

Class: XII	Department: ENGLISH	2023- 24
VISTAS	Topic: Poets and Pancakes- Asokamitran	

Summary:

1. The Gemini studio was located in Madras (Chennai).
2. The writer recounts his years in the company.
3. The make-up department was in the upstairs of a building that was believed to have been Robert Clive's stables.
4. Pancake was the brand name of the make-up material used by the artists in Gemini Studios.
5. The make-up room had the look of a hair-cutting salon with incandescent lights at all angles around half a dozen large mirrors, the writer speaks about the 'fiery misery' of those subjected to make-up.
6. There was a great deal of 'national integration' in the department and a strict hierarchy was maintained there.
7. The players who played the crowd were the responsibility of the 'office boy' in his early forties, a frustrated person, who turned all his anger towards Kothamanagalam Subbu.
8. The author's job was to cut out newspaper clippings and store them in files.
9. Most people including the 'boy' thought author was doing 'next to nothing'.
10. S S Vasan (editor of Tamil weekly Ananada Vikatan) was the owner of the studios.
11. **Subbu was No.2.** Subbu – a Brahmin, had the ability to look cheerful at all times, could be 'inspired when commanded', was tailor-made for films, had a separate identity as a poet and actor, had a genuine love for others, was charitable, always seen with The Boss, attached to Story.
12. **Department.** Story Department – assembly of poets and writers wore khadi.
13. **A lawyer(legal adviser)** – referred to as 'the opposite'-caused the end of a brief and the brilliant career of a talented actress, looked 'alone and helpless', a man of cold logic in a crowd of dreamers, close to the Boss, wore pants, coat and a tie, attached to Story Department, lost his job when the Story Department was closed down.
14. **Gemini studios** –a favourite haunt of poets, an excellent mess which supplied good coffee, Congress rule meant prohibition, almost everyone radiated leisure, wore Khadi and worshipped Gandhi, averse to Communism.
15. **Visit of MRA (a kind of counter-movement to international Communism) in 1952-** presented two plays 'The Forgotten Factor' and 'Jotham Valley' in a professional manner impressed Madras and Tamil drama community.
16. **Another visitor** – a poet from England, tall man, very English, addressed 'a more dazed and silent audience', visit remained an unexplained mystery, staff did not know whether he was a poet or an editor.
17. **Author's conviction about prose-writers** –'prose writing is for the patient, persistent, persevering drudge', short story contest by a British periodical 'The Encounter'-found in the British Council Library almost untouched by readers', discovered Stephen Spender was the editor.

18. The **author** bought ‘The God That Failed’ years later –six essays describing the disillusionment of six eminent men of letters with Communism, Stephen Spender one among them, the author suddenly realized the relevance of his visit to Gemini studios.

COMPETENCY BASED QUESTIONS

- (A) Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow :
6 1=6

Then the poet spoke. He couldn't have addressed a more dazed and silent audience. No one knew ~~what~~ he was talking about and his accent defeated any attempt to understand what he was saying. The whole thing lasted about an hour; then the poet left and we all dispersed in utter bafflement what are we doing ? What is an English poet doing in a film studio which makes Tamil films for the simplest sort of people ? People whose lives least afforded them the possibility of cultivating a taste for English poetry ? The poet looked pretty baffled too, for he too must have felt the sheer incongruity of his talk about the thrills and travails of an English poet. His visit remained an unexplained mystery.

- (i) Choose the appropriate option with reference to the extract.
‘The audience were dazed’ because
- (a) they were not accustomed to listening to poetry.
 - (b) they had never before seen an Englishman.
 - (c) they failed to comprehend what the poet was speaking.
 - (d) they were already bored.
- (ii) Complete the sentence with reference to the extract :
The English poet was _____ when he was addressing the dazed audience.
- (iii) Where did the talk take place ? Choose the correct option.
- (a) The Main Mall
 - (b) Story Writing Department
 - (c) Film studio
 - (d) Subbu's office
- (iv) The English poet's visit remained an unexplained mystery because.....
_____.
- (v) Complete the analogy with a word from the extract :
noisy : silent : : assembled : _____

- (vi) Explain the following phrase with reference to the extract :
‘The poet felt the sheer incongruity of his talk’

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. What does the writer mean by ‘the fiery misery’ of those subjected to make-up’?

A. By ‘the fiery misery’ of those subjected to make-up, the writer is trying to throw light upon the difficulties actors and actresses have to face because of half a dozen mirrors surrounded with large light bulbs. The bulbs generated a lot of heat and were definitely not a pleasure for the eyes.

2. What is the example of national integration that the author refers to?

A. At first, a Bengali was the head of the make-up studio but then he outgrew Gemini Studios and left it for better opportunities. After him, it was supervised by a Maharashtrian who was assisted by a Dharwar Kannadiga, an Andhra, a Madras Indian Christian, an Anglo-Burmese and the usual local Tamils. The fact that people from different cultures worked together puts forward the post-independence national integration scenario. It shows that people were united way before All India Radio and Doordarshan raised the concept.

3. What work did the ‘office boy’ do in the Gemini Studios? Why did he join the studios? Why was he disappointed?

A. The ‘office boy’ had the duty of slapping paints on the faces of players at the time of crowd-shooting. He joined Gemini Studios with a dream of becoming a first-rate actor, screen-writer or producer.

4. Why did the author appear to be doing nothing at the studios?

A. The author’s job was to cut and collect newspaper clippings or sometimes even writing them by hand. This was easier and lesser in comparison to what others were doing at the Studio.

5. Why was the office boy frustrated? Who did he show his anger on?

A. The office boy was frustrated because he thought his literary talent was going wasted in a room full of barbers and make-up artists. He somehow managed to deviate his anger on Subbu.

6. Who was Subbu’s principal?

A. The Boss, SS Vasan, who was also the founder of Gemini Studios, was Subbu’s principal

7. Subbu is described as a many-sided genius. List four of his special abilities.

A. Subbu, as a man of many qualities, had the ability to look cheerful at all times, was an excellent actor who could portray his roles in several ways, was an accomplished poet, and loved anyone he met.

8. Why was the legal adviser referred to as the opposite by others?

A. The legal adviser was referred to as the opposite by others because he once resorted to blackmailing an actress by recording her while she was throwing tantrums on the set. This is not considered to be legal, thus he was usually called the opposite.

9. What made the lawyer stand out from the others at Gemini Studios?

A. Gemini Studios was filled with dreamers and creative personnel. A lawyer in between them was the only man with logic. The writer calls him a 'neutral' man.

10. Did the people at Gemini Studios have any particular political affiliations?

A. No, although they dressed up in Khadi, they did not have the slightest political affiliations.

11. Why was the Moral Rearmament Army welcomed at the Studios?

A. Frank Buchman's Moral Re-Armament army was welcomed at the studio mainly because of their political association. The MRA came as a welcome change to their monotonous days at the studio.

12. Name one example to show that Gemini studios was influenced by the plays staged by MRA.

A. Frank Buchman's Moral Rearmament Army staged two plays – "Jotham Valley" and "The Forgotten Factor" in a most professional manner. The Gemini family of 600 and the people of Madras city watched them times and again.

13. What caused the lack of communication between the Englishman and the people at Gemini Studios?

A. The British accent of the Englishman caused lack of communication between him and the people at Gemini Studios.

14. Why is the Englishman's visit referred to as an unexplained mystery?

A. The Englishman's visit to the Gemini Studios is referred to as an unexplained mystery because no one could decipher his identity, whether he was a poet or an editor. Besides, when he spoke, no one at the studio understood what he intended to say as his accent was beyond their comprehension.

15. How did the author discover who the English visitor to the studios was?

A. Before investing money in participating in a short story contest organized by an English periodical- The Encounter, the author did a research on the magazine. He went to the British Council Library where, while going through an issue of that periodical, he discovered that its editor was Stephen Spender, the poet that had once visited the studio.

16. What does The God that Failed refer to?

A. The God that Failed refers to a collection of essays by six authors who wrote about their journey into Communism, one of them being Stephen Spender.

17. The author has used gentle humour to point out human foibles. Pick out instances of this to show how this serves to make the piece interesting.

A. The author portrays the make-up artists and the usage of the pancakes in an interesting way. Even the caricature of Subbu is hilarious. The way he tries to help his principal is quite amusing. The episode of the legal adviser that inadvertently causes the end of an actress's career is yet another example. The frustration of the office boy, the superficial praising of Gandhi, hatred of Communism and the 'mystery' surrounding Stephen Spender are some of the instances where the author has incorporated gentle humour.

18. Why was Kothamangalam Subbu considered No. 2 in Gemini Studios?

A. Kothamangalam Subbu was successful in securing the place closest to The Boss by means of flattery. He was not brilliant but a rather cheerful person and loyal to The Boss. He offered solutions whenever The Boss was in a fix. Thus, the staff considered him No.2 in Gemini Studios.

19. How does the author describe the incongruity of an English poet addressing the audience at Gemini Studios?

A. The English poet was addressing the Tamil audience at Gemini Studios in English with a typical provincial accent. He was talking about the thrills and travails of an English poet to a dazed and silent audience. This was the incongruity because his audience could not understand him at all.

20. What do you understand about the author's literary inclinations from the account?

A. The writer was a prose-writer. He wanted to send a short story for the short story contest organized by a British periodical by the name 'The Encounter'.