tolerance, live and let live. Nation shall speak peace unto nation.'

'Oh, I do agree.'

'I have seen the world and its ways. I have no prejudices. The customs of others may be quite different from our own but human beings are human beings the world over. We learn from one another every day. By keeping an open mind, Miss Fanshaw.'

'Oh yes.'

'You have travelled?'

'I – I have visited Europe. Not too far afield, I'm afraid.'

'I have journeyed on foot through most of the European countries, I have earned my passage at all times.'

She did not like to ask how, but she was impressed, having only been abroad once herself, to France.

Mr. Curry had been an orphan, he said, life for him had begun in a children's home. 'But it was a more than adequate start, Miss Fanshaw, we were all happy together. I do not think memory deceives me. We were one big family. Never let it be said that the Society did not do its best by me. I see how lucky I am. Well, you have only to look about you, Miss Fanshaw – how many people do you see from broken families, unhappy homes? I know nothing of that: I count my-

self fortunate. I like to think I have made the best of my circumstances.'

His education, he said, had been rather elementary, he had a good brain which had never been taxed to the full.

'Untapped resources,' he said, pointing to his forehead.

They talked so easily, she thought she had never found conversation flowing along with any other stranger, any other man. Mr. Curry had exactly the right amount of formal politeness, mixed with informal ease, and she decided that he was destined to live here, he had style and he seemed so much at home.

He had an ordinary face, for which she was grateful, but there was something slightly unreal about it, as though she were seeing it on a cinema screen. All the same, it was very easy to picture him sitting in this kitchen, eating breakfast, before putting on his hat, which had a small feather in the band, each morning and going off to work.

'I do have some rather bulky equipment.'

'What exactly'

'I have two jobs, Miss Fanshaw, two strings to my bow, as it were. That surprises you? But I have always been anxious to fill up every hour of the day, I have boundless energy.'

She noticed that he had some tufts of pepper coloured hair sprouting from his ears and nostrils and wondered if, when he visited the barber for a haircut, he also had these trimmed. She knew nothing about the habits of men.

'Of course, it is to some extent seasonal work.'

'Seasonal?'

'Yes. For those odd wet and windy days which always come upon us at the English seaside, and of course during the winter, I travel in cleaning utensils.'

He looked around him quickly, as though to see where she kept her polish and dusters and brooms, to make note of any requirements.

'Perhaps you would require some extra storage space? Other than the room itself.'

Mr. Curry got up from the table and began to clear away dishes, she watched him in astonishment. The man on the doorstep with a note of the wrong address had become the luncheon visitor, the friend who helped with the washing up.

'There is quite a large loft.'

'Inaccessible.'

'Oh.'

'And I do have to be a little careful. No strain on the back. Not that I am a sick man, Miss Fanshaw, I hasten to reassure you, you will not have an invalid on your hands. Oh no. I am extremely healthy for my age. It is because I lead such an active life.'

She thought of him, knocking upon all the doors, walking back down so many front paths. Though this was not what he did in the summer.

'Sound in wind and limb, as you might say.'

She thought of racehorses, and tried to decide whether he had ever been married. She said, 'Or else, perhaps, the large cupboard under the stairs, where the gas meter...'

'Perfect.'

He poured just the right amount of washing up liquid into the bowl; his sleeves were already unbuttoned and rolled up to the elbows, his jacket hung on the hook behind the back door. She saw the hairs lying like thatch on his sinewy arms, and a dozen questions sprang up into her mind, then, for although he seemed to have told her a great deal about himself, there were many gaps.

He had visited the town previously, he told her, in the course of his work, and fell for it. 'I never forgot it, Miss Fanshaw. I should be very happy here, I told myself. It is my kind of place. Do you see?'

'And so you came back.'

'Certainly. I know when I am meant to do something. I never ignore that feeling. I was intended to return here.'

'It is rather a small town.'

'But select.'

'I was only wondering – we do have a very short season, really only July and August...'

'Yes?'

'Perhaps it would not be suitable for your – er – summer work?'

'Oh, I think it would, Miss Fanshaw, I think so, I size these things up rather carefully, you know, rather carefully.'

She did not question him further, only said, 'Well, it is winter now.'

'Indeed. I shall, to coin a phrase, be plying my other trade. In a town like this, full of ladies such as yourself, in nice houses with comfortable circumstances, the possibilities are endless, endless.'

'For – er – cleaning materials?'

'Quite so.'

'I do see that.'

'Now you take a pride, don't you? Anyone can see that for himself.'

He waved a hand around the small kitchen, scattering little drops of foamy water, and she saw the room through his eyes, the clean windows, the shining taps, the immaculate sinks. Yes, she took a pride, that was true. Her mother had insisted upon it. Now, she heard herself saying, 'My mother died only a fortnight ago,' forgetting that she had told him already and the shock of the fact overcame her again, she could not believe in the empty room, which she was planning to give to Mr. Curry, and her eyes filled up with tears of guilt. And what would her mother have said about a strange man washing up in their kitchen, about this new, daring friendship.

'You should have consulted me, Esme, you take far too much on trust. You never think. You should have consulted me.'

Two days after her mother's funeral, Mrs Bickerdike, from The Lilacs, had met her in the pharmacy, and mentioned, in lowered voice, that she 'did work for the bereaved', which, Esme gathered, meant that she conducted seances. She implied that contact might be established with the deceased Mrs Fanshaw. Esme had been shocked, most of all by the thought of that contact, and a continuing relationship with her mother, though she had only said that she believed in letting the dead have their rest. 'I think, if you will forgive me, and with respect, that we are not meant to inquire about them, or to follow them on.'

Now, she heard her mother talking about Mr. Curry. 'You should always take particular notice of the eyes, Esme, never trust anyone with eyes set too closely together.'

She tried to see his eyes, but he was turned sideways to her.

'Or else too widely apart. That indicates idleness.'

She was ashamed of what she had just said about her mother's recent death, for she did not at all wish to embarrass him, or to appear hysterical. Mr. Curry had finished washing up and was resting his

reddened wet hands upon the rim of the sink. When he spoke, his voice was a little changed and rather solemn. 'I do not believe in shutting away the dead, Miss Fanshaw, I believe in the sacredness of memory. I am only glad that you feel able to talk to me about the good lady.'

She felt suddenly glad to have him here in the kitchen, for his presence took the edge off the emptiness and silence which lately had seemed to fill up every corner of the house.

She said, 'It was not always easy ... My mother was a very ... forthright woman.'

'Say no more. I understand only too well. The older generation believed in speaking their minds.'

She thought, he is obviously a very sensitive man, he can read between the lines: and she wanted to laugh with relief, for there was no need to go into details about how dominating her mother had been and how taxing were the last years of her illness – he knew, he understood.

Mr. Curry dried his hands, smoothing the towel down one finger at a time, as though he were drawing on gloves. He rolled down his shirt-sleeves and fastened them and put on his jacket. His movements were neat and deliberate. He coughed. 'Regarding the room – there is just the question of payment, Miss Fanshaw, I believe in having these matters out at once. There is nothing to be embarrassed about in speaking of money, I hope you agree.'

'Oh no, certainly, I...'

'Shall we say four pounds a week?'

Her head swam. She had no idea at all how much a lodger should pay, how much his breakfasts would cost, and she was anxious to be both business-like and fair. Well, he had suggested what seemed to him a most suitable sum, he was more experienced in these matters than herself.

'For the time being I am staying at a commercial guest house in Cedars Road. I have only linoleum covering the floor of my room, there is nothing cooked at breakfast. I am not accustomed to luxury, Miss Fanshaw, you will understand that from what I have told you of my life, but I think I am entitled to comfort at the end of the working day.'

'Oh, you will be more than comfortable here, I shall see to that, I shall do my very best. I feel...'

'Yes?'

She was suddenly nervous of how she appeared in his eyes.

'I do feel that the mistake you made in the address was somehow ...'

'Fortuitous.'

'Yes, oh yes.'

Mr. Curry gave a little bow.

'When would you wish to move in, Mr. Curry? There are one or two things ...'

'Tomorrow evening, say?'

Tomorrow is Friday.'

'Perhaps that is inconvenient.'

'No ... no ... certainly ... our week could begin on a Friday, as it were.'

'I shall greatly look forward to having you as a landlady, Miss Fanshaw.'

Landlady. She wanted to say, 'I hope I shall be a friend, Mr. Curry,' but it sounded presumptuous.

When he had gone she made herself a pot of tea, and sat quietly at the kitchen table, a little dazed. She thought, this is a new phase of my life. But she was still a little alarmed. She had acted out of character and against what she would normally have called her better judgement. Her mother would have warned her against inviting strangers into the house, just as, when she was a child, she had warned her about speaking to them in the street. 'You can never be sure, Esme, there are some very peculiar people about.' For she was a great reader of the crime reports in her newspapers, and of books about famous trials. The life of Doctor Crippen had particularly impressed her.

Esme shook her head. Now, all the plans she had made for selling the house and moving to London and going abroad were necessarily curtailed, and for the moment she felt depressed, as though the old life were going to continue, and she wondered, too, what neighbours and friends might say, and whether anyone had seen Mr. Curry standing on her doorstep, paper in hand, whether, when he went from house to house selling cleaning utensils, they would recognize him as Miss Fanshaw's lodger and disapprove. There was no doubt that her

mother would have disapproved, and not only because he was a 'stranger off the streets'.

'He is a salesman, Esme, a doorstep pedlar, and you do not *know* what his employment in the summer months may turn out to be.'

'He has impeccable manners, mother, quite old-fashioned ones, and a most genteel way of speaking.' She remembered the gloves and the raised hat, the little bow, and also the way he had quietly and confidently done the washing up, as though he were already living here.

'How do you know where things will lead, Esme?'

'I am prepared to take a risk. I have taken too few risks in my life so far.'

She saw her mother purse her lips and fold her hands together, refusing to argue further, only certain that she was in the right. Well, it was her own life now, and she was mistress of it, she would follow her instincts for once. And she went and got a sheet of paper, on which to write a list of things that were needed to make her mother's old bedroom quite comfortable for him. After that, she would buy cereal and bacon and kidneys for the week's breakfasts.

She was surprised at how little time it took for her to grow quite accustomed to having Mr. Curry in the house. It helped, of course, that he was a man of very regular habits and neat, too, when she had first gone into his room to clean it, she could have believed that no one was using it at all. The bed was neatly made, clothes hung out of sight in drawers – he had locked the wardrobe, she discovered, and taken away the key. Only two pairs of shoes side by side, below the washbasin, and a shaving brush and razor on the shelf above it, gave the lodger away.

Mr. Curry got up promptly at eight – she heard his alarm clock and then the pips of the radio news. At eight twenty he came down to the kitchen for his breakfast, smelling of shaving soap and shoe polish. Always, he said, 'Ah, good morning, Miss Fanshaw, good morning to you,' and then commented briefly upon the weather. It was 'a bit nippy' or 'a touch of sunshine, I see' or 'bleak'. He ate a cooked breakfast, followed by toast and two cups of strong tea.

Esme took a pride in her breakfasts, in the neat way she laid the table and the freshness of the cloth, she warmed his plate under the grill and waited until the last minute before doing the toast so that it

should still be crisp and hot. She thought, it is a very bad thing for a woman such as myself to live alone and become entirely selfish. I am the sort of person who needs to give service.

At ten minutes to nine, Mr. Curry got his suitcase from the downstairs cupboard, wished her good morning again, and left the house. After that she was free for the rest of the day, to live as she had always lived, or else to make changes – though much of her time was taken up with cleaning the house and especially Mr. Curry's room, and shopping for something unusual for Mr. Curry's breakfasts.

She had hoped to enrol for lampshade-making classes at the evening institute but it was too late for that year, they had told her she must apply again after the summer, so she borrowed a book upon the subject from the public library and bought frames and card and fringing, and taught herself. She went to one or two bring-and-buy sales and planned to hold a coffee morning and do a little voluntary work for old people. Her life was full. She enjoyed having Mr. Curry in the house. Easter came, and she began wonder when he would change to his summer work, and what that work might be. He never spoke of it.

To begin with he had come in between five thirty and six every evening, and gone straight to his room. Sometimes he went out again for an hour, she presumed to buy a meal somewhere and perhaps drink a glass of beer, but more often he stayed in, and Esme did not see him again until the following morning. Once or twice she heard music coming from his room – presumably from the radio, and she thought how nice it was to hear that the house was alive, a home for someone else.

One Friday evening, Mr. Curry came down into the kitchen to give her the four pounds rent, just as she was serving up lamb casserole, and when she invited him to stay and share it with her, he accepted so quickly that she felt guilty, for perhaps he went without an evening meal altogether. She decided to offer him the use of the kitchen, when a moment should arise which seemed suitable.

But a moment did not arise. Instead, Mr. Curry came down two or three evenings a week and shared her meal, she got used to shopping for two, and when he offered her an extra pound a week, she accepted, it was so nice to have company, though she felt a little daring, a little carefree. She heard her mother telling her that the meals cost

more than a pound a week. 'Well, I do not mind, they give me pleasure, it is worth it for that.'

One evening, Mr. Curry asked her if she were good at figures, and when she told him that she had studied book-keeping, asked her help with the accounts for the kitchen utensil customers. After that, two or three times a month, she helped him regularly, they set up a temporary office on the dining-room table, and she remembered how good she had been at this kind of work, she began to feel useful, to enjoy herself.

He said, 'Well, it will not be for much longer, Miss Fanshaw, the summer is almost upon us, and in the summer, of course, I am self-employed.'

But when she opened her mouth to question him more closely, he changed the subject. Nor did she like to inquire whether the firm who supplied him with the cleaning utensils to sell, objected to the dearth of summer orders.

Mr. Curry was an avid reader, 'in the winter', he said, when he had the time. He read not novels or biographies or war memoirs, but his encyclopedia, of which he had a handsome set, bound in cream mock-leather and paid for by monthly instalments. In the evenings, he took to bringing a volume down to the sitting-room, at her invitation, and keeping her company, she grew used to the sight of him in the opposite armchair. From time to time he would read out to her some curious or entertaining piece of information. His mind soaked up everything, but particularly of a zoological, geographical or anthropological nature, he said that he never forgot a fact, and that you never knew when something might prove of use. And Esme Fanshaw listened, her hands deftly fringing a lampshade – it was a skill she had acquired easily – and continued her education.

'One is never too old to learn, Mr. Curry.' 'How splendid that we are of like mind! How nice!' She thought, yes, it is nice, as she was washing up the dishes the next morning, and she flushed a little with pleasure and a curious kind of excitement. She wished that she had some woman friend whom she could telephone and invite round for coffee, in order to say, 'How nice it is to have a man about the house, really, I had no idea what a difference it could make.' But she had no close friends, she and her mother had always kept themselves to

themselves. She would have said, 'I feel younger, and it is all thanks to Mr. Curry. I see now that I was only half-alive.'

Then, it was summer. Mr. Curry was out until half past nine or ten o'clock at night, the suitcase full of brooms and brushes and polish was put away under the stairs and he had changed his clothing. He wore a cream linen jacket and a straw hat with a black band, a rose or carnation in his buttonhole. He looked very dapper, very smart, and she had no idea at all what work he was doing. Each morning he left the house carrying a black case, quite large and square. She thought, I shall follow him. But she did not do so. Then, one evening in July, she decided to explore, to discover what she could from other people in the town, for someone must know Mr. Curry, he was a distinctive sight, now, in the fresh summer clothes. She had, at the back of her mind, some idea that he might be a beach photographer.

She herself put on a quite different outfit – a white pique dress she had bought fifteen years ago, but which still not only fitted, but suited her, and a straw boater, edged with ribbon, not unlike Mr. Curry's own hat. When she went smartly down the front path, she hardly dared to look about her, certain that she was observed and spoken about by the neighbours. For it was well known now that Miss Fanshaw had a lodger.

She almost never went on to the promenade in the summer. She had told Mr. Curry so. 'I keep to the residential streets, to the shops near home, I do so dislike the summer crowds.' And besides, her mother had impressed on her that the summer visitors were 'quite common'. But tonight walking along in the warm evening air, smelling the sea, she felt ashamed of that opinion, she would not like anyone to think that she had been brought up a snob – live and let live, as Mr. Curry would tell her. And the people sitting in the deck-chairs and walking in couples along the seafront looked perfectly nice, perfectly respectable, there were a number of older women and families with well-behaved children, this was a small, select resort, and charabancs were discouraged.

But Mr. Curry was not to be seen. There were no beach photographers. She walked quite slowly along the promenade, looking all about her. There was a pool, in which children could sail boats, beside the War Memorial, and a putting green alongside the gardens of

the Raincliffe Hotel. Really, she thought, I should come out more often, really it is very pleasant here in the summer, I have been missing a good deal.

When she reached the putting green she paused, not wanting to go back, for her sitting-room was rather dark, and she had no real inclination to make lampshades in the middle of July. She was going to sit down, next to an elderly couple on one of the green benches, she was going to enjoy the balm of the evening. Then, she heard music. After a moment, she recognized it. The tune had come quite often through the closed door of Mr. Curry's bedroom.

And there, on a corner opposite the hotel, and the putting green, she saw Mr. Curry. The black case contained a portable gramophone, the old-fashioned kind, with a horn, and this was set on the pavement. Beside it was Mr. Curry, straw hat tipped a little to one side, cane beneath his arm, buttonhole in place. He was singing, in a tune-ful, but rather cracked voice, and doing an elaborate little tap dance on the spot, his rather small feet moving swiftly and daintily in time with the music.

Esme Fanshaw put her hand to her face, feeling herself flush, and wishing to conceal herself from him: she turned her head away and looked out to sea, her ears full of the sentimental music. But Mr. Curry was paying attention only to the small crowd which had gathered about him. One or two passers by, on the opposite side of the road, crossed over to watch, as Mr. Curry danced, a fixed smile on his elderly face. At his feet was an upturned bowler hat, into which people dropped coins, and when the record ended, he bent down, turned it over neatly, and began to dance again. At the end of the second tune, he packed the gramophone up and moved on, farther down the promenade, to begin his performance all over again.

She sat on the green bench feeling a little faint and giddy, her heart pounding. She thought of her mother, and what she would have said, she thought of how foolish she had been made to look, for surely someone knew, surely half the town had seen Mr. Curry? The strains of his music drifted up the promenade on the evening air. It was almost dark now, the sea was creeping back up the shingle.

She thought of going home, of turning the contents of Mr. Curry's room out onto the pavement and locking the front door, she thought of calling the police, or her Uncle Cecil, of going to a neigh-

bour. She had been humiliated, taken in, disgraced, and almost wept for the shame of it.

And then, presently, she wondered what it was she had meant by 'shame'. Mr. Curry was not dishonest. He had not told her what he did in the summer months, he had not lied. Perhaps he had simply kept it from her because she might disapprove. It was his own business. And certainly there was no doubt at all that in the winter months he sold cleaning utensils from door to door. He paid his rent. He was neat and tidy and a pleasant companion. What was there to fear?

All at once, then, she felt sorry for him, and at the same time, he became a romantic figure in her eyes, for he had danced well and his singing had not been without a certain style, perhaps he had a fascinating past as a music hall performer, and who was she, Esme Fanshaw, to despise him, what talent had she? Did she earn her living by giving entertainment to others?

'I told you so, Esme. What did I tell you?' 'Told me what, mother? What is it you have to say to me? Why do you not leave me alone?'

Her mother was silent.

Quietly then, she picked up her handbag and left the green bench and the promenade and walked up through the dark residential streets, past the gardens sweet with stocks and roses, past open windows, towards Park Walk, and when she reached her own house, she put away the straw hat, though she kept on the dress of white pique, because it was such a warm night. She went down into the kitchen and made coffee and set it, with a plate of sandwiches and a plate of biscuits, on a tray, and presently Mr. Curry came in, and she called out to him, she said, 'Do come and have a little snack with me, I am quite sure you can do with it, I'm quite sure you are tired.'

And she saw from his face that he knew that she knew.

But nothing was said that evening, or until some weeks later, when Mr. Curry was sitting opposite her, on a cold, windy August night, reading from the volume Cow to DIN. Esme Fanshaw said, looking at him, 'My mother used to say, Mr. Curry, "I always like a bit of singing and dancing, some variety. It takes you out of yourself, singing and dancing."'

Mr. Curry gave a little bow.

Probing for Meaning and Method

1. Summarize the main events presented. Is the focus on action or on characterization?

2. How does the author organize the conflicts of the story? What are the main conflicts and the minor conflicts? Does the excitement of the story emerge from external conflicts, internal conflicts or the interplay between external and internal conflicts?

3. What has caused the conflict at the beginning of the story? How does Esme Fanshaw react to her mother's death? Does she experience a feeling of loss, fear, freedom, a combination of these feelings? Are there any words, naming her emotions? Which of them are repeated? Why? What suggestive details hint at Esme's internal state of mind? What associative landscape details help the author to show it? Is there any correspondence between Esme's inner state and outer state?

4. What causes the conflicts that develop during the course of the story? Are these conflicts external or internal?

5. Where does the action take place? What sensuous qualities does the author give to the setting? What does Esme Fanshaw's house look like, sound like, feel like? What sensuous and metaphoric images help you to receive a dominating impression about the setting? Define this impression.

How does the place of action seem to affect the protagonist? Why is she afraid of the empty house? What makes her change her attitude to it?

6. When Mr. Curry moves in as Esme's lodger, what advantages and disadvantages does the new arrangement have for her? How do you understand Esme's remark, 'I feel younger, and it is all thanks to Mr. Curry. I see now that I was only half-alive.'

7. What are the protagonist's moral traits? Are they easily caught? Does the author use any details of behaviour, dress, speech, and physical movements to communicate these traits? What role does interior monologue play in this description? Is Esme Fanshaw natural or wearing a mask? What makes you think so?

8. What can you tell about the social values and customs in the world in which the characters live? How does the social environment affect the characters' views on life? What does the author seem to

think about the social environment portrayed in the story? Is Hill approving? Ambivalent? Disapproving?

To answer these questions, read, translate and interpret the following passages in the text:

a)... she wondered, too, what neighbours and friends might say, and whether anyone had seen Mr. Curry standing on her doorstep, paper in hand, whether, when he went from house to house selling cleaning utensils, they would recognize him as Miss Fanshaw's lodger and disapprove.

b) When she went smartly down the front path, she hardly dared to look about her, certain that she was observed and spoken about by the neighbours. For it was well known now that Miss Fanshaw had a lodger.

c) He said, 'Well, it will not be for much longer, Miss Fanshaw, the summer is almost upon us, and in the summer, of course, I am self-employed.'

But when she opened her mouth to question him more closely, he changed the subject.

d) She thought of her mother, and what she would have said, she thought of how foolish she had been made to look, for surely someone knew, surely half the town had seen Mr. Curry?

e) She thought of going home, of turning the contents of Mr. Curry's room out onto the pavement and locking the front door, she thought of calling the police, or her Uncle Cecil, of going to a neighbour. She had been humiliated, taken in, disgraced, and almost wept for the shame of it.

What stylistic devices in the passages quoted above help the author to describe Esme's thoughts?

9. Does Esme appear awkward in the company of others? Why does she know 'nothing about the habits of men'? Why doesn't Mr. Curry seem real to her? Interpret the subtext of the following paragraph:

...Esme Fanshaw heard his voice as though it issued from the wireless – there was a distortion about it, a curious echo. She shook her head. He is not real, she thought ... But he was here, Mr. Amos Curry, in a navy-blue

pin stripe suit and with a small neat darn just below his shirt collar. He was sitting at her kitchen table – for she had hesitated to ask him into the dining room, which in any case was rarely used, the kitchen had seemed a proper compromise. He was here.

Who is to blame for Esme's loneliness? Her mother? The society? Herself?

10. Do you consider Esme Fanshaw and her mother opposing or parallel characters? Comment on the use of the personal pronoun *we* in the speech of Esme's mother. Do their attitudes to life differ? What actions, words and opinions of the characters might support your position?

To answer these questions, read, translate and interpret the following paragraphs:

a) She went quickly into the sitting-room and drew the curtains and then poured herself a small glass of sherry, the kind her mother had preferred.

b) Now, standing in the doorway, smelling lavender polish and dust, she felt ashamed, as though she wanted to be rid of all memory, as though she had wanted her mother to die. She said, but that is what I did want, to be rid of the person who bound me to her for fifty years.

c) She thought, he is a very clean man, very neat and spruce, he has a gold incisor tooth and he wears gloves. Her mother had always approved of men who wore gloves. 'So few do, nowadays. Gloves and hats. It is easy to pick out a gentleman.'

Mr. Curry also wore a hat.

d) ...she could not believe in the empty room, which she was planning to give to Mr. Curry, and her eyes filled up with tears of guilt. And what would her mother have said about a strange man washing up in their kitchen, about this new, daring friendship.

'You should have consulted me, Esme, you take far too much on trust. You never think. You should have consulted me.'

e) She thought, this is a new phase of my life. But she was still a little alarmed. She had acted out of character and against what she would normally have called her better judgement. Her mother would have warned her against inviting strangers into the house, just as, when she was a child, she

had warned her about speaking to them in the street. 'You can never be sure, Esme, there are some very peculiar people about.'

f) She heard her mother telling her that the meals cost more than a pound a week. 'Well, I do not mind, they give me pleasure, it is worth it for that.'

g) She thought again how rash she had been, she said, he is a total stranger, someone from the street, a casual caller, I know nothing at all about him. But she recognized the voice of her mother, then, and rebelled against it...

h) 'I told you so, Esme. What did I tell you?' 'Told me what, mother? What is it you have to say to me? Why do you not leave me alone?'

Her mother was silent.

i) Esme Fanshaw said, looking at him, 'My mother used to say, Mr. Curry, "I always like a bit of singing and dancing, some variety. It takes you out of yourself, singing and dancing."'

11. Is Esme Fanshaw a static character or a dynamic character? Do her traits remain the same or change during the story? Did she become free to choose and model her own way after her mother's death? Do you believe she is really the mistress of her own life now? Is she 'prepared to take a risk'?

12. Has Esme any principles of her own or are her principles, if any at all, determined by those surrounding her? How would you interpret the subtext of the following remark, "I am the sort of person who needs to give service". Isn't Esme going to lose her identity by becoming 'useful' for Mr. Curry?

13. Comment upon the title of the story, tracing the recurrent use of the title components in the text.

14. How do you understand Eliot's idea, "Liberty is a different kind of pain from prison"? Do you think it may be treated as the theme of the story? Why or why not? Frame the theme in writing.

15. Give your stylistic commentary of the story.

Suggestions for Short Writing

1. Write three paragraphs to retell the story:

- five years before the events depicted,
- five years after the events depicted.

2. Write a paragraph to describe the emotions Esme experiences when thinking about her mother or having a dialogue with her.

3. Trace the thematic and evaluative force of interior monologue in the story.

Suggestions for Sustained Writing

Tackling the Story

Write an essay on the whole text of *A Bit of Singing and Dancing*

Generalizing about Life

Write an essay opposing or defending one of the ideas below:

(a) 'Character' says Novalis in one of his questionable aphorisms – 'character is destiny'

(G. Eliot: *The Mill on the Floss*)

(b) All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

(O. Wilde: *The Importance of Being Earnest*)

(c) I do not wish them [women] to have power over men; but over themselves

(M. Wollstonecraft: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*)

Considering the Nature of Literature

Write an essay in which you give your opinion as an interpreter of the following idea:

I felt that discussing story-writing in terms of plot, character, and theme is like trying to describe the expression on a face by saying where the eyes, nose, and mouth are

(F. O'Connor: *Writing Short Stories*)

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