

Bhavan's Sheth R A College of Arts and Commerce, Ahmedabad
Commercial Communication - Semester - V Petals of Life (2020-21)

University paper style: (2.30 hours, four questions, 70 marks)

Text: (1) <i>The Last Lesson</i> - Alphonse Daudet, (2) <i>Maintaining Democracy</i> - Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (3) <i>The Washwoman</i> - Isaac Bashevis Singer, (4) <i>A Snake in the Grass</i> - R. K. Narayan, (5) <i>My Struggle for an Education</i> - Booker T. Washington		
Topics.	Units and Questions	Marks
Text: <i>Petals of Life</i>	Unit I - Petals of Life	
	Q. 1 (a) Answer in brief: 3/5 questions (b) Write a short note: 1/3 short notes	09 08
Writing a Press Report	Unit II - Press Report Q. 2 Write a press report on: 1/3 (i) an accident, (ii) a natural calamity, (iii) a current event	17
Insurance Correspondence	Unit III - Insurance Correspondence Q. 3 Write a letter: 1/2 (i) Soliciting information about a life insurance policy, (ii) Inquiring about a medical insurance policy, (iii) Asking for a loan against an insurance policy, (iv) Claiming full benefits by the nominee on the death of the policy holder, (v) Claiming reimbursement on the medical policy, (vi) Intimating the change of nomination, (vii) Asking for the surrender value of a life insurance policy	17
Vocabulary (50 foreign words in common use), and Do as directed:	Unit IV (B) - Vocabulary	
	Q. 4 (a) Match the following (six Vocab items)	06
	(b) Give Meanings (three Vocab items)	03
	(c) Choose the appropriate options (five MCQs - Unit I)	05
	(d) True or false (five items - Unit I)	05

Commercial Communication - V- Model Question Paper for University Exam

Text: *Petals of Life*

1. (a) Answer any **three** of the following questions in brief. (09)

(i) What was special about the bulletin-board at the town hall? What notice was put up there one morning?

(ii) What three things, according to Dr. Ambedkar, must we do to maintain democracy?

(iii) How does the author praise the old washwoman's virtues after she died?

(iv) What was Dasa's excuse for not keeping the garden clean and tidy?

(v) What feeling did Booker T. Washington have at the first sight of the Hampton Institute building?

(b) Write a short note on any **one** of the following. (08)

(i) M. Hamel, the teacher (ii) Dr. Ambedkar's views on social democracy

(iii) Humour in the story *A Snake in the Grass*

2. Write a press report on any **one** of the following: (17)

(a) A collision of two trains (b) a cyclonic storm (c) the Cleanliness drive in Ahmedabad

3. Write a letter to the Manager of the Webpur Branch, Ahmedabad of the Baku Life Insurance Corporation, intimating the change of nomination to the life insurance policy. (17)

Or

Write a letter to the Manager of the Trump Nagar Branch, Kadi of the Gigabyte Life Insurance Corporation soliciting information about insurance policies marketed by the company.

4. (a) Match the words given in column "A" with their meanings in column "B": (06)

A	B
(i) ad hoc	- for each person
(ii) de jure	- take special notice
(iii) eureka	- that is
(iv) nota bene	- for a particular purpose
(v) per capita	- by law
(vi) id est	- a cry of joy

(b) Give meanings: (03)

in camera, de facto, mala fide

(c) Choose the correct option: (05)

1. The ----- soldiers were drilling in the open field.

(a) Sikh (b) Swiss (c) Prussian

2. The unconstitutional methods to achieve economic objectives are the Grammar of "-----".

(a) Anarchy (b) Authority (c) Politics

3. The author's family had little contact with -----.

(a) Jews (b) Gentiles (c) Christians

4. The neighbours said that Dasa was the ----- servant on earth.

(a) craziest (b) laziest (c) busiest

5. Hampton was about ----- miles from Malden.

(a) 700 (b) 600 (c) 500

(d) State whether the following statements are true or false: (05)

6. Little Franz was happy to learn that it was M. Hamel's last lesson that morning.

7. We cannot separate liberty, equality and fraternity without defeating the purpose of democracy.

8. The old washwoman walked an hour and a half to collect the laundry.

9. The beggar woman said that Lord Subramanya had come to visit the family.

10. Booker T. Washington set out for Hampton in the spring of 1872.

----- X --- X --- X --- X --- X -----

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Petals of Life

Lesson One - *The Last Lesson* by Alphonse Daudet (1840 - 1897)

Summary:

Little Franz was late for school that morning. Today M. Hamel, the teacher, was going to question the students on participles. Little Franz knew nothing about participles and feared a scolding by M. Hamel. For a moment he thought of running away and spending the day outside. The day was bright. The birds were chirping in the woods. The Prussian soldiers were drilling in the open field. All these attractions were more tempting than participles. But little Franz resisted them and hurried off to school. On the way to school, little Franz passed by the town-hall. There was a crowd in front of the bulletin-board. For the last two years all the bad news for Alsace had come from that bulletin-board. Wachter, the blacksmith, who had read the notice told little Franz that he should not go fast because he (little Franz) had plenty of time to reach school.

There was always a great uproar when the school began. But it was unusually quiet this morning. All the students were sitting in their places. M. Hamel's iron ruler usually rapped the table but this morning he was moving up and down the classroom with his ruler under his arm. He did not get angry though little Franz was late. Very kindly he asked him to sit in his place. M. Hamel was wearing his beautiful green coat, a frilled shirt and a little black silk cap. This was unusual because he wore these fine clothes only on Sundays, and on inspection and prize (distribution) days. This morning the village people were also sitting on the back benches. Everybody looked sad.

In his grave and gentle tone, M. Hamel informed the class that it was his last French lesson. There was an order from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The new German teacher would come the next day. Little Franz now realized that this was the notice put up at the town-hall. M. Hamel wanted his students to be attentive in the last lesson. That very moment little Franz's attitude to his lessons changed completely. He realized that he could hardly write French. The idea that this was M. Hamel's last lesson made little Franz forget the teacher's iron ruler.

M. Hamel had been working in the same school for the last forty years. The old men of the village had come to attend his last lesson. It was their way of thanking the master for his faithful service. It was also their way of showing respect for the country (now under the Prussian occupation) which was not theirs any more.

Little Franz made mistakes in reciting the participles but M. Hamel did not scold him. He felt sad that the students could not speak or write French, their own language, correctly. He said that everyone, including the parents and he himself, was responsible for the students' poor knowledge of the language.

M. Hamel praised French as the most beautiful language in the world. He asked the students not to forget their language because it was the only hope when people were politically enslaved. Then M. Hamel read a grammar lesson. Little Franz listened carefully and found it easy. In his last lesson, M. Hamel explained everything patiently and seemed eager to teach the students all he knew before he left the school.

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The grammar lesson was followed by a lesson in writing. Every student worked sincerely. The class was quiet except the sound of the scratching of the pens on the paper. During the class, M. Hamel sat motionless in his chair and gazed at everything, one after the other, in the little classroom. The writing lesson was followed by lessons in history and spellings.

The church-clock struck twelve then. The Angelus (a Roman Catholic prayer) and the trumpets of the Prussians sounded at the same time. M. Hamel stood up from his chair. He looked very pale. He began to address the students and the village elders but could not go beyond saying, "My friends ...". He choked. He took a piece of chalk and wrote "Vive la France" ("Long Live France") in large letters on the blackboard.

M. Hamel leaned his head against the wall and made a gesture with his hand to dismiss the class.

Answer the following questions in brief: *The Last Lesson* - Alphonse Daudet

1. Why did little Franz think of skipping his lesson one morning?

Little Franz was late for school that morning. Today M. Hamel, the teacher, was going to question the students on participles. Little Franz knew nothing about participles and feared a scolding by M. Hamel. For a moment he thought of running away and spending the day outside. The day was bright. The birds were chirping in the woods. The Prussian soldiers were drilling in the open field. All these attractions were more tempting than participles. But little Franz resisted them and hurried off to school.

2. **What was special about the bulletin-board at the village town hall? What notice was put up there one morning?**

On the way to school, little Franz passed by the town-hall. There was a crowd in front of the bulletin-board. For the last two years all the bad news for Alsace had come from that bulletin-board. Wachter, the blacksmith, who had read the notice told little Franz that he should not go fast because he (little Franz) had plenty of time to reach school. After little Franz had taken his place in the class, M. Hamel informed the students that it was his last French lesson. The new German teacher would come the next day. Little Franz now realized that this was the notice put up on the bulletin-board.

3. What unusual things did little Franz observe in the class one morning?

There was always a great uproar when the school began. But it was unusually quiet this morning. M. Hamel's iron ruler usually rapped the table but this morning he was moving up and down the classroom with his ruler under his arm. He did not get angry though little Franz was late. Very kindly he asked him to sit in his place. M. Hamel was wearing his beautiful green coat, a frilled shirt and a little black silk cap. This was unusual because he wore these fine clothes only on Sundays, and on inspection and prize (distribution) days. This morning the village people were also sitting on the back benches. Everybody looked sad.

4. **What announcement did M. Hamel make one morning in the class? How did the announcement affect little Franz?**

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One morning, M. Hamel informed the class that it was his last French lesson. There was an order from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The new German teacher would come the next day. M. Hamel wanted his students to be attentive in the last lesson. That very moment little Franz's attitude to his lessons changed completely. He realized he could hardly write French. The idea that this was M. Hamel's last lesson made little Franz forget the teacher's iron ruler.

5. Why was M. Hamel leaving the school all of a sudden? How did the old men of the village thank him for his faithful service?

M. Hamel had been working in the same school for the last forty years. But now he was leaving the school all of a sudden. The Prussians were occupying France at the time. There was an order from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The new German teacher would come the next day. This morning the old men of the village had come to attend M. Hamel's last lesson. It was their way of thanking the master for his faithful service.

6. How did M. Hamel praise French in his last lesson? Why did he end the last lesson by writing "Vive la France" on the blackboard?

The Prussians were occupying France at the time. There was an order from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. M. Hamel was anxious about the future of the French language. In his last lesson, he praised French as the most beautiful language in the world. M. Hamel asked the students not to forget their language because it was the only hope when people were politically enslaved. At the end of the lesson, he could not finish his address to the students. He choked. He took a piece of chalk and wrote "Vive la France" ("Long Live France") in large letters on the blackboard. This showed his love for his nation and his language.

Short Note/s: ***The Last Lesson*** - Alphonse Daudet

M. Hamel, the teacher

or

The theme of ***The Last Lesson***

M. Hamel had been working in the same school for the last forty years. But now he was leaving the school all of a sudden. The Prussians were occupying France at the time. There was an order from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. One morning M. Hamel informed the class that it was his last French lesson. The old men of the village had come to attend this lesson. It was their way of thanking the master for his faithful service.

M. Hamel's iron ruler was a terror for the students. But this morning he was gentle with them in the last lesson. He was sad that his students could not speak or write French correctly. In his last lesson, M. Hamel seemed eager to teach the students all he knew. He praised French as the most beautiful language in the world. He asked the students not to forget their language because it was the only hope when people were politically enslaved.

The Last Lesson shows an ordinary school teacher's love for his language and his nation. Earlier little Franz did not care for his studies. But his attitude to his lessons changed

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completely. At the end of the last lesson, M. Hamel could not finish his address to the students. He choked. He took a piece of chalk and wrote "Vive la France" ("Long Live France") in large letters on the blackboard. Then he made a gesture with his hand to dismiss the class.

Points for MCQs: The Last Lesson - Alphonse Daudet

1. The Prussian soldiers were drilling in the open field.
2. The bulletin-board at the town hall was the source of all bad news for the last two years.
3. One morning M. Hamel was wearing his beautiful clothes because it was his last lesson.
4. There was an order that only German would be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine.
5. M. Hamel had been teaching in the same school for the last forty years.

Points for true or false: The Last Lesson - Alphonse Daudet

1. That morning Little Franz was happy that it was M. Hamel's last lesson.
2. M. Hamel behaved kindly towards the students in his last lesson.
3. M. Hamel used to wear his fine clothes only on Sundays, and on inspection and prize days.
4. M. Hamel considered French the most logical language in the world.
5. M. Hamel gave the students a long lecture in his last lesson.

Lesson Two - *Maintaining Democracy* by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891 - 1956)

Summary:

Dr. Ambedkar suggests three things for maintaining democracy not merely in form but also in fact. To maintain democracy, according to him, we must:

- use constitutional methods to achieve social and economic objectives
- avoid hero-worship in politics
- make a political democracy a social democracy as well

Dr. Ambedkar advocates the use of the constitutional methods only to achieve social and economic objectives if we wish to maintain democracy. Constitutional methods require us to abandon bloody (violent) methods of revolution. Dr. Ambedkar says that civil disobedience, non-cooperation and satyagraha are unconstitutional methods. For him these methods are the "Grammar of Anarchy." The use of unconstitutional methods can be justified only when constitutional methods have failed to achieve social and economic objectives. The sooner unconstitutional methods are abandoned, the better it is for maintaining democracy.

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) gave the caution that if people want to maintain democracy, they should not allow great men to take away their liberty or subvert their institutions. Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847) said that great men give life-long services to the nation but people cannot be grateful to them at the cost of their own liberty. The observation is true for India. Dr. Ambedkar explains that in religion bhakti (devotion or hero-worship) leads to the salvation of the soul but in politics it leads only to degradation and dictatorship. Bhakti plays a greater role in Indian politics than in the politics of any other country in the world.

Political democracy has no meaning without social democracy. Political democracy can last only if it is based on social democracy. Social democracy recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles form a union of trinity and we cannot separate them without defeating the very purpose of democracy. Without equality and

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fraternity, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Without liberty, equality would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality cannot become a natural way of life. It would require a (police) constable to enforce them.

Answer the following questions in brief: Maintaining Democracy by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

1. What three things, according to Dr. Ambedkar, must we do to maintain democracy?

Dr. Ambedkar advocates the use of the constitutional methods only to achieve social and economic objectives if we wish to maintain democracy. He suggests three things to maintain democracy not merely in form but also in fact. According to Dr. Ambedkar, we must:

- use constitutional methods to achieve social and economic objectives
- avoid hero-worship in politics
- make a political democracy a social democracy as well

2. Which methods must be avoided to achieve economic and social objectives? Why?

Dr. Ambedkar advocates the use of the constitutional methods only to achieve social and economic objectives if we wish to maintain democracy. Constitutional methods require us to abandon violent methods of revolution. He says that civil disobedience, non-cooperation and satyagraha are unconstitutional methods. The use of the unconstitutional methods leads to chaos and anarchy. They can be justified only when constitutional methods have failed. The sooner unconstitutional methods are abandoned, the better it is for maintaining democracy.

3. Why does Dr. Ambedkar caution us against hero-worship in politics?

John Stuart Mill said that people should not allow great men to take away their liberty or subvert their institutions. Daniel O'Connell said that people cannot be grateful to great men at the cost of their own liberty. Dr. Ambedkar explains that bhakti (hero-worship) is good in religion where it leads to the salvation of the soul. He says that bhakti plays a greater role in Indian politics than in the politics of any other country in the world. Therefore Dr. Ambedkar cautions us that bhakti leads only to degradation and dictatorship in politics.

4. How does Dr. B. R. Ambedkar define social democracy? Or How are the three principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are interrelated with each other?

Dr. Ambedkar says that political democracy can last only if there is social democracy. Social democracy recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. These three principles form a union of trinity. We cannot separate them without defeating the very purpose of democracy. Without equality and fraternity, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Without liberty, equality would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality cannot become a natural way of life. It would require a (police) constable to enforce them.

Short Note/s: **Maintaining Democracy** by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

Dr. Ambedkar's views on maintaining democracy

or

Dr. Ambedkar's idea of social democracy

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Dr. Ambedkar suggests three things to maintain democracy not merely in form but also in fact. According to him, we must:

- use constitutional methods to achieve social and economic objectives
- avoid hero-worship in politics
- make a political democracy a social democracy as well

Dr. Ambedkar advocates the use of the constitutional methods only to achieve social and economic objectives if we wish to maintain democracy. Constitutional methods require us to abandon violent methods of revolution. He says that civil disobedience, non-cooperation and satyagraha are unconstitutional methods. The use of unconstitutional methods can be justified only when constitutional methods have failed to achieve social and economic objectives.

Dr. Ambedkar says that political democracy has no meaning without social democracy. Social democracy recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life. We cannot separate these principles without defeating the purpose of democracy. Without equality and fraternity, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Without liberty, equality would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality cannot become a natural way of life.

Points for MCQs: Maintaining Democracy by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

1. Dr. Ambedkar calls the methods of civil disobedience, non-cooperation and satyagraha the "Grammar of Anarchy".
2. John Stuart Mill said that people should not allow great men to take away their liberty.
3. According to Dr. Ambedkar, bhakti leads to salvation in religion.
4. Hero-worship in politics leads to degradation and dictatorship.
5. Without fraternity, liberty and equality cannot become a natural way of life.

Points for true or false: Maintaining Democracy by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

1. Unconstitutional methods to achieve social and economic objectives are always justified.
2. The sooner the unconstitutional methods are abandoned, the better it is for maintaining democracy.
3. Political democracy can last only if it is based on social democracy.
4. The principles of liberty, equality and fraternity cannot be separated without killing the purpose of democracy.
5. Without liberty, equality would kill the individual initiative.

Lesson Three - *The Washwoman* by Isaac Bashevis Singer (1902 - 1991)

Summary:

The Gentile (not Jewish) washwoman was past seventy when she started washing (clothes) for the author's family. Most Jewish women of her age were weak and walked with the help of a stick. But this washwoman, though small and thin, possessed strength and will power. She walked about an hour and a half to collect the laundry accumulated over several weeks and carried the heavy load on her shoulders the long way home.

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The washwoman charged no more than other washwomen. But she took a great trouble to provide quality service. She had no faucet in her house and brought water from a pump. She dried the laundry on clotheslines in the attic (a room at the top of a building). She returned the washed laundry in about two weeks.

The old washwoman loved doing honest labour. She neither begged at the church door nor entered the home for the poor, aged people. She did not want to be a burden on anyone. The washwoman's son was rich. But he never came to see her. He never gave her any money. When he got married, he did not invite his mother to his wedding. But she went to the church uninvited to attend the ceremony.

Once there was a very harsh winter. The streets were covered with snow. There was bitter cold. Coal became dear. People were dying of the cold. The washwoman was eighty years old then. On one winter day she came to collect the laundry. She was weak because of the age. She trembled because of the cold. The bundle of the clothes was bigger this time. The washwoman staggered under its weight. Only her will power gave her the strength to work beyond the limits of her physical strength.

For a long time, there was no news of the washwoman. The author's family needed the clothes. But they did not know her address. It seemed she had died. The family mourned for the loss of the laundry and for the old washwoman who had served them faithfully for years. More than two months passed. One evening the washwoman returned with the laundry. She was very ill and could not speak for some time. Then she told the author's mother that a doctor was called to examine her. The doctor (expecting that she might die) sent for the priest. The washwoman's son, when he got to know the fact, contributed money for her coffin and for the funeral. But the washwoman regained her strength and resumed her work. She said that the wash (the laundry) did not allow her to die. Now she did not want to live any longer and be a burden on anyone. The author's mother paid the money. The washwoman left with a promise to return in a few weeks to collect the laundry. But she never came back.

In spite of her weakness, the washwoman had returned the last wash. She had been driven by an indomitable will to return the property to its rightful owners. Her weak body was supported by the force of honesty and duty. She died only after she had fulfilled the task she had undertaken. The author remarks that the old washwoman's soul passed into the spheres where all holy souls meet. He could not imagine paradise without the *Gentile* washwoman.

Answer the following questions in brief: *The Washwoman* by Isaac Bashevis Singer

1. Why did the old *Gentile* woman wash laundry at her age? Or Describe the appearance of the old *Gentile* washwoman?

The *Gentile* (not Jewish) washwoman was past seventy when she started washing (clothes) for the author's family. Her son was rich. But he never gave her any money. The washwoman neither begged at the church door nor entered the home for the poor, aged people. She did not want to be a burden on anyone. She loved doing honest labour. Most Jewish women of her age were weak and walked with the help of a stick. But this washwoman, though small and thin, possessed strength and will power.

2. How was the old *Gentile* washwoman's son faithless to her?

The Gentile (not Jewish) washwoman was past seventy when she started washing (clothes) for the author's family. Her son was rich. But he never came to see her. He never gave her any money. When the washwoman's son got married, he did not invite her to his wedding. When the son got to know that his old mother was about to die, he contributed money for her coffin and for the funeral. But beyond that he did not care for his mother. Thus, the son failed to perform his duty to his old mother.

3. **Why did the washwoman not return the laundry for more than two months during the harsh winter?**

Once there was a very harsh winter. The streets were covered with snow. There was bitter cold. People were dying of the cold. The washwoman was eighty years old then. On one winter day she came to collect the laundry. She staggered under the weight of the bundle of the clothes. Only her will power gave her the strength to work beyond the limits of her physical strength. For a long time, there was no news of the washwoman. It seemed she had died. She had been very ill. More than two months passed when she returned with the laundry.

4. **What, according to the author, kept the old washwoman alive in spite of her weak body? How does the author praise her virtues after she died?**

Once there was a very harsh winter. The washwoman was eighty years old then. On one winter day she came to collect the laundry. More than two months passed when, one evening, the washwoman returned with the laundry. She said that the wash (the laundry) did not allow her to die. She had been driven by an indomitable will to return the property to its rightful owners. Her weak body was supported by the force of honesty and duty. The author remarks that the old washwoman's soul passed into the spheres where all holy souls meet. He could not imagine paradise without the Gentile washwoman.

Short Note/s: **The Washwoman** by Isaac Bashevis Singer

The old Gentile washwoman

The old Gentile washwoman was past seventy when she started washing (clothes) for the author's family. Her son was rich. But he never gave her any money. The washwoman neither begged at the church door nor entered the home for the poor, aged people. She did not want to be a burden on anyone. Most Jewish women of her age were weak and walked with the help of a stick. This washwoman, though small and thin, possessed strength and will power.

Once there was a very harsh winter. The washwoman was eighty years old then. On one winter day she came to collect the laundry. More than two months passed when the washwoman returned with the laundry. She said that the doctor (expecting that she might die) called for the priest. But she regained her strength and resumed her work. The old washwoman said that the wash (the laundry) did not allow her to die.

In spite her weakness, the old washwoman had returned her last wash. She had been driven by an indomitable will to return the property to its rightful owners. Her weak body was supported by the force of honesty and duty. The author remarks that the old washwoman's soul

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passed into the spheres where all holy souls meet. He could not imagine paradise without the Gentile washwoman.

Points for MCQs: *The Washwoman* by Isaac Bashevis Singer

1. The author's family had little contact with Gentiles.
2. The old washwoman walked about an hour and a half to collect the laundry.
3. The old washwoman spoke Polish.
4. The old washwoman's son was faithless to her.
5. The author could not imagine paradise without the old washwoman.

Points for true or false: *The Washwoman* by Isaac Bashevis Singer

1. The old washwoman was past eighty when she started washing the laundry for the author's family.
2. The old washwoman charged more than other washwomen did.
3. The old Gentile washwoman lived with her son.
4. The washwoman returned the laundry after more than two months when the winter was harsh.
5. The son contributed money for the old washwoman's coffin and the funeral.

Lesson Four - *A Snake in the Grass* by R. K. Narayan (1906 - 2001)

Summary:

It was a sunny afternoon. The family was having their siesta in the bungalow. A cyclist rang his bell and announced that a cobra had got into the compound.

The family - the mother and her four sons - came to the gate in great agitation. They woke up Dasa, their old servant, who was sleeping in the shed. He tried to dismiss the matter. The family threatened to dismiss Dasa if the cobra could not be found before that evening. The family said that dreadful things came into their compound because Dasa neglected cleaning the garden and the lawns. Some neighbours appeared on the scene. They said that Dasa was the laziest servant on the earth. They accused him of not keeping the surroundings (the lawns in the bungalow) clean. In his defence, Dasa said that he had been demanding a grass-cutter for months but the family did not provide him one. There was a speculation as to how much a grass-cutter would cost in wartime. There was also a debate about black market and wartime prices.

The topic changed when the college boy of the family produced statistical data that appeared in an American paper on the death rate by snake bite. As per these data, 30000 people died of snake bite every year. The son, analyzing the data further, said that the given figure meant one death in twenty minutes and 83 deaths in a day. The mother nearly screamed out of fear on hearing that. The boys and the servant then took bamboo sticks and set to work. Others joined them with knives and crowbars. In minutes, they hacked everything - creepers, bushes and lawns - in the garden. The snake was not found.

When the snake hunt was going on, an old beggar came to the gate of the bungalow for alms. She said that it was not a snake but God Subramanya who had come to visit the family. She said that the family should not kill the snake. The mother agreed heartily and gave the beggar a

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coin. The beggar then sent a snake charmer to catch the cobra. He spoke to the family and others about his life and his power over snakes. They pointed at the direction in which the cobra had gone. But the snake charmer said that he could not catch the snake without seeing it. He asked the family to call him when they saw the snake again. The snake charmer left his name and address and returned home.

In their search for the snake, the family had turned up every stone in the garden and cut down every blade of the grass. At five in the evening the family was taking rest in the veranda. They considered various measures to protect themselves against reptiles in future. It was at this moment that Dasa appeared before them. He carried a water-pot sealed with a slab of stone covering its mouth. He said that he had seen the snake peeping from the pot and explained how he sealed it up before the snake could come out.

Dasa had now the glow of a champion on his face. He became the hero of the day. The mother complimented Dasa for his sharpness and wished that she had placed some milk in the pot for the cobra. Dasa said that he should not be called an idler anymore. He picked up the pot cautiously and said that he would carry it to the snake charmer. The family decided to reward him adequately.

Five minutes after Dasa had left, the youngest son of the family saw the cobra out of a hole in the compound wall. It glided towards the gate and, crawling under it, disappeared along a drain. Were there two snakes or was there no snake in Dasa's water pot? The college boy wished he had knocked down the water pot from Dasa's hand to know the truth.

Answer the following questions in brief: A Snake in the Grass by R. K. Narayan

1. How did the family come to know about the snake in the compound of their bungalow? Whom did they blame for the snake getting into their compound?

It was a sunny afternoon. The family - the mother and her four sons - was having their siesta in the bungalow. A cyclist rang his bell and announced that a cobra had got into the compound. The family came to the gate in great agitation. They woke up Dasa, their old servant, who was sleeping in the shed. He tried to dismiss the matter. The family threatened to dismiss Dasa if the cobra could not be found before that evening. They said that dreadful things came into their compound because of Dasa's neglect of the garden and the lawns.

2. **What was Dasa's excuse for not keeping the garden clean and tidy?** Or How did the boys of the family hack the garden to find the snake?

One afternoon, a cyclist announced that a cobra had got into the compound of the bungalow. The family - the mother and her four sons - came to the gate in great agitation. Some neighbours also appeared on the scene. They accused Dasa of not keeping the surroundings (the garden and the lawns) clean. In his defence, Dasa said that he had been demanding a grass-cutter for months but the family did not provide him one. The boys of the family then took bamboo sticks and hacked the garden - creepers, bushes and lawns - to find the snake.

3. What statistics did the college boy offer about the deaths caused by snake bite?

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A snake had got into the compound of the family's bungalow. One boy in the family was a college student. He had read in an American paper that 30,000 people die of snake bite every year. He elaborated the statistics and explained that it meant one death in twenty minutes and 83 deaths in a day by snake bite. The mother nearly screamed out of fear on hearing the figures of the deaths due to snake bite.

4. How did the beggar woman's words affect the mother's agitation over the snake?

When the snake hunt was going on, an old beggar came to the gate of the bungalow for alms. She said that it was not a snake but God Subramanya who had come to visit the family. She said that they should not kill the snake. The mother agreed heartily and gave the beggar a coin. The mother remembered that she had forgotten to perform a religious ceremony. She thought the coming of the snake was a reminder of a forgotten religious obligation.

5. How did Dasa claim to have caught the snake? Did he really catch it?

The family had not been able to find the snake till five in the evening. Dasa suddenly appeared before them. He carried a water-pot with a slab of stone covering its mouth. He said that the snake was in the pot and that he would carry the pot to the snake charmer. Five minutes after Dasa had left, the youngest son of the family saw the cobra out of a hole in the compound wall. Were there two snakes or was there no snake in Dasa's water pot? The college boy wished he had knocked down the water pot from Dasa's hand to know the truth.

Short Note/s: *A Snake in the Grass* by R. K. Narayan

Dasa, the old servant of the family

or

The humour in *A Snake in the Grass*

One sunny afternoon, a cobra had got into the family's compound. Dasa, their old servant, was sleeping in the shed. The family woke him up. Dasa tried to dismiss the matter. The family threatened to dismiss Dasa. The family accused Dasa of not keeping the garden clean. Neighbours said that Dasa was the laziest servant on the earth. Dasa's excuse was that the family had not provided him a grass-cutter. Then people began to discuss irrelevant issues.

There was a speculation as to how much a grass-cutter would cost in wartime. There was also a debate about black market and wartime prices. The college boy cited statistical data that 30,000 people died of snake bite every year. This made the mother nearly scream out of fear. The boys and the servant hacked the everything in the garden. The snake could not be found. A beggar woman said that it was not a snake but God Subrmanya had come to the family's house. This reminded the mother of a forgotten religious obligation.

A snake charmer came and returned with a promise to come back if the snake was seen. Then Dasa claimed that he had sealed up the cobra in a water pot. He became the hero of the day. Five minutes after Dasa had left, the youngest boy of the family saw the cobra out of a hole in the compound wall. Were there two snakes or was there no snake in Dasa's water pot? *A Snake in the Grass* deals humorously with how people react to the incident of a snake getting into the compound of a bungalow.

Points for MCQs: A Snake in the Grass by R. K. Narayan

1. A cyclist informed the family that a cobra had got into their compound.
2. The neighbours said that Dasa was the laziest servant on the earth.
3. The college boy said that 30000 people died of snake bite every year.
4. Dasa claimed to have caught the cobra in a water pot.
5. The youngest son saw the cobra five minutes after Dasa had claimed to have caught it in a water pot.

Points for true or false: A Snake in the Grass by R. K. Narayan

1. Dasa, the old servant, was working in the garden when the cobra got into the compound.
2. Dasa's demand of a grass-cutter led to a debate on wartime prices and black market.
3. The old beggar said that it was not a snake but who God Subramanya had come to visit the family.
4. The snake charmer caught the cobra immediately on seeing it.
5. No one knew for sure whether Dasa carried the cobra in the water pot or not.

Lesson Five - My Struggle for an Education by Booker T. Washington (1856 - 1915)

Summary:

[Excerpt taken from Booker T. Washington's autobiography *Up from Slavery* (1901)]

Booker T. Washington (aged about 14) was working in a coal mine. One day he overheard two miners talking about a great school for coloured (black) people in Virginia (a Southeastern state in the USA). The name of the school was Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. Washington had no idea how far the school was and how he could reach there. But he resolved to go to Hampton for getting an education. For a few months he continued to work in the coal mine.

Finally, in the fall of 1872, Washington decided to make an effort to go to the Hampton Institute. His mother sympathized with him but thought that her son was going on a 'wild-goose chase' (pursuit of something not attainable). She therefore gave him only a half-hearted consent. Washington did not have enough money to buy clothes and to pay travelling expenses. His brother John helped him but that was not a great deal. Older coloured people who had spent their best years in slavery took much interest in Washington's efforts to get an education. They gave him very little money but their emotional support touched the boy's heart. When Washington started for Hampton, his mother was weak in health. Their parting was sad because Washington hardly expected to see his mother again.

Washington set out only with a small, cheap satchel (a bag carried on the shoulder) containing a few articles of clothing. The distance between Malden (starting point of Washington's journey in Massachusetts) and Hampton is about five 500 miles (800 km). In those days, trains ran only a part of the distance. The rest of the journey had to be made in stage-coaches (a vehicle pulled by horses which needed to be changed on longer routes). On the first night of the journey, Washington had the first experience of colour discrimination at a hotel. Except him, all the passengers of the coach were whites. The coach halted for the night at a hotel. The hotel-keeper denied Washington food and lodging because of the colour of his skin. The season was cold and he kept walking about to keep himself warm during the night.

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Washington was too eager to reach Hampton and had no time to feel bitter about the hotel-keeper.

For his onward journey, Washington walked and begged rides. After a few days, he reached Richmond which was 80 miles from Hampton. It was late in the night. He was tired, hungry and dirty. He had no money. He had not a single acquaintance in the city. He did not know where to go. Washington requested for lodging at several places but they all demanded money. He walked the streets and passed many food-stands selling fried chicken and apple pies. He would have promised anything to get these two food items but he got neither. Washington was extremely exhausted after midnight. When there was no passer-by around, he crept under an elevated sidewalk. He made the satchel his pillow and rested under the sidewalk. All the night he heard footsteps over his head. In spite of these hardships he was not discouraged in his pursuit of an education.

Next morning when there was light enough to see the surroundings, Washington found himself near a large ship. A cargo of pig iron was being unloaded from the vessel. The white captain of the ship was kind-hearted and permitted Washington to unload the cargo. He thus earned enough money to buy himself a breakfast. The captain allowed him to work for a few more days. To save money, Washington continued to sleep under the sidewalk during the night. When he had saved enough money, he started for Hampton again.

Washington reached the Hampton Institute with fifty cents in his pocket to begin his education. The first sight of the school building seemed to have rewarded him for all the hardships he had faced to reach the place. The school seemed to him the most beautiful place he had ever seen. The sight of the school seemed to give him a new life. He felt that he had reached the promised land.

As soon as he reached the Hampton Institute, Washington presented himself before the head teacher. He did not make a favourable impression because he had been without food, bath or change of clothes for a long time. The head teacher admitted other students but she could not make up her mind whether to admit Washington or not. After some hours, she asked him to sweep the adjoining recitation room.

Washington felt that his future depended upon the impression he would make upon the head teacher in cleaning the room. He dusted every bench, table and desk four times and swept the room three times. The head teacher inspected the room minutely but found not a bit of dirt or a particle of dust anywhere. She instantly agreed to admit Washington. The sweeping of the room was his entrance examination. He felt more satisfaction than any other youth might have had on passing an entrance examination to Harvard or Yale. Washington says that he passed several examinations since then but this one was the best he ever passed.

Answer the following questions in brief: My Struggle for an Education by B T. Washington

- 1. How did Washington come to know about the Hampton Institute? Why did he resolve at once to go to that school?**

Booker T Washington was working in a coal mine. One day he overheard two miners talking about a great school for coloured (black) people in Virginia. The name of the school was Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. Washington had no idea how far the school was and how he could reach there. But he resolved to go to Hampton for getting an education.

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After that day, Washington had only one thought day and night in mind - that was to go to Hampton.

2. What hardships did Booker T. Washington face to reach Hampton from Malden?

In the fall of 1872, Booker T. Washington set out for Hampton, about 500 miles from Malden. In those days, trains ran only a part of the distance. The rest of the journey had to be made in stage-coaches. Washington had very little money. He had only a small, cheap satchel (a bag carried on the shoulder) containing a few articles of clothing. On the first night of the journey, he was denied food and bed in a hotel because of the colour of his skin. For the rest of the journey he walked and begged rides. He was often without food and bath. He was extremely exhausted. But Washington was not discouraged in his pursuit of an education.

3. Describe Washington's first experience of colour discrimination.

Booker T. Washington had his first experience of colour discrimination on the first day of the journey from Malden to Hampton. Except him, all the passengers of the coach were whites. The coach halted for the night at a hotel. Washington had no money to pay for the accommodation. But the hotel-keeper did not even ask for money. He was denied food and bed at the hotel because of the colour of his skin. Washington was too eager to reach Hampton and had no time to feel bitter about the hotel-keeper.

4. How did the white captain of the ship help Washington at Richmond?

After a few days of the journey from Malden, Booker T. Washington reached Richmond which was 80 miles from Hampton. It was late in the night. He was tired, hungry and dirty. He had no money. He had not a single acquaintance in the city. He was extremely exhausted and spent the night under an elevated sidewalk. The next morning, when it was light, Washington found himself near a large ship. The white captain of the ship was kind-hearted. He permitted Washington to unload the cargo. He thus earned enough money to buy himself a breakfast. The captain allowed Washington to work for a few more days.

5. What feeling did Washington have at the first sight of the Hampton Institute building?

Booker T. Washington travelled 500 miles from Malden to Hampton to get an education at the Hampton Institute for coloured people. After travelling many days and facing many hardships, he reached the Hampton Institute with fifty cents in his pocket to begin his education. The first sight of the school building seemed to have rewarded him for all the hardships he had faced to reach the place. The school seemed to him the most beautiful place he had ever seen. The sight of the school seemed to give him a new life. He felt that he had reached the promised land.

6. What admission test was Washington put through by the head teacher of the Hampton Institute?

As soon as Booker T. Washington reached the Hampton Institute, he presented himself before the head teacher. He did not make a favourable impression. The head teacher did not admit Washington for some hours. She asked him to sweep the adjoining recitation room. Washington felt that his future depended upon the impression he would make upon the head

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teacher in cleaning the room. He dusted every bench, table and desk four times and swept the room three times. The head teacher was pleased with his work and instantly agreed to admit him. Washington says that cleaning the recitation room was the best test he ever passed.

Short Note/s: *My Struggle for an Education* by B T. Washington

Booker T. Washington's struggle for an education

One day while working in a coal mine, Booker T. Washington overheard two miners talking about a great school for coloured people in Virginia. The name of the school was Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. Washington resolved to go to Hampton for getting an education. In the fall of 1872, he set out for Hampton, about 500 miles from Malden. He had very little money. He had only a small, cheap satchel containing a few articles of clothing.

On the first night of the journey, Washington had the first experience of colour discrimination at a hotel. For the rest of the journey, he walked and begged rides. He reached Richmond that was about 80 miles from Hampton. He had no money. He was hungry and tired. He slept at night under an elevated sidewalk. Next morning, the white captain of the ship permitted Washington to unload the cargo. Washington earned enough money to buy himself a breakfast.

Booker T. Washington reached the Hampton Institute with only fifty cents in his pocket. The sight of the school seemed to give him a new life. The head teacher asked him to sweep the recitation room. Washington dusted every bench, table and desk four times and swept the room three times. The head teacher was pleased with his work and instantly agreed to admit him. Washington says that cleaning the recitation room was the best test he ever passed.

Points for MCQs: *My Struggle for an Education* by B T. Washington

1. Booker T. Washington set out for Hampton in the fall of 1872.
2. Booker T. Washington's mother was weak in health when he began his journey to Hampton.
3. In Richmond, the white captain helped Booker T. Washington.
4. The Hampton Institute was a three-storey brick building.
5. Booker T. Washington had only fifty cents to begin his education at the Hampton Institute.

Points for true or false: *My Struggle for an Education* by B T. Washington

1. The Hampton Institute was located in Richmond.
2. The full name of the Hampton Institute was the Hampton Formal and Agricultural Institute.
3. The distance between Malden and Hampton was about 800 miles.
4. The hotel-keeper denied Booker T. Washington accommodation because he had no money.
5. Washington made a fine impression on the head teacher when he presented himself before her.

Stay home, stay safe!

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