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CLASS 11

ENGLISH FL

Summary

Hornbill

Prose & Poetry

Snapshots

Supplementary Reader



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Class 11 :: English FL :: Summary

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Hornbill – Prose

1. The Portrait of a Lady

"The Portrait of a Lady" is an autobiographical story by **Khushwant Singh** about the author's grandmother and his close relationship with her during his childhood. The story describes her simple and disciplined life, her deep religious faith and the changes in their relationship as the author grows older.

The author remembers his grandmother as an old, short and slightly bent woman. She always wore a spotless white dress and carried a rosary in her hand. Her silver hair was untidy, and she constantly moved her lips in prayer. To the author, she seemed to have always been old.

During his early childhood, the author and his grandmother were very close. They lived together in the village, and she took complete care of him. She woke him up, dressed him, prepared his breakfast and accompanied him to school. The village school was attached to a temple, where the grandmother spent her time praying while the author studied. On their way home, she fed the village dogs with stale chapatis.

When they moved to the city, their close relationship gradually changed. The author was sent to an English school by a motor bus, so his grandmother could no longer accompany him. She did not understand his lessons in science and English and was unhappy that the school did not teach about God and the scriptures. She was also disturbed when he began receiving music lessons because she considered music unsuitable for respectable people.

As the author grew older, he went to university and was given a separate room. His grandmother spent most of her time praying and sitting at the spinning wheel. Her happiest activity was feeding the sparrows in the courtyard. Hundreds of sparrows gathered around her, and she quietly watched them eat.

When the author went abroad for higher studies, his grandmother came to the railway station to see him off. She did not show her emotions openly. She silently kissed his forehead and continued praying with her rosary. After five years, when the author returned, she welcomed him and later celebrated his return by beating a drum and singing songs with other women.

The next morning, the grandmother fell ill. She felt that she had wasted time by celebrating instead of praying and decided to spend her remaining time in prayer. She continued reciting prayers with her rosary. Soon, her lips stopped moving and she died peacefully.

After her death, thousands of sparrows gathered silently around her body. The author's mother brought bread for them, but they did not eat. They simply sat there in silence. When the grandmother's body was carried away, the sparrows flew away quietly.

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The story presents the grandmother as a loving, religious, disciplined and strong-minded woman. It also shows how relationships change as people grow older and circumstances change. Through the grandmother's simple life, faith and affection, the author presents the deep bond between generations and the lasting impression a loved one can leave on our lives.

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2. We're Not Afraid to Die… if We Can All Be Together

– Gordon Cook and Alan East

"We're Not Afraid to Die… if We Can All Be Together" is a true adventure story about a family's dangerous sea journey and their struggle for survival after their boat is badly damaged by a powerful storm. The story shows courage, determination, teamwork and hope in the face of extreme danger.

The narrator, his wife Mary, their children Jonathan and Suzanne, and two crewmen, Larry Vigil and Herb Seigler, set out from Plymouth, England, on a 150-foot wave-hit boat called **Wavewalker**. They planned to repeat the round-the-world voyage of Captain James Cook. After sailing for several months, they reached the southern Indian Ocean, where they faced rough weather.

On January 2, the weather suddenly became extremely dangerous. The wind rose to nearly 150 knots and huge waves struck the boat. The narrator tried to protect the boat by slowing it down and securing everything on deck. Suddenly, a gigantic wave struck Wavewalker and smashed the boat badly. The narrator was thrown overboard but managed to return to the boat. He discovered that the boat was seriously damaged and that he had suffered several injuries.

The family and crew worked desperately to save Wavewalker. Water was entering the boat rapidly, so they pumped it out continuously. The narrator repaired the damaged parts as best as he could, while Mary, Larry and Herb helped with the emergency work. Suzanne had been badly injured, but she bravely told her father that she did not want to worry him. Her courage strengthened the family.

The storm continued, and the situation became worse. The boat was taking in more water, and they realised that they needed to reach land quickly. After checking their charts, the narrator decided to head towards **Ile Amsterdam**, a small island about 410 miles away. He calculated a new course and hoped that the boat would survive the journey.

As they moved towards the island, the children remained remarkably brave. When the narrator feared that the boat might sink, Jonathan told him that they were not afraid to die as long as they could all be together. These words deeply moved the narrator and gave him renewed courage. Suzanne also showed great strength despite her injuries.

After days of struggle, they finally sighted Ile Amsterdam. The island gave them hope, but reaching it was still difficult because the boat was badly damaged. With determination and careful navigation, they finally reached the island safely. The inhabitants of the island welcomed them and helped them after their exhausting ordeal.

The story is a powerful account of **courage, teamwork, presence of mind and hope**. The family and crew survive not because the danger is small, but because they refuse to give up. The courage of the children, the cooperation of the crew and the narrator's determination help them overcome one of the most dangerous situations of their lives.

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3. Discovering Tut: The Saga Continues

– A.R. Williams

"Discovering Tut: The Saga Continues" is a historical and scientific account of the discovery and examination of the tomb and mummy of **Tutankhamun**, the famous Egyptian pharaoh. The chapter describes the mystery surrounding his death, the discovery of his tomb, and the modern scientific attempts to understand his life and death.

Tutankhamun became the king of Egypt when he was only a teenager and died at a very young age. His death remained a mystery for thousands of years. In 1922, the British archaeologist **Howard Carter** discovered Tut's tomb in the Valley of the Kings after years of searching. The tomb contained a large collection of gold objects, ornaments and other treasures. Carter carefully examined the burial chamber and found the mummy of the young king inside a nested set of coffins.

The discovery created worldwide excitement. Tut's mummy, however, had been damaged during Carter's attempts to remove it from the coffin because the hardened resins used during the burial had firmly fixed it to the bottom. Carter and his team had to use considerable force to separate the mummy from the coffin.

Even after the discovery, questions about Tut's life and death remained unanswered. Modern scientists began using advanced technology to examine the mummy without causing further damage. In January 2005, Tut's mummy was taken for a **CT scan**. The scan produced hundreds of detailed images of his body and allowed experts to study his physical condition more closely.

The investigation revealed several details about Tut's body. Scientists studied his bones and other physical features to understand his health and possible cause of death. The examination showed that he had been a young and physically delicate person. However, the exact circumstances of his death continued to attract debate and investigation.

The chapter also describes how modern technology has changed the study of ancient history. Instead of relying only on physical examination, scientists can now use CT scans and

other non-invasive methods to examine mummies. This allows them to gather valuable information while preserving the ancient remains.

Thus, "Discovering Tut: The Saga Continues" combines **history, archaeology and modern science**. The story of Tutankhamun continues to fascinate people because his short life, mysterious death and magnificent tomb provide an important link between the ancient Egyptian world and modern scientific investigation.

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4. The Ailing Planet: the Green Movement's Role

"The Ailing Planet: the Green Movement's Role" is an article by Nani Palkhivala that highlights the serious environmental problems facing the Earth. It explains the growth of the Green Movement and stresses that human beings must change their attitude towards nature and learn to live responsibly with other forms of life.

The Green Movement began in 1972 with the publication of **The Limits to Growth**, a report by a group of scientists known as the Club of Rome. It created worldwide awareness about the dangers of uncontrolled development and the destruction of natural resources. The movement gradually brought environmental concerns into public and political discussions.

The author says that the Earth is like an ailing planet because its natural systems are under great pressure. Human beings have exploited forests, water, land and other resources without considering the long-term consequences. The planet has limited resources, but human wants and consumption continue to increase.

The article presents the idea of **sustainable development**, which means development that meets the needs of the present without destroying the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The author stresses that the Earth does not belong only to the present generation. We have a responsibility towards future generations as well.

The author also discusses the importance of population control. A rapidly increasing population puts enormous pressure on land, water, food and other natural resources. Poverty and environmental destruction are closely connected because poor people often depend directly on natural resources for survival.

The article refers to the concept of **Era of Responsibility**. According to this idea, human beings must recognise that they are only one part of the Earth's larger ecological system. The world should move away from an attitude of domination and exploitation towards responsibility, cooperation and respect for nature.

Palkhivala also discusses the importance of forests. Forests are essential for maintaining ecological balance, protecting soil, regulating climate and supporting wildlife. Their destruction therefore threatens the entire environmental system. The article points out that environmental protection cannot be achieved merely through laws; people must also develop awareness and a sense of responsibility.

The author concludes that the future of the planet depends on human choices. We must control population growth, use resources carefully, protect forests and adopt sustainable ways of development. The Earth is our common home, and saving it requires collective responsibility. The article therefore gives a strong message that **human progress should not come at the cost of the health and survival of the planet**.

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5. The Adventure

"The Adventure" is a fascinating story by Jayant Narlikar that combines **history, science and imagination**. It presents the idea of an alternative reality in which a different historical event changes the course of Indian history. The story also explores the relationship between reality, memory and scientific theories.

The main character, **Professor Gaitonde**, is a historian who is deeply interested in the **Battle of Panipat**. While travelling to Bombay, he meets with a strange accident and loses consciousness. When he recovers, he finds himself in a world that looks familiar but is different from the one he knows. The transition between the two worlds is sudden and mysterious. At first, Gaitonde notices only small differences, but he soon realises that the history of this world is completely different.

The first major turning point comes when Gaitonde discovers that the **Marathas had won the Battle of Panipat in 1761**, instead of losing it. This single change had completely altered the subsequent history of India. The Marathas remained powerful, and the political development of the country took a very different course.

Gaitonde goes to the **Asiatic Society Library** to investigate the strange situation. He studies historical records and finds a book, **Bhausahebanchi Bakhar**, which describes the Battle of Panipat differently from the history he knows. He learns that **Vishwasrao survived the battle** in this alternative reality. His survival gave the Marathas new confidence, and they eventually defeated Abdali's forces. Gaitonde realises that this small difference at a crucial moment has resulted in a completely different history.

Gaitonde then attends a public meeting at **Azad Maidan**. He expects to see a presidential chair on the platform, as was customary in his world. However, there is no chair because this society has abandoned the tradition of having a presiding chairman. Gaitonde insists on occupying the empty chair, but the audience becomes angry and throws him out. This strange incident becomes another important part of his adventure.

The return to his original world is equally sudden. After the incident at the meeting, Gaitonde experiences another mysterious transition and finds himself back in the familiar world. He meets his friend **Rajendra Deshpande**, a scientist, and tells him about everything that happened.

Rajendra tries to explain Gaitonde's experience through scientific ideas. He suggests that Gaitonde may have experienced another possible reality. He explains that the **Battle of Panipat was the crucial point of divergence**. In Gaitonde's familiar world, the Marathas lost because Vishwasrao was killed. In the alternative world, Vishwasrao survived, leading to a Maratha victory and a completely different course of Indian history.

The story ends without giving a definite scientific explanation for Gaitonde's experience. It leaves the reader to think about the possibility of **parallel realities and alternative outcomes**. Through Gaitonde's strange adventure, the author shows how one small change

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at a crucial moment can produce a completely different world and connects the subjects of **history, science and imagination**.

6. Silk Road

"Silk Road" is a travel account by **Nick Middleton** describing his journey through the high-altitude regions of Tibet towards **Mount Kailash**. The chapter presents the difficulties of travelling in the harsh Tibetan landscape and also gives a glimpse of Tibetan people, culture and their strong religious faith.

The author begins his journey from **Ravu** with **Tsetan**, a skilled Tibetan driver, and **Daniel**. His destination is **Darchen**, from where he plans to undertake the **kora**, or pilgrimage around Mount Kailash. They travel through the barren but beautiful Tibetan landscape, crossing high mountains and the vast **Changthang plateau**.

During the journey, they see **gazelles, wild asses and nomadic herdsmen**. The road becomes increasingly difficult as they climb to great heights. They have to cross a snow-covered mountain pass, where Tsetan drives carefully through the dangerous conditions. At one point, snow blocks their way, and Tsetan gets out to clear the road. His experience and calmness help them continue their journey safely.

The travellers eventually reach **Hor**, near the sacred **Lake Manasarovar**. The author is impressed by the religious significance of the place, although the surroundings are harsh and unwelcoming. They then continue towards Darchen.

When the author reaches **Darchen**, he is disappointed by the place and is also suffering from the effects of high altitude. He has difficulty breathing and feels too weak to undertake the kora. Tsetan takes him to a **Tibetan medical clinic**, where a doctor examines him and gives him medicine. After taking rest and receiving treatment, the author gradually recovers.

Tsetan later returns to Ravu, leaving the author in Darchen. The author worries because he has no companion for the difficult pilgrimage. His situation improves when he meets **Norbu**, a Tibetan scholar working in Beijing. Norbu is also planning to undertake the kora around Mount Kailash. Although neither of them is physically well prepared, they decide to make the journey together.

The chapter ends with the author ready to begin the pilgrimage. His journey through Tibet has exposed him to **extreme altitude, difficult roads, severe weather and physical hardship**, but it has also given him an opportunity to experience the region's landscape, people and religious traditions.

The chapter highlights **adventure, perseverance, human companionship and respect for nature and culture**. The author's journey shows that travelling through difficult conditions requires courage, patience and adaptability. It also presents the **Silk Road region as a meeting point of geography, culture, history and spirituality**.

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Hornbill – Poetry

1. A Photograph

– Shirley Toulson

"A Photograph" is a reflective poem by **Shirley Toulson** about the poet's mother, the passage of time, and the pain of losing a loved one. Looking at an old photograph makes the poet remember her mother's childhood and brings back feelings of love, nostalgia and loss.

The photograph shows the poet's mother as a **young girl of about twelve**, standing at the beach with her two cousins, **Betty and Dolly**. The three girls are holding hands and smiling at the camera. The poet's mother is in the middle, while her cousins stand on either side of her. The photograph was taken by the girls' uncle.

The poet notices the contrast between the happy scene in the photograph and the changes brought by time. The sea and the beach remain almost unchanged, but the girls have grown up and their lives have changed. The photograph therefore reminds the poet of the **transience of human life** and the permanence of nature.

Years later, the poet's mother would look at the photograph and laugh at the way she and her cousins were dressed for the beach. For the poet, however, the photograph has a deeper emotional meaning because it brings back memories of her mother's life.

The poet's mother has now been dead for some time. The poet remembers her mother's laughter but is also reminded of her absence. The photograph, which once represented a happy moment in her mother's childhood, now becomes a reminder of **loss and death**.

The poem ends with the poet unable to express her grief fully. The silence surrounding her mother's death is so deep that there are no words to describe it. The final silence suggests the **permanent nature of death** and the emotional pain caused by the loss of a loved one.

Thus, the poem presents the themes of **memory, loss, the passage of time, mortality and the contrast between the permanence of nature and the transience of human life**. Through a simple photograph, the poet expresses the universal experience of remembering someone who is no longer alive.

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2. The Laburnum Top

"The Laburnum Top" is a nature poem by **Ted Hughes** that describes the sudden transformation of a quiet laburnum tree when a goldfinch arrives to feed her young ones. The poem presents the contrast between **silence and movement, stillness and activity**, while showing the loving relationship between the mother bird and her chicks.

The poem begins on a **September afternoon**. The laburnum tree is silent and still. Its leaves are yellowing, and a few yellow flowers remain on the tree. The poet creates a peaceful and quiet atmosphere by describing the tree as completely motionless.

Suddenly, a **goldfinch** arrives. She enters the thick branches of the tree where her young ones are waiting. Her arrival changes the entire atmosphere. The chicks become excited and start making sounds. The tree, which was silent a moment ago, becomes full of movement and activity.

The poet compares the goldfinch to a **machine** because of the quick and energetic way she moves into the tree. Her arrival is like a sudden burst of energy. She feeds her young ones and cares for them before preparing to leave.

After feeding the chicks, the goldfinch flies away into the open sky. Once she leaves, the tree becomes quiet and still again. The poem therefore moves in a clear cycle: **silence → sudden activity → silence**.

The poem highlights the beauty of nature and the special bond between a mother bird and her young ones. It also shows how a small creature can completely transform a quiet natural setting. Through the contrast between stillness and movement, Hughes presents nature as both **peaceful and full of sudden energy**.

The poem also suggests that life in nature continues through simple acts of care and survival. The goldfinch represents **energy, motherhood and life**, while the silent tree provides a safe home for her family.

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3. The Voice of the Rain

"The Voice of the Rain" is a nature poem by **Walt Whitman** in which the poet presents a conversation between himself and the rain. Through the rain's description of its journey, the poem highlights the **water cycle, the relationship between nature and the earth, and the life-giving power of rain**.

One day, the poet asks the rain, **"Who art thou?"** The rain replies that it is the **"Poem of Earth."** It explains that it rises invisibly from the land and sea in the form of water vapour, reaches the sky, and takes shape as clouds.

The rain then describes its continuous journey. It rises from the earth, forms clouds, and returns to the earth as rain. When it falls, it washes away dust and impurities and provides the moisture necessary for plants and other forms of life. Thus, rain completes a natural cycle and continually renews the earth.

The rain also says that it gives life to the earth and helps seeds that are hidden in the soil to grow. Without rain, these seeds would remain dormant. The rain therefore performs an essential and **life-giving function** in nature.

The poet compares the rain to a **song or poem**. Just as a poem originates in the mind of the poet, goes out into the world and returns with its own fulfilment, rain rises from the earth, travels through the sky and returns to its place of origin after fulfilling its purpose.

The poem presents nature as a continuous and harmonious process. Rain is not simply water falling from the sky; it is part of a cycle that **purifies, nourishes and renews the earth**. The comparison between rain and poetry also suggests that both have the power to give beauty, meaning and life.

Thus, the poem celebrates the **beauty and importance of nature** and shows the continuous cycle of rain. Through the personification of rain and the comparison between rain and poetry, Whitman presents rain as the **life-giving and renewing voice of the Earth**.

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4. Childhood

"Childhood" is a reflective poem by **Markus Natten** in which the poet tries to discover when and how he lost his childhood. He examines the changes in his thinking as he grows older and realises that childhood ends when innocence, unquestioning faith and simple ways of looking at the world disappear.

The poet first wonders whether childhood ended when he stopped being **eleven years old** and became twelve. He then considers whether it happened when he understood that **Hell and Heaven do not exist in the geographical locations** he had imagined. This realisation makes him question the beliefs he had accepted as a child.

The poet next asks whether childhood disappeared when he discovered that adults are not always what they appear to be. He noticed that grown-ups often **talked about love but did not always act lovingly**. This made him understand the difference between what people say and what they actually do.

The poet then considers another important change: the development of his own ability to **think independently**. He realises that he has a mind of his own and can form his own opinions instead of simply accepting what others tell him. This marks an important stage in his movement from childhood towards adulthood.

Finally, the poet accepts that his childhood has disappeared. He cannot identify one exact moment when it ended, but he feels that it has gone to **"some forgotten place"**. He finds traces of childhood in the innocent face of a small child, suggesting that childhood continues to exist in younger children even though it has disappeared from him.

The poem therefore presents childhood as a state of **innocence, unquestioning belief and simplicity**. Growing up brings rational thinking, self-awareness and the ability to recognise contradictions in the adult world. The poem explores the **loss of innocence, maturity, independent thinking and the transition from childhood to adulthood**.

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5. Father to Son

"Father to Son" is a poem by **Elizabeth Jennings** about the emotional distance between a father and his son. Although they have lived together for years, the father feels that he does not understand his son anymore. The poem explores **generation gap, lack of communication, parental love, conflict and the desire for reconciliation**.

The father begins by expressing his pain that he has **failed to understand his own son**. The son has grown into a person whose thoughts, interests and behaviour seem completely unfamiliar to him. The father feels as though the son has become a stranger despite being his own child.

The father wishes that he could rebuild their relationship and understand what has gone wrong. He accepts that the son has his own identity and interests, but he feels helpless because he cannot communicate with him effectively. Their emotional distance has created tension and sadness in the family.

The father compares their relationship to a situation in which they are **living under the same roof but belonging to different worlds**. He remembers the son's childhood and wonders how the close relationship they once shared disappeared as the son grew older.

Despite the conflict, the father does not hate his son. His words reveal **deep love, concern and a strong desire to forgive and accept him**. He wishes that they could start their relationship afresh and rebuild the bond that has been lost.

The poem also shows that the son may have his own feelings and desires, but the father is unable to understand them. Both father and son appear trapped in their silence. The father's greatest wish is that they should forgive each other and find a way to reconnect.

Towards the end, the father expresses a hope for reconciliation. He wants to reach out to his son even though he does not know how the son will respond. The poem therefore ends with a sense of **hope mixed with uncertainty**.

"Father to Son" presents the universal problem of the **generation gap**. It shows that physical closeness does not always guarantee emotional closeness. The poem suggests that **love, understanding, communication, acceptance and forgiveness** are necessary to heal relationships between parents and children.

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Snapshots – Supplementary Reader

1. The Summer of the Beautiful White Horse

"The Summer of the Beautiful White Horse" is a humorous and heart-warming story by **William Saroyan** about two Armenian-American boys, **Aram and Mourad**, who belong to the poor but proud **Garoghlanian family**. The story revolves around a beautiful white horse that the boys have taken without the owner's permission. Through their adventure, the story highlights childhood innocence, honesty, family pride, friendship and love for animals.

The story begins early one summer morning when **Aram**, a nine-year-old boy, is awakened by someone tapping on the window of his room. When he looks out, he is astonished to see his cousin **Mourad** sitting on a beautiful white horse. Aram cannot believe what he sees because his family is extremely poor and could never afford to buy such a horse. At the same time, riding a horse has always been one of his greatest dreams. Therefore, he is both amazed and excited when Mourad invites him to ride.

Aram immediately realises that Mourad could not have bought the horse. The **Garoghlanian family** has been poor for many years, but it is famous in the community for its honesty. Their family pride is based on the belief that no member of the family would ever steal anything. Aram therefore wonders how Mourad could have obtained such a beautiful horse. Although he knows that the horse must have been taken from someone, he cannot bring himself to call Mourad a thief. He convinces himself that perhaps Mourad has only borrowed the horse.

Mourad is a strange, lively and somewhat eccentric boy. He has a special love for animals and seems to understand them naturally. The family considers him somewhat crazy because of his unusual behaviour and free spirit. Mourad tells Aram that he has been riding the horse for some time and has hidden it in a **barn in a deserted vineyard**. He invites Aram to ride with him, and Aram eagerly accepts.

Aram has never ridden a horse before and finds it difficult to control the animal. He falls off several times, while Mourad laughs at him and teaches him how to ride. Despite his lack of experience, Aram is extremely happy. For several weeks, the two boys secretly ride the horse early in the morning before other people are awake. They do not intend to sell the horse or make money from it. They simply want to enjoy riding it and spending time with the animal. Their actions are therefore driven mainly by childhood excitement, adventure and their love for horses.

The real owner of the horse is **John Byro**, an Assyrian farmer who lives nearby. One morning, while Aram and Mourad are riding, they meet John Byro. He carefully examines the horse and tells them that it looks exactly like his missing horse. He explains that his horse has been missing for about a month and that he has been searching for it.

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Aram becomes nervous because he knows that John Byro has recognised the horse. However, John Byro does not accuse the boys of stealing. He says that he knows the reputation of the **Garoghlanian family** and cannot believe that members of such an honest family would steal his horse. His trust in their family makes the boys feel uncomfortable. Aram realises that John Byro's faith in their honesty makes their action even more serious.

John Byro eventually leaves without taking the horse. Aram and Mourad continue their adventure for some time, but the incident makes them think more seriously about what they have done. They know that they cannot keep the horse forever without damaging the honour of their family.

Mourad finally decides that the horse should be returned. The boys take it back to **John Byro's barn** early one morning and leave it there. When John Byro discovers his horse, he is surprised and delighted. He notices that the horse has become stronger and healthier. He also remarks that its behaviour has improved and that it has acquired a better temper.

The boys never openly confess that they had taken the horse. Instead, they quietly return it, thereby restoring the horse to its owner and protecting the honour of their family. Their decision shows that, despite their adventurous behaviour, they still value the Garoghlanian family's reputation for honesty.

The story also reveals Mourad's special relationship with the horse. He has not merely ridden it; he has cared for it and trained it. The horse becomes calmer and more obedient during the time he spends with it. This shows that Mourad's relationship with animals is based on affection and understanding rather than ownership.

“The Summer of the Beautiful White Horse” presents childhood as a time of innocence, imagination, adventure and strong emotions. Aram and Mourad take someone else's horse, but they do not do so for money or personal gain. Their adventure comes from their love of horses and their desire to experience something beyond their ordinary lives. At the same time, the story shows that their actions cannot be completely separated from the idea of stealing, and their eventual decision to return the horse reflects their awareness of right and wrong. The story ultimately celebrates **honesty, family honour, friendship, childhood innocence, love for animals and the joy of adventure**.

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2. The Address

"The Address" by **Marga Minco** is a poignant story about the memories of war, loss, displacement and the painful relationship between people and material possessions. The story follows a young woman who returns after the war to recover her mother's belongings from the house where they had been kept by an acquaintance. Her experience ultimately makes her realise that the objects connected with the past cannot bring back the people or the life she has lost.

The narrator, who remains unnamed, returns to her old neighbourhood after the war. She goes to **46, Marconi Street**, the address of **Mrs Dorling**, a woman whom her mother had known before the war. The narrator remembers that during the war her mother had told her that Mrs Dorling had come to their house and taken away many of their valuable belongings for safekeeping. Her mother believed that the things would be safer with Mrs Dorling during the difficult times.

The narrator remembers Mrs Dorling clearly. She had visited their house several times and had gradually taken away household possessions, including furniture and other valuable items. The narrator's mother trusted her and believed that she was helping them protect their belongings. The narrator, however, had never felt comfortable with the arrangement.

When the narrator reaches Mrs Dorling's house after the war, she rings the bell. Mrs Dorling opens the door but immediately recognises her. Instead of welcoming her, she behaves coldly and pretends not to know her properly. She tells the narrator that she has come at an inconvenient time and refuses to let her enter the house.

The narrator is disappointed but does not give up. She returns to the address later. This time, **Mrs Dorling is not at home**, but her daughter opens the door. The daughter does not know who the narrator is and allows her to enter the house. As soon as the narrator steps inside, she begins to recognise familiar objects from her own home.

The sight of these belongings produces a painful mixture of memories and emotions. She recognises the furniture and other objects that once belonged to her family. However, the objects now look strange because they have been placed in an unfamiliar house and surrounded by unfamiliar things.

The narrator notices a table that she remembers from her mother's house. She also sees other familiar household possessions. These objects immediately bring back memories of her mother and the life they had before the war. The narrator remembers the ordinary comfort of her former home and the people who are no longer alive.

Mrs Dorling's daughter treats the objects as ordinary household possessions. She does not understand their emotional significance to the narrator. This makes the narrator feel even more uncomfortable. She realises that the things that once belonged to her family have become part of another family's everyday life.

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The narrator then remembers how her mother had spoken about Mrs Dorling. Her mother had trusted her enough to give her the family's possessions during the war. But after the war, the narrator discovers that Mrs Dorling has kept those belongings instead of returning them. The situation becomes a painful reminder of the destruction caused by the war and the betrayal of trust.

Although the narrator has the opportunity to reclaim the possessions, she gradually understands that they cannot restore what has been lost. The furniture, silverware and other objects remind her of her mother and her former home, but they cannot bring back the people or the life that existed before the war. Seeing her mother's belongings in an unfamiliar house makes the memories painful rather than comforting.

The narrator therefore decides that she does not want to take the belongings back. She leaves Mrs Dorling's house without claiming anything. Her decision is not simply because the objects are worthless, but because they have become inseparably connected with a past that she can no longer recover. She understands that keeping them would only keep her tied to painful memories.

At the end of the story, the narrator thinks about **46, Marconi Street**, but decides that she will forget the address. She has realised that the things from her old home no longer have the same meaning for her. By choosing to leave them behind, she tries to free herself from the painful past and move forward.

The story shows how **war destroys not only lives and homes but also a person's sense of belonging and connection with the past**. It also shows that material possessions cannot replace the people and relationships that have been lost. The narrator's final decision to forget the address represents her acceptance that the past cannot be recovered and her quiet attempt to come to terms with her loss.

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3. Mother's Day

"Mother's Day" is a humorous and thought-provoking play by **J.B. Priestley** about the unfair treatment of mothers within families. It presents the story of **Mrs Annie Pearson**, a gentle and hardworking woman whose husband and children take her for granted. With the help of her neighbour **Mrs Fitzgerald**, she learns to stand up for herself and makes her family realise the value of her work and affection.

The play opens in the home of the Pearson family. **Mrs Pearson** is a pleasant but timid woman who spends most of her time doing household work for her husband and two grown-up children, **Doris and Cyril**. She works continuously for the family, but none of them appreciates what she does. Instead, they expect her to serve them and behave as though she has no life or wishes of her own.

Mrs Pearson's neighbour, **Mrs Fitzgerald**, is very different from her. She is confident, bold and outspoken. She feels that Mrs Pearson is allowing her family to treat her badly. She advises her to become firm and make her husband and children realise that she is not their servant.

Mrs Fitzgerald tells Mrs Pearson that she should stop doing everything for the family without receiving any respect in return. Mrs Pearson, however, is afraid that if she becomes strict, her family may become unhappy or stop loving her. Mrs Fitzgerald then suggests a remarkable solution: because she has learned some Eastern magic, she can **exchange personalities with Mrs Pearson**. Mrs Pearson agrees, and the two women exchange personalities while remaining in each other's bodies.

Mrs Fitzgerald, now in Mrs Pearson's body, prepares to deal with the family. She tells the real Mrs Pearson, who is now in Mrs Fitzgerald's body, to remain outside and allow her to handle the situation.

Soon **Doris**, Mrs Pearson's daughter, comes home. She expects her mother to prepare her tea and help her as usual. However, Mrs Fitzgerald, behaving as Mrs Pearson, refuses to serve her. She speaks to Doris firmly and tells her that she is capable of looking after herself.

Doris is shocked by her mother's unusual behaviour. She has never seen her mother behave so confidently. She becomes even more uncomfortable when Mrs Pearson tells her that she has been wasting her time expecting her mother to do everything for her.

Mrs Fitzgerald also makes an important point about the family's treatment of Mrs Pearson. She explains that Mrs Pearson is not a servant and should not be expected to work constantly for everyone else. She tells Doris that if the family wants things done, they should learn to do some of them themselves.

When **Cyril**, the son, comes home, he too expects his mother to prepare tea and attend to his needs. He is surprised when she refuses. Instead of treating him gently as she normally does, she tells him directly that he has become accustomed to taking his mother for granted.

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Cyril and Doris are confused by the change in their mother. They cannot understand why she has suddenly become so assertive. Mrs Fitzgerald deliberately continues to challenge them because she wants them to recognise how selfishly they have been behaving.

She then turns her attention to **George Pearson**, Mrs Pearson's husband. George is a self-important man who considers himself the head of the family. He regularly goes to the club and spends his evenings there. He is also proud of his position and believes that his family should serve him without question.

When George comes home, he expects the usual treatment from his wife. Instead, Mrs Fitzgerald tells him that she knows about the way he spends his time at the club and makes fun of his importance. She tells him that the people at the club laugh at him and that he is not nearly as impressive as he thinks he is.

George is deeply embarrassed and angry. He cannot understand how his normally quiet wife could speak to him in such a direct manner. Mrs Fitzgerald continues to make him uncomfortable and tells him that he should start treating his wife with respect.

George, Doris and Cyril gradually realise that something has changed. They are disturbed by the new Mrs Pearson because she refuses to behave like the obedient woman they have always known.

Mrs Fitzgerald then tells them that Mrs Pearson is entitled to enjoy herself too. She suggests that Mrs Pearson should have an evening out instead of spending all her time working for the family. She also tells the family that they should not expect her to remain constantly available to them.

The family becomes increasingly frightened by the possibility that their mother may permanently change. They realise that they have depended upon her for almost everything and have never seriously considered her feelings.

Eventually, Mrs Fitzgerald decides that the lesson has gone far enough. She tells the real Mrs Pearson that it is time to **exchange personalities again**. The two women return to their original bodies.

Mrs Pearson is once again herself, but she has changed internally. She has gained confidence from Mrs Fitzgerald's actions and now understands that she must not allow her family to treat her like a servant.

Mrs Fitzgerald tells her to remain firm. She advises her not to return to her old habit of doing everything for everyone. Mrs Pearson should continue to expect respect from her husband and children while remaining loving towards them.

When the family sees Mrs Pearson again, they are relieved, but they are also cautious because they have experienced the shock of her changed behaviour. Mrs Pearson does not need to shout or behave aggressively. She simply makes it clear that things cannot continue as they were before.

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The family begins to understand that their mother has feelings, needs and a life of her own. They have taken her kindness and hard work for granted because she has always been willing to do everything for them.

The play ends on a hopeful and humorous note. Mrs Pearson has not rejected her family; instead, she has learned that **love does not mean allowing others to exploit one's kindness**. The family, too, has been given an important lesson about respect, responsibility and appreciation.

"Mother's Day" therefore exposes the common tendency to take a mother's unpaid household work for granted. Through humour, role reversal and exaggerated situations, Priestley shows that a family should not treat its mother as a servant. The play ultimately stresses the importance of **self-respect, equality, mutual understanding, appreciation and shared responsibility within a family**.

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4. Birth

"Birth" is a gripping story by **A. J. Cronin** about **Andrew Manson**, a young doctor who faces a difficult and exhausting situation while attending the delivery of a poor woman. The story highlights the dedication of a doctor, the importance of professional responsibility, and the joy of saving a life through determination and medical skill.

Andrew Manson is a young doctor who has recently started working in **Bryn**. One evening, after spending some time with **Christine**, the woman he loves, he returns home feeling tired and emotionally disturbed. Just as he is preparing to rest, he is called to attend **Joe Morgan's** wife, **Susan Morgan**, who has been in labour for nearly twenty hours.

Joe Morgan is extremely anxious because he and Susan have been married for almost twenty years and have desperately wanted a child. Andrew understands how important the birth is to them and immediately goes to their house.

When Andrew examines Susan, he realises that the situation is serious. She is exhausted after the long labour, and the baby is in danger. He remains calm and begins attending to her. After a difficult delivery, the baby is finally born, but Andrew is shocked to find that the newborn appears to be **lifeless**. The baby is pale, limp and not breathing.

At the same time, Susan's condition is also weak, and Andrew has to ensure that she receives proper attention. The midwife, **Mrs Morgan**, is worried about the baby, but Andrew refuses to give up. He remembers that a newborn who appears dead may sometimes be revived through immediate and persistent effort.

Andrew examines the baby carefully and discovers that there is still a possibility of saving it. He orders the midwife to prepare **two basins, one containing hot water and the other cold water**. He places the baby alternately in the hot and cold water and works patiently to stimulate its breathing.

For a long time, there is no response. Andrew becomes increasingly exhausted, but he continues his efforts. He rubs the baby's body, tries artificial respiration and repeatedly works to restore its breathing. His determination becomes a struggle between life and death.

Finally, after repeated efforts, Andrew notices a faint sign of life. The baby's chest begins to move, and gradually it starts breathing. The baby has been successfully revived.

The moment fills Andrew with tremendous joy. He is exhausted, but he feels a deep sense of professional satisfaction because he has saved a life that had appeared to be lost. Joe Morgan is overjoyed when he learns that his long-awaited child is alive.

Andrew then turns his attention to Susan, who is still weak. He makes sure that she is properly cared for before leaving. As he walks home, he feels completely transformed by the experience. His earlier worries and disappointment seem insignificant compared with the satisfaction of having brought a new life into the world.

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The story ends with Andrew feeling that he has finally understood the true meaning of being a doctor. His success does not come merely from medical knowledge but from **courage, patience, determination and a refusal to accept defeat** when a human life is at stake.

"Birth" presents medicine as more than a profession. It shows the **human responsibility of a doctor towards patients** and the importance of remaining calm and determined during a crisis. Andrew's efforts to revive the apparently dead baby demonstrate that hope and perseverance can sometimes overcome seemingly impossible circumstances. The story ultimately celebrates the **value of life, professional dedication, compassion and the triumph of determination over despair**.

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5. The Tale of Melon City

"The Tale of Melon City" by **Vikram Seth** is a humorous and satirical poem about a foolish king, his absurd system of justice and the passive people of his kingdom. Through a series of ridiculous events, the poem exposes the dangers of **blind obedience, meaningless justice, foolish leadership and an indifferent society**. The poem is written in a simple narrative style and ends with the surprising crowning of a melon as the king.

The poem begins with a king who is described as **just and placid**. One day, he orders his men to build an arch over the main road because he wants it to be a grand and impressive structure. The arch is constructed, but when the king rides through it on his way to inspect the city, the arch is found to be too low. It knocks the king's crown off his head.

The king becomes extremely angry because he considers the incident an insult to his royal dignity. He immediately orders that the person responsible for constructing the arch should be punished. The **chief of the builders** is brought before the king. However, the chief says that the workers were responsible for the mistake.

The king then orders that the **workers** should be punished. When the workers are questioned, they argue that the **masons** were responsible because the materials and construction had not been properly prepared. The masons are therefore brought before the king.

The masons, in turn, shift the blame to the **architect**. The architect is summoned and questioned. He argues that the original design had been changed during construction and therefore he should not be blamed for the arch being too low.

The king becomes increasingly confused. He wants someone to be punished, but every person accused of causing the problem gives an explanation that shifts the blame to somebody else.

Finally, the king calls for the **wisest man in the kingdom** to settle the matter. The wise men advise him that the arch itself should be punished because it has caused the king's crown to fall. This absurd suggestion shows how meaningless the king's idea of justice has become.

The king agrees to punish the arch. However, the situation becomes even more ridiculous when it is discovered that the king himself is the only person who is the right height to be hanged by the arch. The executioner therefore declares that the king must be hanged because the law requires someone to be punished.

The king is shocked by this conclusion, but he has created a system in which the law must be obeyed regardless of whether the result is reasonable. Since the king himself is the only person who fits the noose, he is hanged.

After the king's death, the ministers face a new problem: they must appoint a new ruler. They decide that the next person who enters the city gates should be made king. The first person to arrive happens to be an **idiot**.

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The ministers ask him who should be made king. The idiot answers **"a melon"**, apparently because he is asked what should be made the king and he simply chooses a melon. The ministers take his answer literally and crown a melon as the new king.

The people of the kingdom accept this strange arrangement without protest. They do not care who rules them as long as they are allowed to live peacefully. The poem ends by saying that the people remain happy because the melon does not interfere with their lives.

The ending is deliberately absurd and satirical. The **melon** becomes a symbol of a ruler who has no real power, intelligence or responsibility. At the same time, the passive acceptance of the people suggests that they are not interested in good governance as long as their personal lives remain undisturbed.

Through humour and exaggeration, Vikram Seth criticises **foolish rulers, blind obedience to laws, bureaucratic systems and passive citizens**. The king claims to be just, but his idea of justice is irrational and mechanical. Every person simply passes the blame to someone else, and the king himself eventually becomes the victim of the system he created.

The poem also shows the danger of following rules without using **common sense and independent judgment**. The king wants justice at any cost, but the process becomes so absurd that he is eventually executed by his own law. The people, meanwhile, accept even a melon as their ruler without questioning the situation.

Thus, "The Tale of Melon City" is not merely a funny story. It is a sharp **political satire** on incompetent leadership, absurd justice, unquestioning obedience and public indifference. Vikram Seth uses irony, humour and absurd situations to show that a society that blindly accepts foolish authority may end up being ruled by something as meaningless as a **melon**.

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