

GURU GOBIND SINGH PUBLIC SCHOOL, CHAS
WEEKLY ASSIGNMENT: WEEK 1
ENGLISH
CLASS XII

VISTAS: e CONTENT

1. Chapter 1: The Third level by Jack Finney

- a) **About the author: Jack Finney was an American author best known for his works of science fictions and thrillers. Most famous among them being “The Body Snatchers”, “Time and Again”, “From Time to Time” and “The Third Level”. His stories repeatedly explore the idea of time as something which is not unidirectional.**
- b) **Theme: The Third Level is a science fiction that deals with the insecurities faced by the middle class which are perpetuated by a modern urban lifestyle. Employment concerns, busy repetitive schedule, mundane lifestyle and constant fear of wars and destruction can be the cause of anxiety, depression or development of an escapist attitude. This story very subtly combines the fantasy of the protagonist to go back or escape to a laid back, relaxed rural lifestyle with elements of reality to create a very interesting and engaging science fiction.**
- c) **Characters in the story: i) Charley- The chief protagonist who claims to have found the third level and desperately wants to go back to his childhood native town of Galesburg, Illinois and that too in the past in 1894. ii) Louisa- She is the wife of narrator Charley. At first she is disturbed and worried about her husband and his mental health due to his fascination to find the third level but later on joins her husband in his search. iii) Sam Weiner- Psychiatrist friend of the narrator who at first refutes the claims of narrator about finding the third level and terms his fascination as a way to escape his current unhappy mundane lifestyle. Later on, he is the one who finds the third level and goes back in time to settle in Galesburg, Illinois in the year 1894 where he engages himself in hay, feed and grain business because he cannot continue with his current profession there as in 1894 everyone seemed to be happy and no one suffered from anxiety or depression.**
- d) **Chapter Summary: The chapter starts with the narrator claiming that there is a third level in the New York Grand Central Railway Station that nobody knows about, even the Presidents of the railroads don't know about it. He is himself surprised as he has also visited the station many times but never encountered the third level. So he took the next logical step and talked with his Psychiatrist friend Sam. Sam diagnosed his anomaly as “a walking dream wish fulfillment”. He said that Charley was unhappy with the modern world which was full of insecurity, fear, war and worry and was looking for a way to escape all this and so the third level became his way to escape from all this and it was purely his imagination and no such level such exists. To his defense, Charley thought that everyone he knew wanted to escape from all this but they never found the third level. This particular remark highlights how the modern lifestyle takes its toll on individuals and how no one is very happy or content with their lives. Everyone suggested him to stick to his hobby of stamp collecting to keep his mind off from these things which was also a temporary refuge.**

The narrator, Charley then explains the readers about the events of that particular evening when he found the third level. He was late to return from his work and decided to take the

subway instead of travelling by road as it was much faster. He also describes the Grand Central as an enormous ever growing tree with its branches and roots extending to very far off places. He makes this comparison because the Grand Central has countless numbers of entries, exits, tunnels, corridors and stairways opening up in different far off places. But he thought that there were primarily two levels, the first level had prominent intercity or interstate trains going out to various parts of America and the second level mainly handled the local suburban traffic. He got down to the second level but while looking for the platform got lost and the corridor he was moving in angled left and slanted downwards. As he kept on moving at the end of it, he reached a platform which he thought was the second level but to his surprise everything was different. Everyone was wearing old fashioned 1890s dresses, the hairstyle and moustache's styles were also different. There were other things also that made him certain that he has travelled back in time such as the open flame gaslights, brass spittoons, man having a pocket watch, the ticket counters and finally the train with a steam engine. To be absolutely sure he walked over to the newsboy and found an edition of the newspaper "The World" carrying front page news about ex President Cleveland which was published on June 11, 1894.

It was a perfect opportunity for him to escape and he went straight to the ticket counters asking for two tickets to Galesburg, Illinois but the clerk thought he was being tricked as the narrator produced current currency which was not used at that time. He left the place and has been looking for it since then but couldn't find it. He even exchanged \$300 with old currency. He looked but his wife was worried and eventually after lots of searching he stopped. Another unexpected thing happened, his friend Sam disappeared and no one could find him. One day however he gets a clue, going through his stamp collection he found a first day cover which was earlier not there. He opened the envelope to find a letter from his friend Sam claiming that he was in Galesburg, Illinois in the year 1894 and he reached there after finding the third level. He also says that life there is much peaceful, relaxed and happy. Everyone is content and urges the narrator to keep looking for the third level. Now that they had proof that the third level exists both Charley and Louisa are looking for the third level.

- **First Day Cover-** When a new stamp is issued, stamp collectors buy the stamps and post it to themselves by pasting on an empty envelope so that the date gets stamped on it as a proof that the stamp was bought and mailed on the very first date when it was issued.
 - **After Sam found the third level and reached Galesburg he wanted to convey the same to Charley and knew that he collects stamps and also that his collection was given to him by his grandfather who lived in 1890s. So he sent a first day cover to the address of Charley's grandfather so that Charley could have the letter.**
 - **Here the third level acts as a confluence or junction between time and space. By using the third level one could not only travel to different places but also to a different time (here 1894). Even though Sam calls Charley escapist, he himself also wanted to escape.**
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ASSIGNMENT

A) Read the e-content given above and answer the following questions:

- 1) Do you think that the third level was a medium of escape for Charley? Why?
- 2) What do you infer from Sam's letter to Charley?
- 3) Do you see an intersection of time and space in this story? Explain.
- 4) Explain how Sam's letter ended up in the stamp collection of the narrator.
- 5) What are the troubles associated with the modern urban lifestyle? How Charley tries to overcome them? How in general people try to cope up with them?

B) Read the passage given below and answer the questions that follow:

I'm not alone. Insomnia affects several millions of people. The good news is that with proper diagnosis and discipline, insomnia is almost always treatable. There are some 90 different classified sleep disorders. Insomnia is the most prevalent, although technically it is considered not a condition but a symptom. It is a red flag for any number of things. Sleeping pills may seem like the fast and easy remedy. However, they are most effective for short-term use, and even then, should be administered only under a physician's guidance. The side effects of sleeping pills include dependence, rebound insomnia and the need for higher dosage.

Determined to help myself to a solid night's sleep without resorting to sleeping pills, I began by reducing my considerable coffee intake. Common sense also told me that nicotine and alcohol- one a stimulant, the other a sedative – were probably not conducive to a calm, centered self, so I gradually eliminated these substances as well to my benefit. I tracked in a notepad the worries and creative inspirations that present themselves larger-than-life in the middle of the night. And I started a sleep journal. Although my overall sleep was improving, I still experienced difficult periods. So, I read more books and talked to therapists and sleep specialists. Although caffeine was an obvious no-no, I hadn't considered sugar as a culprit. Dr. Albert explains in her book both the weird feeling of a sugar high and the panic reactions of a low may either prevent sleep or wake you up. Albert also points to excess salt, which he says stimulates the nervous system, and to spicy foods, which can disturb digestion. Foods and nutrients that Albert cites as promoting sleep calcium, seaweed and dairy products; so go ahead and have that glass of warm milk. In addition to calcium, it contains Luyptophan, an amino acid that may encourage drowsiness. Magnesium, which should be taken with calcium for proper absorption and B vitamins are also listed as helpful.

Many of the books I read talked about 'sleep hygiene,' a rather clinical sounding term for basic bedtime common sense. Here are some do's and don'ts do you aerobic exercise just before jumping into bed. Avoid napping during the day. Don't eat a big meal late in the evening. Make sure you have a comfortable mattress, keep the temperature on the cool side and reserve your bedroom for sleep only. I also discovered that simply worrying about whether you're going to sleep can lead to self-perpetuating chronic insomnia.

Questions

- (a) On the basis of your reading of the above passage, make notes on it using headings and sub-headings. Use recognizable abbreviations wherever necessary (minimum 4). Also suggest a suitable title.
- (b) Write a summary of the above passage in about 80 words.

- C) You are Sangeeta/Shishir, the Editor of your school magazine. Draft a notice for your school bulletin board inviting articles, sketches etc from the students for your school magazine. You belong to KN International School, Gangtok.
- D) You are Shailesh , S/o Sh AK Mathur of Circular Road, Jammu. Your father wants you to draft a formal invitation to be sent on the occasion of your sister Suvarsha's marriage. Prepare the invitation.
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