

Class 12 English Core
Notes
Flamingo Chapter-2
Lost Spring: Stories of Stolen Childhood

“Lost spring”, an extract from Anees Jung's book "The Lost Spring- Stories of stolen childhood" has a tinge of irony. Spring being the best season of a year, is full of colour, fragrance, freshness, renewal and growth. Similarly, the childhood of human life is often linked to spring, as it marks the beginning of human life, full of joy, pleasure, play and growth.

The writer expresses her concern over the exploitation of childhood in hazardous jobs like rag-picking and bangle making. Abject poverty and thoughtless traditions result in the loss of childhood of millions of children like Saheb and Mukesh by working hard to support themselves and their families rather than enjoying their childhood by playing and seeking education. There is a dire need to provide these poverty stricken children, opportunity to dare, dream and do and a life of dignity.

Thus the title brings out the depravity of child labour in a very telling way. The author examines and analyses the impoverished condition and traditions that condemn children to a life of exploitation. These children are denied education and forced into hardships early in their lives. The writer encounters Saheb - a rag picker whose parents have left behind the life of poverty in Dhaka to earn a living in Delhi. His family like many other families of rag pickers lives in Seemapuri.

They do not have any identification other than a ration card. The children do not go to school and they are excited at the prospect of finding a coin or even a ten rupee note for rummaging in the garbage. It is the only way of earning a living. They live in impoverished conditions but resign to their fate.

The writer is pained to see Saheb-e-alam, a rag picker whose name means the ruler of universe, losing the spark of childhood and roaming barefoot with his friends. Now, from morning to noon, Saheb works in a tea stall and is paid Rs. 800 per month. He sadly realizes that he is no longer a free bird and master of his own will. He is more of an abandoned labourer with surrendered freedom and identity and this loss weighs heavily on his tender shoulders

The author then tells about another victim of poverty, Mukesh who wants to be a motor mechanic and wishes to drive a car. Hailing from Firozabad, the centre of India's bangle making and glass blowing industry, he has always worked in the glass making industry. He lives in a stinking surrounding with choked lanes and garbage piles all around in a half built shack with thatched dead grass roof with iron door and his family of three generations uses firewood stove and aluminium utensils.

His family like the others there do not know that it is illegal for children to work in such close proximity to furnaces, with such high temperature. They are exposed to various health hazards like losing their eyesight as they work in abysmal conditions, in dark and dingy cells. Mukesh's father is blind as were his father and grandfather before him.

They lead a hand to mouth existence as they are caught in the vicious web of the money lenders, middlemen, police and the traditions. So, burdened are the bangle makers of Firozabad that most of them have lost their eyesight before even attaining adulthood. Their desire to dream and dare is snubbed in their childhood only.

- The author examines and analyses the impoverished conditions and traditions that condemn children to a life of exploitation these children are denied an education and forced into hardships early in their lives.
- The writer encounters Saheb - a rag picker whose parents have left behind the life of poverty in Dhaka to earn a living in Delhi.
- His family like many other families of rag pickers lives in Seemapuri. They do not have other identification other than a ration card.
- The children do not go to school and they are excited at the prospect of finding a coin or even a ten rupee note for rummaging in the garbage.
- It is the only way of earning the life they live in impoverished conditions but are resigned to their fate.
- The writer is pained to see Saheb, a rag picker whose name means the ruler of earth, lose the spark of childhood and roams barefooted with his friends.
- From morning to noon the author encounters him in a tea stall and is paid Rs. 800 He sadly realizes that he is no longer his own master and this loss of identity weighs heavily on his tender shoulders.
- The author then tells about another victim, Mukesh who wants to be a motor mechanic. Hailing from Firozabad, the centre of India's bangle making and glass blowing industry, he has always worked in the glass making industry.
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- They are exposed to various health hazards like losing their eyesight as they work in abysmal conditions, in dark and dingy cells.
- Mukesh's father is blind as were his father and grandfather before him.
- They lead a hand to mouth existence as they are caught in the vicious web of the money lenders, middlemen, police and the traditions
So burdened are the bangle makers of Firozabad that they have lost their ability to dream unlike Mukesh who dreams of driving a car.

Understanding the Text

1. What could be some of the reasons for the migration of people from villages to cities?

Answer

There are many factors that cause migration of people from villages to cities. Some villagers voluntarily move to the cities in search for jobs and better civic and health facilities, etc. Others are forced to migrate when natural disasters like flood, storm, drought, famine, etc. destroy their houses and properties. History has records of large scale migrations caused by wars. Also, many villagers who are better off than others manage to send their children to study in the cities. In the lesson 'Lost Spring', Saheb and his family migrates to Seemapuri from Dhaka after their houses were destroyed in the storms.

2. Would you agree that promises made to poor children are rarely kept? Why do you think this happens in the incidents narrated in the text?

Answer

yes, the promises made to poor children are rarely kept. Often, they are not taken seriously or have been made on the pretext of retaining a child's fancy for something. This keeps the child hoping for a better possibility till he/she realizes the truth. It is difficult for people to shatter the children's dreams; while it is also painful to see these children thrive of false hopes given to them. Once, while interacting with Saheb, the narrator ends up encouraging him to study and jokingly talks

about opening a school herself. At that time she fails to realize that unknowingly she has sown a

seed of hope in Saheb's heart. She becomes conscious of her mistake when, after a few days, Saheb approaches her, enquiring about her school. Her hollow promise leaves her embarrassed.

3. What forces conspire to keep the workers in the bangle industry of Firozabad in poverty?

Answer

The unfavorable social and legal systems, the deceptive middlemen, and their own sad destinies keep the workers in the bangle industry of Firozabad in perpetual poverty.

Talking about the Text

1. How, in your opinion, can Mukesh realise his dream?

Answer

Mukesh was different from the others of his community. By daring to dream, he has already taken the first step towards a big change. He wants to become a motor mechanic and drive a car. He can realize this dream with determination and hard work. There might be many obstacles on his way but a strong willpower will help him move towards the way to success. The fact that he is willing to walk a long distance in order to learn the vocation, underlines his firm resolve. The only thing left for him to do is to make that first journey to that garage and request the owner to take him in and guide and direct him on his journey as a mechanic.

2. Mention the hazards of working in the glass bangles industry.

Answer

The impoverished workers in the glass bangles industry toil in potentially hazardous working conditions while welding. The furnaces they work in have extremely high temperature and lack proper ventilation. Persistently working in low light conditions, without any protective eye gear, leaves them blind. Even burns and cuts are quite common. The workers are quite prone to ailments such as lung cancer.

3. Why should child labour be eliminated and how?

Answer

Child labour should be eliminated because it takes away from the child his childhood and the prospect of elementary education. Moreover, since the child labourers are cheap, and consequently engaged in hazardous and dangerous employment, they are often vulnerable to mental and physical illness. In order to curb this problem, it is important to make education easily accessible. Apart from

that, the parents must be made aware of the consequences of working in harmful environments. It is also important to make the public aware of the fact that child labour is a criminal offence and is punishable under law. The government must ensure stricter child labour laws and that the offenders

Thinking about Language

1. Carefully read the following phrases and sentences taken from the text. Can you identify the literary device in each example?

1. Saheb-e-Alam which means the lord of the universe is directly in contrast to what Saheb is in reality.
2. Drowned in an air of desolation.
3. Seemapuri, a place on the periphery of Delhi yet miles away from it, metaphorically.
4. For the children it is wrapped in wonder; for the elders it is a means of survival.
5. As her hands move mechanically like the tongs of a machine, I wonder if she knows the sanctity of the bangles she helps make.
6. She still has bangles on her wrist, but not light in her eyes.
7. Few airplanes fly over Firozabad.
8. Web of poverty.
9. Scrounging for gold.
10. And survival in Seemapuri means rag-picking. Through the years, it has acquired the proportions of a fine art.
11. The steel canister seems heavier than the plastic bag he would carry so lightly over his shoulders.

Answer

1. Irony
2. Metaphor
3. Antithesis
4. Antithesis
5. Simile
6. Pun
7. Pun
8. Metaphor
9. Metaphor
10. Hyperbole
11. Paradox