

St. Peter's Senior Secondary School
English Core (301)
Class 12
Assignment 8

TEXTBOOK: VISTAS
LESSON: The Third Level
AUTHOR: Jack Finney

Read the text from your book and underline important words and ideas. (Refer to the dictionary to find the meaning of difficult words.)

Or

Follow this link : http://ncertbooks.prashanthellina.com/class_12.English.Vistas/Chapter1.pdf

MAIN CHARACTERS:

- Charley
- Louisa
- Sam

INTRODUCTION:

The Third Level by Jack Finney is about the harsh realities of war. War has irreversible consequences thus leaving people in a state of insecurity. It is also about modern day problems and how common man tends to escape reality by various means. In this story, a man named Charley hallucinates and reaches the third level of the Grand Central Station which only has two levels.

SUMMARY:

‘Charley is convinced that there are three, not just two, levels of Grand Central Station. Charley’s psychiatrist Sam Weiner and his friends think his delusion is a ‘waking-dream-wish fulfillment’ and like his stamp collection, a temporary refuge from a world full of insecurity, fear, war and worry’.

Charley describes how one evening while hurrying home from office he decides to take the subway from Grand Central Station, and gets lost. He eventually finds himself on a strange third level with spittoons, gaslights, an ancient locomotive and people whose appearance and clothes look strange. He realizes that he has somehow gone back in time to 1894, which is confirmed by the newspaper’s lead story on President Cleveland.

Charley tries to buy tickets to Galesburg, Illinois, a wonderful town... with big old frame houses, huge lawns and tremendous trees..., and where summer evenings were twice as long and people lived in peace and harmony. But the clerk won’t accept his 1950 currency and so he leaves the station.

During his lunch break the next day, Charley withdraws nearly all his savings and buys old-style currency to buy tickets to Galesburg of 1894. But he can never again find the entrance to the third level at Grand Central Station. Charley finds evidence that the third level actually exists when he

discovers a letter dated July 18, 1894 addressed to his grandfather at Galesburg, Illinois, from his psychiatrist Sam Weiner who it seems was not skeptical of the third level as he had appeared.

THEME:

‘The Third Level’ is a story that weaves together a psychological journey of the narrator into past, present and moves towards future. There is always a natural human tendency to constantly move between the past, the present and the future. Past, present and future are strategically and organically interconnected.

Man is mortal and has many good and bad aspects of life like love, profit, loss, good, bad, etc. All these aspects tend to affect the human mind. Then existential worries act like a catalyst for making the human mind constantly move between the past, the present and the future. ‘The Third Level’ is a study of human mind caught in this cycle of time.

When people in the present time want to escape the problems and stress of life, they feel that life, fifty or sixty years ago, was relaxed and they wanted to go back to that time for peace and happiness.

ATTEMPT THE GIVEN QUESTIONS:-

1. Read the extract given below and briefly answer the questions that follow each:

a. But I say there are three, because I’ve been on the third level of the Grand Central Station. Yes, I’ve taken the obvious step: I talked to a psychiatrist friend of mine, among others.

- 1) Who is referred as ‘I’ in the above extract?
- 2) Write the name of the ‘friend’ referred in above lines.
- 3) Where was ‘I’ coming from?

b. Well, maybe, but my grandfather didn’t need any refuge from reality; things were pretty nice and peaceful in his day, from all I hear, and he started my collection.

- 1) Which ‘collection’ is being referred to in the above extract?
- 2) To whom does ‘I’ refer to in the above extract?
- 3) Which word in the extract mean ‘escape’?

2. Answer the following questions in 30-40 words:

- a. What made Louisa, Charley’s wife, believe that the third level was a reality?
- b. What idea did Charley have about the tunnel and why didn’t he tell the psychiatrist about it?
- c. What, according to the psychiatrist, was Charley’s problem?
- d. Describe Charley’s character with special reference to his escapist tendency.
- e. How did Charley realize that he was on the third level?
- f. Why did the narrator talk to a psychiatrist friend of his and what did he say about the third level?

g. What information Charley gathered from coin store? What was his perception?

3. Answer the following questions in 120-150 words:

- a. Imagination is a 'temporary refuge from reality' Explain.
- b. The Third Level' at the Grand Central Station is nothing but a convenient excuse for escapism. Justify the statement.
- c. Describe Charley. Do you think his being on the third level at Grand Central Station was a waking-dream wish fulfillment? What did his stamp collecting point to?
- d. Sam's letter to Charley is a fine blend of reality and fantasy. Comment.