

**ANNUAL PREPARATORY PROGRAMME FOR ENHANCEMENT IN
ACADEMICS AND REVISION (APPEAR)
CLASS XII, ENGLISH CORE - 301
MODULE - XVII (THE THIRD LEVEL)**

Module Detail	
Subject Name	English Core
Course Name	Annual Preparatory Programme for Enhancement in Academics and Revision (APPEAR) in English for Class XII
Module Name/Title	The Third Level
Module Id	levt_20101
Pre-requisite	Students should be acquainted with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the story <i>Adventure</i> by Jayant Narlikar and World Wars
Learning Outcomes	After reading this module and doing the suggested activities Learners will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> read and understand the story <i>The Third Level</i> analyse and appreciate themes like- escape from reality, concept of time and space, fantasy and reality and waking dream, and relate the story to the key contemporary issues.
Keywords	Escape, fantasy, waking dream, reality

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INTRODUCTION

Before we discuss the story, let us watch the following videos:

Video 1: “Harry Potter and The Sorcerer’s Stone- Platform Nine and Three Quarters”.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTykayOv_XA

In this scene we see Harry, a young boy, looking for platform number nine and three quarters. But he has never seen such a platform, even the ticket collector on the station laugh at him when he asks for directions to the platform. Suddenly, he sees a woman with her kids rushing towards the platform number nine and three quarters. He follows them and enters the platform through a wall.

Video 2: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe - The Wardrobe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwuqA1Ys9Zo>

Clip shows a young girl who is playing hide and seek. She is looking for a place to hide and, in her search, she enters a big room with only a big cupboard covered with a cloth. She hides herself in the cupboard and passing through the clothes hung inside, she enters a place covered in snow.

Q 1. Do you think such places exist in reality?

Q 2. Have you ever had any such curious experience which others find hard to believe?

(Answer in 100 words)

The story *The Third Level* is written by an American author Jack Finney also known as Walter Braden Finney. The story dwells on the irreversible consequences of war, insecurity of people, modern day problems of humans and the wish of common man to escape reality or the present. The story comes under the genre of science fiction.

READING

Learners are requested to read the story *The Third Level*.

<https://ncert.nic.in/textbook.php?levt1=1-8>

LET US RECALL

1. There are only _____ levels at the Grand Central Station as per everyone.
 - a. One
 - b. Two
 - c. Three
 - d. Four
2. Charlie's habit of collecting the stamps was a temporary refuge from _____.
 - a. Truth
 - b. Reality
 - c. Happiness
 - d. Poverty
3. _____ was mailed to his grandfather at his home in Galesburg and it had been there since July 18, 1894.
 - a. First day cover
 - b. Letter
 - c. Money
 - d. Stamps

COMPREHENSION OF THE TEXT

Section I

- *The Third Level* is set in 1950's New York.
- The three main characters of the story are – Charlie, a 31-year-old man; Louisa, Charlie's wife; and Sam, Charlie's friend and psychiatrist by profession.
- The story opens with our narrator (Charlie) addressing the readers that there are only two levels at the Grand Central Station of New York.
- Though there are only two levels, Charlie has visited the third level of Grand Central. He narrates that one night while he was in a hurry to get back home, he decided to take the subway from the Grand Central as it was faster means.
- He entered the Grand Central and went down the steps to the first level. Then he walked down another flight to the second level and got lost. The corridor he was in, turned sharp left and was slanting downwards. He went down a short flight of stairs and came out on the third level at Grand Central Station.

(Delhi Metro Station too is multilevel and there are many corridors and steps. An example of this is Central Secretariat Metro Station.)

- It looked different, "the room was smaller, there were fewer ticket windows and train gates, and the information booth in the center was of wood and old looking. The man in the booth wore a green eyeshade and long black sleeve protectors. The lights were dim and sort of flickering" because "they were open-flame gaslights".
- There were brass spittoons on the floor.
- A man wearing a derby hat, a black four-button suit with tiny lapels, and a big, black, handlebar mustache was pulling a gold watch from his vest pocket.
- Women wearing dress with leg-of mutton sleeves and skirts to the top of their high-buttoned shoes.
- He even "caught a glimpse of a locomotive, a very small Currier & Ives locomotive with a funnel-shaped stack".
- Everybody on the station was dressed like 1890s.
- He realized that he has travelled to the past. "To make sure, he walked over to a newsboy and glanced at the stack of papers at his feet. It was *The World* and *The World* hasn't been

published for years. The lead story said something about President Cleveland and it was printed June 11, 1894.”

[*The Third Level* – NCERT, p.1-6]

Section II

- Understanding the entire situation, Charlie immediately moved to the ticket window. He wanted to buy two tickets for Louisa and himself to go to Galesburg, Illinois of 1894 with the First World War still twenty years off, and World War II over forty years in the future.
- Charlie had enough money to buy two one-way tickets. But, when he counted the money and looked up, the clerk nodded at the bills “That ain’t money, mister and if you’re trying to skin me, you won’t get very far”. Charlie glanced at the cash drawer beside him. The money was old-style bills and different looking. Charlie turned away and got out fast.
- Next day, during lunch hour, Charlie drew three hundred dollars out of the bank, paid a premium and bought old-style currency.
- Charlie’s three hundred dollars bought him less than two hundred in old-style bills, but he didn’t care because things were cheaper in 1894.
- But to his dismay, he never again found the corridor that leads to the third level at Grand Central Station.
- His friends brushed his claim aside by suggesting it was a waking dream wish fulfilment (he was hallucinating).
- His psychiatrist friend said, “Charlie is unhappy as the modern world where he lives is full of insecurity, fear, war, worry and all the rest of it, and that he just wants to escape”.
- His friends further argued that Charlie’s habit of collecting the stamps was a ‘temporary refuge from reality.’
- Charlie wonders about their claim as his grandfather too was a stamp collector though things were nice and peaceful in his days. Even President Roosevelt collected stamps.
- But his fruitless wandering made his wife Louisa worried and she didn’t want him to look for the third level anymore, and after a while he stopped; he went back to stamp collection.
- Suddenly, Charlie informs the readers that now both, he and his wife are looking for the third level, every weekend.

- His friend Sam Weiner disappeared, and nobody knew where?
- One night, while fussing with his stamp collection, Charlie found a first-day cover. One that shouldn't have been there.
- First day cover - when a new stamp is issued, stamp collectors put it on an envelope and mail it to themselves with a blank paper inside to mark the date of its issue or first day of its sale. The envelope is called a first-day cover. They're never opened.
- It was mailed to his grandfather at his home in Galesburg and it had been there since July 18, 1894, yet Charlie didn't remember it at all. Charlie opened it. It wasn't blank.
- The note was signed Sam. According to the note, Sam has found the third level and had gone back in past. He has written to Charlie to urge him to continue his search for the third level as it was worth searching. The place was heaven.
- Later Charlie finds out that Sam has bought eight hundred dollars' worth of old-style currency from the stamp and coin store. He has utilised the money to set a hay, feed and grain business, which he has always wished for and certainly he can't pursue his old business/occupation in Galesburg, Illinois, in 1894 because Sam was his psychiatrist.
- The First day cover in the story highlights the dilemma whether the experience of the third level by Charlie is real or just a waking dream.

[*The Third Level* – NCERT, p.1-6]

THEMES

The Third level falls under the genre of science fiction that interweaves reality with fantasy. Charley believes that he has discovered the third level at the Grand Central station through which he can be transported to Galesburg, Illinois of 1894 with the First World War still twenty years off, and World War II over forty years in the future. A world of peace and happiness, with wooden gates, fancy hairstyles, derby hats, quaint engines, etc.

The story highlights the “theme of escapism as a psychological refuge from the grim realities of the present world along with a desire to stay with the past”. Charlie's experience of the third level seems to be confusing as we are made to think it is a product of **Charley's own imagination, a waking dream**. Life in the present-day modern world is full of insecurities, fear, worries and

stress. Therefore, everyone wants to escape the harsh realities of the present-day life. Charley seems to have imagined the third level as a means to escape to the past. Even his psychiatrist friend Sam eventually discovers the third level and escapes to the past. **The third level is an escape, a shelter, a relief, a refuge.** Even if it is temporary, one can escape from the harsh realities of a world so full of insecurity, tension, fear, war and worry.

The author in his narration **intersects time and space** and establishes that such a level can really exist. This level can be reached through stamp collections, music or talking to people of old generation, theatre, movies etc. It is an escape into a world which is not geographic, a domain which is not physical. It is a realm which is more mental, psychological and where there is peace, tranquility and happiness.

Answer the following MCQs:

1. What is the dilemma depicted by Jack Finney in the story *The Third Level*?

- a) Dilemma about truth and false.
- b) Dilemma about the reality and fantasy.
- c) Dilemma about the third level at the Grand Central.
- d) Dilemma about Sam

2. Why Sam has to change his profession in 1894?

- a) There was no need for a psychiatrist in 1894 as there was no stress
- b) People didn't know about the profession
- c) There were no patients
- d) Both a and b

LET US SUM UP

The story *The Third Level* brings the reader face to face with the fears, anxieties and insecurities of the modern world and how it impacts the humans emotionally. Our narrator Charlie feels helpless and frustrated and seeks temporary respite from life's harsh realities.

ANSWERS

Part 1

1. b
2. b
3. a

Part 2

1. b
2. d

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PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Apparent illogicality sometimes turns out to be a futuristic projection. Explain. [NCERT, Vistas, p-7]
2. There are instances in history when an idea or a vision was rejected as fantasy because it seemed illogical and unreal at a time. But, in the course of time they proved to be revolutionary concepts, ideas, things or objects that changed human lives. Some of such inventions are Airplane, Telephone, Lightbulbs etc.

<https://theculturetrip.com/north-america/usa/articles/10-inventions-no-one-thought-would-be-a-success/>

Do you know any such instance? Explain.

3. Philately helps keep the past alive. Discuss other ways in which this can be done. [NCERT, Vistas, p-7] [Learners can mention names of various activities]
4. Compare how fantasy and reality has been intersected in the two stories - *The Adventure* by Jayant Narlikar and *The Third Level* by Jack Finney.