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(भारतीय संसद में पारित अधिनियम द्वारा स्थापित केन्द्रीय विश्वविद्यालय)
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BA English literature Semester II Prose

In preparing this study materials, I have used number of online and offline resources. Most of these resources are free and open to public domain and some of the parts have been rewritten to suit the needs of the course objective and syllabus. However, students should consider this document only as a supplementary study material and not as an actual text.

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1. Unit 4

1.1 Charles Lamb's Dream Children

The essay is one of the 'Essays of Elia'. The essay expresses the feelings of loss and regret faced by the narrator. It is based on the description of a place, the relationships and the feelings that have been part of the narrator's past.

Just like all children do, Lamb's children also wanted to hear their parents' childhood stories. One day, he was telling them about 'their great-grandmother Field, who lived in a great house in Norfolk'. The house she lived was 'a hundred times bigger' than the house they lived in presently. The children had also heard ('from the ballad of the Children in the Wood ') about the tragic incidents that had supposedly taken place at that house. The tragic story of the children and their cruel uncle had been carved out in wood upon a chimney piece. However, a rich man replaced the wooden one with a marble one and the story was lost. Lamb mentions that Alice displayed her displeasure when she heard that.

Lamb tells the children that Grandmother Field had been given the charge of the house since the owner liked to live in a more fashionable mansion. He tells that she was religious and very good lady, and was respected by everyone. She took care of the house very carefully. After her, the old ornaments of the house were stripped and set up in the owner's house. When Lamb mentioned that the old ornaments could not fit decently in new mansion, John smiled to express his agreement that it was a foolish act.

She was such 'a good and religious woman' that huge number of people attended her funeral. That 'she knew all Psalter by heart' and also 'a great part of the Testament' also suggest that she was a good and religious woman.

She also used to be considered the best dancer till a disease called cancer forced her to stoop. However, her spirits still remained upright. Lamb mentions that she slept 'in a lone chamber of the great lone house' on her own despite that the ghosts of two infants glided up and down the stairs near which she slept. During those days, Lamb himself would sleep with the maid being afraid. He mentions that he was far less religious but he never noticed the ghosts. John was trying to look courageous at this moment.

Lamb also mentions that she was very good to her grand children. When he would visit 'the great house' in the holidays, he liked gazing upon 'busts of Twelve

Cæsars'. Lamb also mentions various things that used to attract him while being at the mansion. He enjoyed spending time among various things there, even more than 'sweet flavors of peaches, nectarines, oranges, and such like common baits of children'. Both children showed the influence of his description by ignoring the bunch of grapes they had otherwise wanted to have.

Lamb tells that the children's uncle John L—— was liked particularly by grandmother Field from amongst all her grandchildren. He was more handsome and spirited than the rest. He was so spirited that when the rest would spend time at the mansion, he would ride a horse for long distance and would even join hunters. Lamb mentions how he had missed their uncle when he died, although he did not show it that much. He missed the uncle's kindness as well as crossness. Lamb also mentions the uncle's lameness repeatedly which shows that he had been very concerned for him. The children felt uncomfortable with the description of the uncle and urged Lamb to tell about 'their pretty, dead mother'.

Then, Lamb told that he courted their mother 'the fair Alice W——n' for seven years. He also tried to clarify to the children how he faced problems due to her 'coyness' and 'denial'. At this point, he noticed the strong similarity between the appearance of his wife and that of Alice. He feels as if his wife was communicating with him through Alice. Finally, he woke up and found himself in his armchair where he had fallen asleep. He states that James Elia was no more there and everything that has been mentioned in the essay so far was being described by Elia.

The response of children makes the essay dramatic and explains the effect of the essay on their mind. On the one hand their actions make their characteristic features clear. For instance, Alice seemed to feel discomfort when the grandmother's ability to learn things by heart was mentioned. This shows that she was a typical child who won't like the mention of qualities of others that she found lacking in herself. When Lamb told them that he preferred to see things at mansion rather than eating fruits, John put the grapes back. This shows his innocence as well as his ability to control his senses.

These actions on the part of children also show that the children were feeling constantly influenced by their father's description.

The essay does not end before an unexpected turn is given to the events. The way it is mentioned that all the description through the essay was based merely on a dream adds to a suspense element to the essay and also makes it open ended. The ending makes the essay even more psychological than the mention of the narrator's feelings and the response of the children had made it.

The surprise ending also points towards the inability of Lamb to get his love responded positively by Alice. The children that have been so close to him in his dream represent the 'dream' or aspirations that he had had while trying to woo his beloved.

The relationships of the narrator with the grandmother and his brother have

been described very clearly. This description has served to clarify his characteristic features; develop the theme of family relationships as well as the theme of loss; and, to make the essay dramatic.

Source: <http://ugcenglish.com/english-literature/english-literature-dream-children-summary-notes/1034/>

1.2 Valentine's Day

As the title suggests, this essay is a rumination on Valentine's Day. Lamb, through his persona Elia, opens by differentiating between the St. Valentine for whom Valentine's Day is named and other, more forbidding church fathers. Lamb says there is no one who can compare to St. Valentine. He is the only one who "comes attended with ... ten thousands of little loves." What other church father, asks Elia, is accompanied by anything as charming as cupids and their flying arrows?

Then Elia anticipates the many, many Valentines the postman will deliver and wonders why the heart has become the symbol of love and the symbol of this day. Why not the liver, he asks whimsically, or the midriff?

In the next paragraph, he notes that people are always interested in a knock at the door, though sometimes what the knock brings is not welcome. But a Valentine, Elia says, is always welcome.

Finally, Elia moves into the story of his friend "E.B." who was, according to literary critic George Wauchope, Edward Francis Burney, a painter and illustrator. E.B. watches a beautiful young woman from his window, unseen by her, and decides to send her a Valentine. He makes her an extraordinary one, filled with illustrations of famous lovers. EB watches as she receives it. She claps her hands and dances about in joy. She wasn't overjoyed because the Valentine was from her lover, as she had no lover (at least none who could draw this way), but because of the lovely images. As Elia writes:

It was more like some fairy present; a God-send, as our familiarly pious ancestors termed a benefit received, where the benefactor was unknown. It would do her no harm. It would do her good for ever after. It is good to love the unknown. I only give this as a specimen of E. B. and his modest way of doing a concealed kindness. While Lamb opens the essay with language that is archaic (old-fashioned, even for the 1820s) and allusive (making references to myths, religion and works of literature), by the next-to-last paragraph, quoted above, he is writing in sweet and simple terms to offer a heartfelt message. His purpose is, first, to offer a lighthearted celebration of Valentine's Day as a whimsical but delightful holiday, delightful because it spreads love. Then he becomes more serious (writing, of course, as Elia), and his moral is that doing a kind act to bring joy to a person who would not expect it is no small thing. It can be a "godsend," and an act of grace to send a beautiful Valentine to an unsuspecting person. Elia thus encourages us all to value and perform what today

we might call random acts of kindness.

Source: <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-summary-essay-valentines-day-how-can-analyze-655587>

1.3 Charles Lamb's All fool's day

"All Fools Day" is an essay written in a light - hearted mood and in a humorous vein. In fact, the principal quality of this essay is its rich humour and gay abandon. Lamb here spontaneously enters the spirit of the first' of April, a day on which people try to befool one another and enjoy the fooling. After wishing many happy returns of this day to others, Lamb directs the shaft of his wit against himself by calling himself a fool, though in the same breath he wants others also to look upon themselves in the same light. The "Four quarters of the globe". Are on the side of the fraternity of fools, he humorously says.

Lamb gets into the spirit of all fools day on which all kinds of practical jokes are played by people on one another. Lamb gets into the spirit of all fool's day and wishes many happy returns of the day to every body, No body, he says, should keep away from the celebration of this festival. Every body, according to Lamb, has a touch of the fool in him "speck of the motley". He himself, says Lamb, belongs to the category of fools and would like his readers to regard themselves as having a touch. Of the fool in their composition. Here in the following lines one can see the humour.

What 1 man, we have four quarters of the globe on our side at the least computation. Fill us a cup of that sparkling gooseberry we-will drink no wise, melancholy, politic port on this day - and let us troll the catch of Amiens - due ad me - due ad me - how goes it? Here shall he see Gross fools as he Now would I give a trifle to know, historically and authentically, who was the greatest fool that ever lived. I would certainly give him a bumper Marry, of the present breed, 1 think I could without much difficulty name you the party.

The meaning of these lines is that the majority of the people in this world have something of the fool in their make-up. Lamb invites every dy to share the goose berry wine with him and to sing the song of folly that Amiens sings in Shakespeare's play. He would like to know who was the greatest fool that ever lived and would like to drink a toast to that man.

Source: <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/85856/7/07>

1.4 Oliver Goldsmith's National Prejudice

Oliver Goldsmith (10 November 1728 – 4 April 1774) was an Irish novelist, playwright and poet, who is best known for his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), his pastoral poem *The Deserted Village* (1770), and his plays *The Good-Natur'd Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771, first performed in 1773). He is thought to have written

the classic children's tale *The History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* (1765).

In his famous essay "On National Prejudice" he recounts an encounter with a group of elderly gentlemen discussing about nationalism.

One man described the different people of Europe in the negative way but praised the "English" for their "bravery, generosity, clemency" etc and they are the best of everyone in the world.

When asked for an opinion, Goldsmith decided not to talk on it as it is for sure he will contradict that statement. While the rest of the group agreed with the man, when directly asked, Goldsmith had to say his thoughts reluctantly.

He couldn't make such a broad statement about the characteristics of the other European nations and that even they also possess positive attributes that are not mentioned or taken into consideration by the man.

He questions why it is important for people to easily judge others and just talk of themselves as the best. Reiterating that in order for him to talk about the other nations, he had to still visit them. And that instead of being citizens of a particular country, why not be a citizen of the world? We should view ourselves as being part of the whole world and not just one nation, one country to be proud of. He concludes by stating that yes, it is okay to be proud of one's land and country. But that should not stop us from thinking outside of the box. Narrowing our minds won't make anything useful. Instead, try to be a citizen of the whole world without the need to hate others.

Source: <https://brainly.in/question/8623786>

2. Unit 5

2.1 AG Gardiner's Rule of the road

Alfred George Gardiner (2 June 1865 – 3 March 1946) was an English journalist, editor and author. His essays, written under the alias "Alpha of the Plough", are highly regarded.

From 1915 he contributed to *The Star* under the pseudonym Alpha of the Plough.[6] At the time *The Star* had several anonymous essayists whose pseudonyms were the names of stars. Invited to choose the name of a star as a pseudonym he chose the name of the brightest (alpha) star in the constellation "the Plough."

His essays are uniformly elegant, graceful and humorous. His uniqueness lay in his ability to teach the basic truths of life in an easy and amusing manner. The collections *Pillars of Society*, *Pebbles on the Shore*, *Many Furrows* and *Leaves in the Wind* are some of his best-known writings.

A.G. Gardiner defines the "rule of the road" in the following way: "It means that in order that the liberties of all may be preserved, the liberties of everybody must be curtailed." In other words, each person must have some limits on his or her freedom in order to enjoy the freedom that comes from social order.

This order relies on everyone understanding how their actions affect those of other people. Gardiner claims that people are becoming "liberty drunk" and only recalling their liberties, not the responsibilities and limits that this liberty relies on.

Today, people often drive with a goal of arriving at their destinations as quickly as possible with, at best, little consideration for those around them and, at worst, a reckless disregard for others. There are frequent incidents of "road rage" and general disregard for rules (for example, people often go around people on exit ramps onto highways, not seeming to care that such an action is very dangerous).

Many people's major goal seems to be to pursue their greatest degree of freedom in driving in the way they would like, but they seem to forget that their actions impose a lack of freedom on others.

If their actions cause an accident, the order we all rely on to drive will be broken, and no one will get anywhere. People must submit to rules and to some limits so that we can all access the freedom that can only come from a condition of social order.

The connection between this claim and the scenario on modern roads will depend a bit upon what country or region your roads are located in. There are very different

customs of driving in different countries. In the United States, a major connection is that we see on our roads the consequences of being "liberty drunk." Gardiner says that people who are liberty drunk do whatever they want without considering the needs of others and of the society as a whole.

On the roads, they cut in and out of traffic or they eat or shave or apply makeup or send text messages as they drive. These actions are convenient to them, but they put others in danger. Gardiner argues that society is weakened when people act in these ways. We can see this on our roads in the phenomenon of "road rage."

As people act in selfish ways, our social cohesion breaks down. We then think that it is acceptable to act very aggressively towards other drivers (perhaps as Gardiner would like to act towards the man who was talking loudly and incessantly as he was trying to read). In this way, the scenario on our roads today shows us that people who are "liberty drunk" break down our social cohesion with their actions.

Source: <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/essay-rule-road-g-gardiner>

2.2 A fellow traveller

In *A Fellow Traveller* by A.G. Gardiner we have the theme of uncertainty, freedom, control, generosity, appearance, equality and modesty. Taken from his *Leaves in the Wind* collection the reader realises from the beginning of the essay that Gardiner may be exploring the theme of uncertainty. Gardiner is unsure of when the mosquito came into the train carriage. He does not know if the mosquito arrived before him or after him. Though he does become aware of his presence and at first is irritated that the mosquito is flying around the carriage. What is also interesting is that Gardiner speaks of the freedom one feels when in a train carriage yet he does not at first afford the mosquito the same freedom. It is only after Gardiner realises that he cannot control the mosquito that modesty and generosity occurs. Shown by way of Gardiner refusing to kill the mosquito. This may be important as there is a sense that Gardiner has admitted defeat when it comes to killing the mosquito. It is only then that Gardiner shows the mosquito any magnanimity or generosity. What is also interesting about the story is the fact that prior to noticing the mosquito, Gardiner does not take advantage of the freedom he has and which he mentions is available to him. It is possible that Gardiner is suggesting that man himself gets too busy in life to take advantage of freedom or to reflect on the simple things in life. Like availing of the opportunity to explore the benefits of having a train carriage to oneself.

Rather Gardiner allows for himself to be disturbed sufficiently by the mosquito that he tries his very best to kill the mosquito. It is as though the mosquito has infringed on Gardiner's personal space and Gardiner does not like it nor will he permit it till he admits defeat. The fact that one of the articles in the newspaper that Gardiner is reading is called 'Peace Traps' may also have some symbolic significance as Gardiner has declared peace with the mosquito yet he knows that he has the

perfect opportunity to kill it. The other article in the paper 'The Modesty of Mr. Hughes' is also symbolic as Gardiner himself is being modest when he admits defeat with the mosquito. Rather than embarrassing himself Gardiner gives the mosquito a type of equality. The two passengers are equals and as such Gardiner will not kill the mosquito. Though some critics might suggest that Gardiner has in some way humanized the mosquito it may simply be a case that Gardiner is not only modest enough to admit defeat but that he is also displaying the ability to be compassionate towards another living creature.

It is also interesting that Gardiner after he admits defeat shifts from a position of viewing the mosquito as an adversary to a fellow companion or traveller. There is a complete one eighty in Gardiner's appraisal of the mosquito and no longer is the mosquito viewed as being something that is troublesome. This may be important as Gardiner could be suggesting that first appearances may not necessarily always be correct. Just as one may judge an individual based upon their appearance and be wrong so too has Gardiner misjudged the mosquito. If anything Gardiner could be using the mosquito as symbolism for another human passenger and how when in a confined space (the train carriage) an individual might strike up a conversation with one person but perhaps due to appearance refrain from doing so with another.

Not only has Gardiner admitted defeat when it comes to the mosquito's presence but he has also allowed for the carriage to remain under the control of the mosquito. If anything the mosquito, unlike Gardiner, is allowed to take advantage of their environment and act to their own will. In reality the mosquito is able to express the freedom that Gardiner himself chose not to when he thought he was alone in the carriage. Which may be one of the morals of the essay. An individual should, when the opportunity arises, take full advantage of the freedom that they see in front of themselves. Perhaps to act as the mosquito does and remain free from obstruction or societal views. The result of doing so will be that an individual will be able to express themselves to their own liking without being hindered by the constraints that society may impose on the individual. It may be better to live free while one can for the opportunity may not present itself with regular frequency. Such are the chains that man allows himself to be hindered by when it comes to what society may think. Source: <http://sittingbee.com/a-fellow-traveller-a-g-gardiner/>

2.3 On umbrella morals

In this essay, the author talks about his umbrella. He said "The truth is I couldn't put up my umbrella. The frame would not work for one thing, and even if it had worked, I would not have put the thing up, because it was falling to pieces and I would be the laughing stock." he said that his own silk umbrella was taken away by some rascal who has umbrella conscience.

In the second para he said that he will swap umbrellas, or forget to return a book,

or take a rise out of the railway company. In fact he is a thoroughly honest man who allows his honesty the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps he takes your umbrella at random from the barber's stand. Then he says he took the umbrella in mistake. I like what the author says here "Dear me! I've taken the wrong umbrella. Ah, well, its no use going back now. He'd be gone. And I've left him mine!"

Third para talked of a preacher, a famous literary critic who are dishonest, but I don't think they are dishonest it is quite possible anybody including you but me. haven't you ever forgot to return a library book? The author himself agreed in the end saying if you press me on the point, I shall have to own that it is hard to part with a book you have come to love.

The author ends the story agreeing that the man who takes his umbrella returns it with compliments. He learnt an lesson that he must write his name on umbrella. I fully agree with author, I write my name on my umbrella, books, and suitcase where I go on tour because if my suitcase is lost and you find you return it seeing my name I forgot to tell I always write my address so you can send it to my address.

Source: <https://brainly.in/question/771627>

2.4 J B Priestley's On doing Nothing

"On Doing Nothing" is an essay by J.B.Priestley debating over the idea of work and relaxation. He talks of the idea of unwinding oneself and the benefits we would enjoy from doing nothing. He, thus, stresses on the idea of doing nothing and spending time in leisurely activities which is as necessary and beneficial to human life as work. The life of man is fraught with work and all of us are involved in that rat race directly or indirectly. Such a life is necessary and can also make us prosperous. But it isn't the be all and the end all of all matters. There, thus exists a world outside work-the world of leisurely activities and past times. We are all to spend sometimes consciously in such matters. Nature is beautiful and it, not only soothes the mind, but also a teacher and a nourisher. Nature only regains our mental health and achieves a position where we can work better and more efficiently.

However, the irony is that not many people realize this value. They spend most of their lives at break-neck speed and pass away without even looking at nature. The author does not conform to such an idea of life. However, the author does not instruct us against work. Work is important and necessary and absolute, no work would only mean laziness couple with aimlessness. He only wants us to blend our work with the perfect mixture of rest and pastimes. These things done in moderation only helps us to perform better. Thus, we should make conscious efforts to enjoy nature and relax. It is only then, that, our lives become a complete circle. This is the reason why he enjoys his outing with his artist friend at Yorkshire Falls. Such communion with nature helps him to retain his sanity intact. On the other hand, he denounces the likes of Mr. Gordon Selfridge who curse the waste of time. Such

people work only for profit motives and in reality miss out a considerable portion of life. The tragedy, however, is that many of us don't even realize the value of past times. This makes the author suggest instances in our history, who would uphold the author's notion of life and its' value. Thus, William Wordsworth would only be happy to vouch for such a kind of life. Priestley goes on to say that a devil is usually busiest being and majority of the world's fuss is created by overwork and impatience. A break from the usual, monotonous and humdrum affairs of life only helps us to avoid such irritation. In short, the author tries to hold before us a way of life and its' intrinsic value. There is more to life than just working ceaselessly. Work and leisure, if blended properly not only helps us to go a long way, but also in a better and more fruitful way.

Source: <https://brainly.in/question/4463895>