

Literature in Action

Poems

1 *Sad I Ams* by Trevor Millum

Sad I Ams

I am

the ring

from an empty Cola can

the scrapings

from an unwashed porridge pan

the severed arm

of last year's Action man.



I am

the envelope

on which the gum is gone

the Sellotape

where you can't find the end

the toothless stapler, springless bulldog clip

the dried up liquid paper

that mars instead of mends

the stamped addressed reply

that you forgot

to send.



I am

the battery in which no charge is left

the starter motor which remains inert

the tyre on which the tread is worn

the sparking plug which shows no sign of spark

the carburettor choked by bits of dirt

the chromium trim from which the shine has gone.

I am

a garden

overgrown with weeds

a library book

that no one ever reads

a stray

which no one thinks to feed

the piece of good advice

which no one seems to need.



In the first stanza, the poet is describing himself as the things that are usually discarded because they are no longer useful to the owner:- the persona is the ring from an empty Cola can and the leftovers of an unwashed porridge pan and the broken arm of an old toy. The ring of the can is usually thrown away after we have opened the can. The scrapings of the pans should be thrown away—nobody wants to keep the scrapings on the pan! No child would want an 'action' figure toy with a broken arm.

In the second stanza, the poet is now describing used things that are no longer usable. The envelope is no longer usable because the gum doesn't stick. The Sellotape is old and the end is impossible to find. The stapler too is useless as the stapler no longer works. The springless bulldog clip does not hold paper. Instead of mending the errors, the dry liquid paper tears the paper. The long forgotten stamped addressed reply is no longer useful.

The third stanza describes the car that is no longer useful to the owner. The non-functioning battery, starter motor, worn out tyre, the old spark plug, dusty carburettor and chromium trim that has lost its shine make the car no longer usable.

In the final stanza, the poet describes things that are not paid attention to. Nobody pays any attention to the garden. It is thus overgrown with weeds. Nobody reads or borrows the books and thus they may be covered with dust. Nobody takes care of the animals and so the strays have to scavenge for food. The advice given falls on deaf ears as nobody pays heed to it.

Elements of the Poem

About the Poem

The poet talks about things that have outlived their usefulness but for some reason are not thrown away. The poem is a reflection of the number of times that we sometimes keep things that are no longer useful.

About the Poet

Trevor explores the possibilities of using society's most forgotten objects as inspiration for writing poems. **Sad I Ams** is a poem that talks about everyday objects which some may treasure but may mean little to someone else.

Structure, Style and Language

The poem consists of four stanzas and every stanza begins with *I am* to highlight the sense of hopelessness.

Sad I Ams

Mood

The overall mood of the poem is that of despair and hopelessness. There also seems to be a slight tinge of pessimism.

Themes

Over the years, we tend to keep things that no longer work instead of throwing them away or sending them for recycling. These things are then forgotten and left to collect dust. The poem communicates a sense of neglect and abandonment when one has outlived one's usefulness.

Moral Values

We should have a positive outlook of life. Things should be looked at in its right perspective. Things that are no longer in use should be properly disposed of.

Online Quick Quiz 7



POEM 1

2 NEWS BREAK by Max Fatchen

THE POEM

*Now why so loving, darling,
And why the sudden kiss?
You'd help me with some little jobs?
For goodness sake, what's this?*

*Your face is clean for once, dear,
Your clothes without a crease.
You saved your luncheon money?
Will wonders never cease?*

*No dropping of your school books,
No shrieking, childish treble.
Today you are a lamb, love,
Where yesterday a rebel.*

*But surely you're some stranger,
No rage or hullabaloo.
Come closer, let me look, dear,
Can this be REALLY you?*

*Now were you struck by lightning
Or were you stunned at sport?
Ah ... now I see the reason.
You've brought your school report!*

THE LITERAL MEANING

The persona is surprised by the child who gives her such a loving kiss. She is also surprised by the offer to do some jobs around the house. The parent is clearly bewildered at the change she sees in the child.

The persona continues to be amazed by the child who had taken the trouble to keep his face clean and the clothes neat. The child surprises her further by not spending his pocket money as he usually does.

The persona is amazed with the change she sees in the child. The child had been playful and rebellious the day before but has suddenly taken a change for the better.

The persona cannot believe the child she sees is hers. The child feels like a stranger to her.

The persona realises that the child behaved so well because he has brought home his school progress report and is trying his best to be well behaved to make up for his mediocre results.

Report Card

English	50%
Maths	35%
Science	28%
Malay	36%

Elements of the Poem

About the Poem

The title of the poem News Break is as the title suggests - the breaking of news. In this case, the mother is amazed by the ways the child attempts to break the news about his performance in his school which is stated in the school report.

Persona

The parent is puzzled by the child's sudden change of behaviour from a playful, noisy child who often throws tantrums to a well-behaved child.

Moral Values

We should try to be honest at all times. We must have the courage to face the consequences of our actions. Relationship with one another should be built on trust.

NEWS BREAK

Mood

The overall mood is light-hearted and humorous but the message is clear that we should attempt to understand the changes in a child. The behaviour of a child is often the result of his or her surroundings. The persona tries to understand the mood and changes she sees in the child and attempts to understand the reason for the changes.

Structure, Style and Language

The poem consists of 5 stanzas and each stanza has the rhyme scheme of *a, b, c, b*. The language and choice of words reflect the affection the parent has for the child.

Themes

The theme of the poem is about understanding the changes in children. We should attempt to understand children through their actions and mannerisms and embrace their strengths as well as their weaknesses.

Online Quick Quiz 8

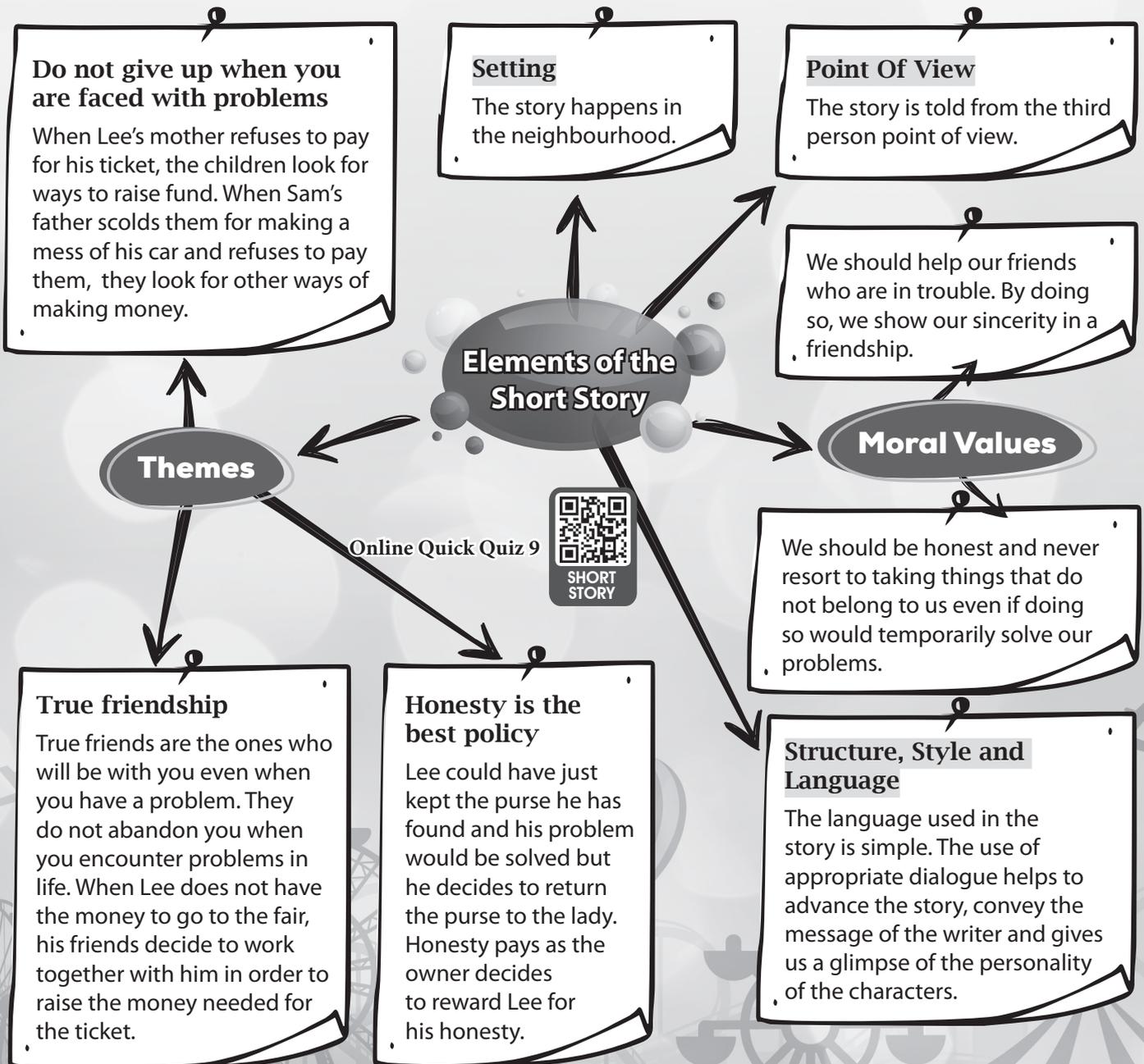


POEM 2

FAIR'S FAIR by Narinder Dhama

SYNOPSIS OF THE STORY

Raj, Lee and Sam were good friends. One day, the fair had come to town and Raj's Father was taking them there. However, Lee did not get permission to go because his mother did not have enough money to give him for the fair. The trio then decided to do jobs to help Lee. Firstly, they washed Sam's father's car but made a mess of the job. So, they were not paid. Next, they took Mrs Green's dog, Micky for a walk in the park where it bit a girl's ball. The one pound earned for walking Micky was given to the girl. As the three good friends were thinking of what to do next, a woman walked past them. Her purse fell out of her bag. They were tempted to take the money from the purse but they knew the money did not belong to them. So, the purse was returned to its owner. The woman praised Lee for his honesty and gave him five pounds. Finally, Lee had some money to go to the fair.



1 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA by Jules Verne

Point of View

This story is told in the first person point of view. The reader understands the happenings in the story through the experiences and observations of the narrator, Professor Aronnax.

Setting

The story is mainly set on the *Nautilus*, the submarine designed by Captain Nemo. The *Nautilus* traverses the Pacific, Indian, Atlantic, Arctic and Antarctic Oceans, the Mediterranean and Red Seas.

Elements of the Novel

Language and Style

Language is simple and dialogues help to bring out the thoughts of the characters. Successfully conveys the excitement of Professor Aronnax.

Moral Values

Man can never outwit nature.

Captain Nemo's confrontation with nature symbolises his ultimate surrender to nature which he has initially set out to defy. The fate of Captain Nemo and the *Nautilus* is unknown suggesting that man can never outwit nature. The fate of *Nautilus* highlights that we should use Science and knowledge for the benefit of man and not to defy nature.

Themes

Man versus nature.

Captain Nemo in creating an all powerful mechanical wonder in the form of *Nautilus* is defying nature. *Nautilus* represents man's attempt to overcome and outwit nature. Captain Nemo is brilliant and attempts to create an alternate nature in the form of *Nautilus* which at that point of time is beyond imagination. He enjoys displaying the wonders on board *Nautilus* while Professor Aronnax is totally impressed with its wonder and the chance to learn more about the oceans and is even reluctant to leave *Nautilus*.

The captain though appears without any emotions is not entirely free from it. When he sees that the East Indian diver is at risk of being attacked by the shark, he risks his own life to save him. He even presents the poor diver with a bag of pearls. He is capable of feeling for the poor and suppressed East Indian diver.

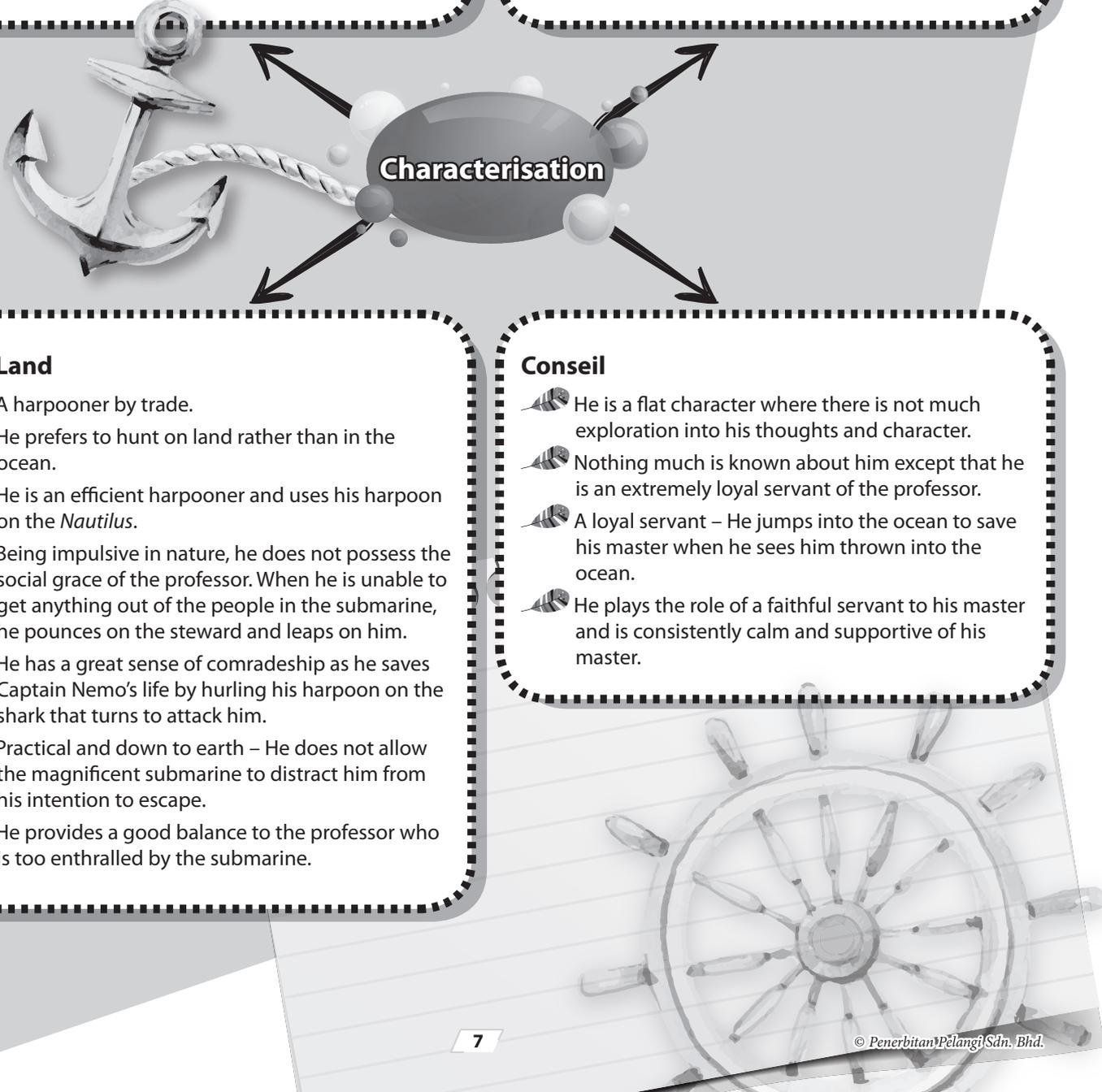
At the end of the story, overcome by extreme depression, Captain Nemo drives *Nautilus* into a maelstrom.

Professor Aronnax

- ✎ The main character, narrator, and protagonist of this novel.
- ✎ As the Assistant Professor in the Museum of Natural History in Paris, he is highly knowledgeable.
- ✎ He is a greatly respected professor as we have been told that he has been invited by the United States Government on an expedition to destroy the sea creature that is threatening the lives of the people on board ships. Overwhelmed by the wonders in the submarine he slowly loses sight of the intent to escape.
- ✎ He sees his days in the submarine as an opportunity to extend his knowledge on the wonders of the ocean.
- ✎ Tries to learn as much as he can in the *Nautilus* and even begins to write a book.

Captain Nemo

- ✎ The talented creator and commander of the *Nautilus*.
- ✎ A person who is prompted by a hatred that is not made known in the story.
- ✎ Takes immense pride in his creation and proudly shows Professor Aronnax and his companions around the submarine.
- ✎ Does not show much emotion.
- ✎ Shows the humane side to his character on three occasions in the story that is when he sheds tears when one of his men is hurt and about to die.
- ✎ Another occasion is when he performs a burial and a prayer for him under the sea.
- ✎ The third instance is when he looks at the photograph of his wife and children with much sorrow.
- ✎ He is consumed by sorrow and hatred.



Characterisation

Ned Land

- ✎ A harpooner by trade.
- ✎ He prefers to hunt on land rather than in the ocean.
- ✎ He is an efficient harpooner and uses his harpoon on the *Nautilus*.
- ✎ Being impulsive in nature, he does not possess the social grace of the professor. When he is unable to get anything out of the people in the submarine, he pounces on the steward and leaps on him.
- ✎ He has a great sense of comradeship as he saves Captain Nemo's life by hurling his harpoon on the shark that turns to attack him.
- ✎ Practical and down to earth – He does not allow the magnificent submarine to distract him from his intention to escape.
- ✎ He provides a good balance to the professor who is too enthralled by the submarine.

Conseil

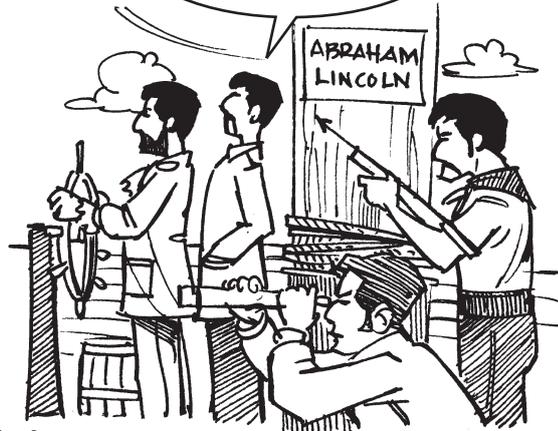
- ✎ He is a flat character where there is not much exploration into his thoughts and character.
- ✎ Nothing much is known about him except that he is an extremely loyal servant of the professor.
- ✎ A loyal servant – He jumps into the ocean to save his master when he sees him thrown into the ocean.
- ✎ He plays the role of a faithful servant to his master and is consistently calm and supportive of his master.

The Story...



It's the sea monster again! Hurry! Let's get out of its way.

In 1866, ships from many countries spot a mysterious sea monster, which endangers merchant steamers and passenger ships. The mysterious sea monster is spotted at different places around the world.



Three months have passed and still there is no sign of the sea monster!

Professor Aronnax, a French marine biologist accepts an invitation to join an expedition to find and destroy the monster together with Canadian whaler and master harpoonist, Ned Land and Aronnax's faithful servant Conseil.

Help me! Help me!



One day, their ship hits a strange creature. The ship crashes and both the professor and Ned are thrown into the sea. The professor's faithful servant jumps into the sea to save him.



Where are we? What place is this?

They find themselves on a submarine, *The Nautilus*. They are captured and brought before its creator and commander, Captain Nemo.

This is a scientific wonder. What a genius.



Professor Aronnax is enthralled by the wonder of *Nautilus*. The trio is prevented from leaving the submarine to safeguard the secrets of the vessel.



There's got to be a way to escape when the men are not looking. We must get out of here.

Ned constantly plans to escape but Professor Aronnax is keen to explore the wonders of *Nautilus*.



This is simply amazing! How is this possible?

The men experience many underwater adventures they never imagine could have existed.



Oh no! What's happening? The submarine is being attacked.

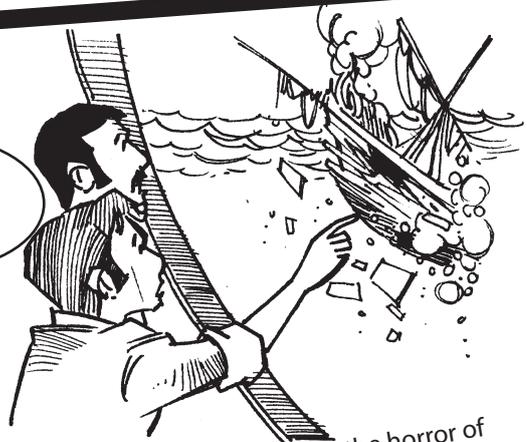
The trio is horrified as Nautilus is attacked by a warship.

We must destroy that warship.



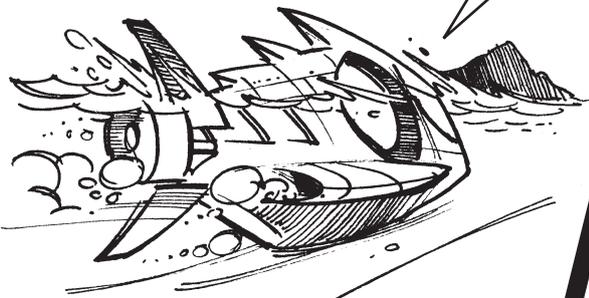
Captain Nemo plans his horrifying attack on the warship.

Oh no! The warship is sinking.



Captain Nemo attacks the ship, much to the horror of Professor Aronnax who watches in disbelief as the ship plunges to the depths.

We must make our escape at all cost.



They plan a rash escape and are caught in a whirlpool when the submarine heads towards a maelstrom.

What has happened to Nautilus?

We are safe at last.



They awake safe and sound in the hut of a fisherman. Professor Aronnax awaits his return to France to rewrite his memoirs of his journey under the sea.



2 THE SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON by Johann Wyss (Retold by Martin Powell)

Setting

The story takes place in the early 19th century and is mainly set on an uninhabited tropical island where the Robinsons struggle through difficulties to stay alive.

Point of View

This story is told in the first person point of view. The reader understands the happenings in the story through the experiences and eyes of the narrator, Mr Robinson.

Elements of the Novel

Language and Style

The language used is simple and the writer is able to communicate the intended message and underlying theme of the story.

Moral Values

Family members should stay united in times of trouble. In the story, the Robinsons stay alive as the family members provide each other with moral support when they find themselves shipwrecked on an island. The younger children help their mother to look for fresh water and food while the elder siblings go with their father to salvage whatever they can get from the ship. They work together to ensure that everybody is safe and taken care of.

Theme

A strong family bond is the source of strength to overcome difficulties in life. The family suddenly finds themselves in peril. They are in a ship when a storm comes. The family discovers that the captain and his mates have taken the rafts and have left the family on board a sinking ship. Together they build their own raft and go in search for an island. They overcome a lot of difficulties to set up a home on the island. Faced with difficulties, the family stays united in order to overcome the challenges together. With their ingenuity, perseverance and unity the Robinsons survive the ordeal.





Jack

- The third son of Mr and Mrs Robinson.
- Mr Robinson entrusts the mother and the brother to his care when he and the older children go to the jungle.
- Resourceful child – makes fishing pole to catch fish.

Franz

- The youngest child of the family.
- Often left in the care of Mrs Robinson.
- Very obedient.

Ernest

- The second son of the family
- Brave, intelligent and resourceful
- Comforts the mother in times of difficulty

Characterisation

Online Quick Quiz 11



Mr Robinson

- The narrator of the story.
- The pillar of strength for the family.
- Very knowledgeable person – He knows everything about roots, herbs and hunting.
- Resourceful – He generates a small explosion to get the animals out of the ship.
- Safety of the family is his priority.
- Very contented person – He decides to stay on in the remote island but does not stop his children from having a brighter future in United Kingdom.

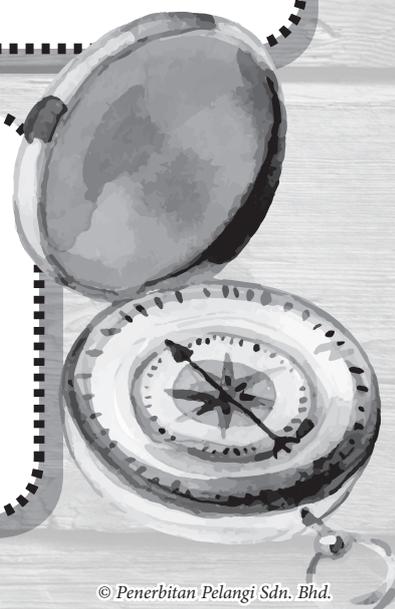
Mrs Robinson

- She is a caring woman who does all she can to care for the family in the remote island.
- She keeps the family together through her patient and supporting ways.
- She is a contented woman who is willing to support her husband who decides to stay on in the island.



Fritz

- The oldest and strongest of the children.
- He assists the father in doing difficult and dangerous tasks.
- Brave - He is the one who kills the gigantic boa that is responsible for the death and disappearance of the livestock.
- He puts the interest of others before himself – rescues Jenny Montrose from being attacked by wild animals.
- Determined – He builds a canoe in two years by himself.



The Story...

Australia, here I come!



In the early 19th century, the Robinson family leaves their homeland in Switzerland to settle as missionaries in Australia.

Oh dear, what is going to happen to us?



Shortly into the voyage they are shipwrecked, and the ship's captain and crew decide to abandon the ship. The family is left to their own fate.

Look! I have caught a big fish.



Mr Robinson and Fritz salvage what they can from the shipwreck.

Fritz and dad have salvaged something from the ship!

What's this message on the leg?



Fritz while testing out his new canoe sees a message asking for help, tied on the leg of an albatross. He discovers that there is a woman, Jenny Montrose trapped like the Robinsons on a nearby island.

Meet Turk and Juno.



Fritz rescues the two dogs from the ship. Together the family constructs a small homestead on the island.

Don't worry, let me help you.



Fritz helps to save Jenny Montrose from being attacked by wild animals.

Grr.. get away from me!

Oh no! Juno is dead. The livestock is also missing?



Juno dies along with many livestock and this puts the family's life on tenterhooks.

So you are the culprit for the missing animals.



Fritz kills the gigantic boa constrictor that is responsible for the death of the animals.

Goodbye children. Be happy and take care of yourselves.



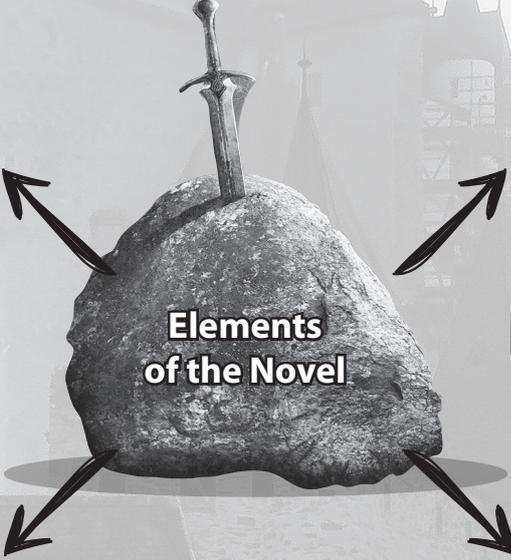
The children leave for United Kingdom with Jenny Montrose in a ship that has come sailing in search for her. The parents choose to stay behind to live on the island.

Setting

The story is set in the 6th century about the birth of a legendary figure in the folklore of medieval England. The story takes place in Medieval England and France.

Point of View

This story is told in the third person point of view where the narrator does not figure in the events of the story and tells the story by referring to all characters and places in the third person with third person pronouns and proper nouns.


Elements of the Novel
The Forces of good over evil

The forces of evil is seen in the character Morgan and her son, Mordred who plots to overthrow King Arthur but ends tragically with the death of Mordred showing that the evil will in the end be punished. King Arthur is seen as the forces of good where he becomes the good king who brings peace to the land. He promises to hand the throne to Morgan's son, Mordred after his death as he does not have a son. Morgan who is cold, calculating and vicious is not willing to wait. She thus plots to seize the throne. She poisons King Arthur's mind and makes him suspect his queen. She then makes King Arthur drive his best friend Lancelot from his castle. Later, she urges the King to seek Lancelot out to kill him. While he is away from the castle, Morgan imprisons the queen and crowns his son the King. King Arthur seeks out Mordred and wounds him in a fight. Lancelot comes to his rescue but King Arthur is already seriously wounded. The story ends with King Arthur being taken away by Merlin and leaving word with Lancelot to save and care for the queen.

Moral Values**Evil cannot triumph over virtue**

One should not be evil and the evil will eventually be punished. Mordred who plots the downfall of King Arthur in the end dies in the battle. King Arthur too pays heavily for having suspected the queen and doing injustice to his trusted knight, Lancelot.

Never allow emotions to rule the heart

King Arthur becomes an easy target for Morgan because he is ruled by emotions. He allows jealousy to get the better of him and clouds his judgement. Morgan's plot succeeds because King Arthur is overcome by jealousy making him emotional and loses his rational self. In the end, he loses both his beloved wife and his entire kingdom.



King Arthur

- He is a brave young boy who is willing to do what others think is impossible – pulling the sword out of the stone.
- Determined – He learns from Merlin on how to be a good king. He does not want to reconsider his marriage with Guinevere although Merlin whom he highly respects persuades him against it.
- Valiant – He leads the army in battles and gains the respect of the people.
- Jealous – His jealousy gets the better of him and makes him fall prey to Morgan's deceit and suspects his beloved wife and trusted knight.

Merlin

- He is a wise magician who engineers the selection of the king, so that the land will have peace.
- He is a devoted person who guides and teaches King Arthur how to be a good king.
- Merlin has magical power and is able to foresee King Arthur's downfall thus leaves a magical sword for King Arthur to help him when he is in trouble.
- He appears at the end to conclude the story by taking the seriously wounded king away.

Lancelot

- He is King Arthur's most trusted knight.
- Though he is misunderstood and banished by King Arthur, he rushes to his aid when he learns about how he is overthrown by Mordred.
- Towards the end King Arthur entrusts the queen to him.

Characterisation

Queen Guinevere

- She is King Arthur's beautiful wife.
- Her character brings in the element of romance into the story.
- She is simple in nature and does not suspect Morgan and her son, Mordred.
- She fully supports her husband who intends to hand the throne to Mordred.
- Being a simple person, she does not realise that her husband would suspect her of any unnatural relationship with Lancelot.

Morgan and Mordred

- Morgan is the evil half-sister of King Arthur and the cause of King Arthur's downfall.
- Morgan engineers the plot to usurp the throne and Mordred carries out the order.
- She is cold, calculating, and vicious.
- Her greed causes her to poison the king's mind, so that she can crown her son the king although King Arthur has made known his intention to hand the throne to Mordred.

The Story...

People are dying everywhere. There's no peace in this land. We need a King.



It is in the late 6th century in England. There is no king and there is no peace on land as people are fighting.

The one who pulls out the sword from the stone is the King of the land.



Merlin, the magician dreams about a wonderful King called Arthur. To find the king, Merlin makes a magic stone where he puts a sword in it.

I will pull the sword out!



It is said that only the true king would be able to draw the sword out. Everyone laughs at young Arthur but he pulls hard and out comes the sword.

Valiant King Arthur! Long live the King!



Merlin assures young Arthur that he will be there to assist him. He soon became King Arthur's trusted adviser. King Arthur fights and wins many battles.

My son, Mordred shall be the King.



Merlin introduces King Arthur to his half-sister, Morgan who can see the future.

Your marriage will be your downfall.



King Arthur falls in love with Guinevere and marries her against the wishes of Merlin who prophesizes that his marriage with Guinevere would lead to his downfall.

I shall take my leave, King Arthur. I can no longer assist you. Take this.



Merlin presents Arthur with a magic sword and bids him goodbye.

Thank you my queen. This round table is where all my knights will meet.

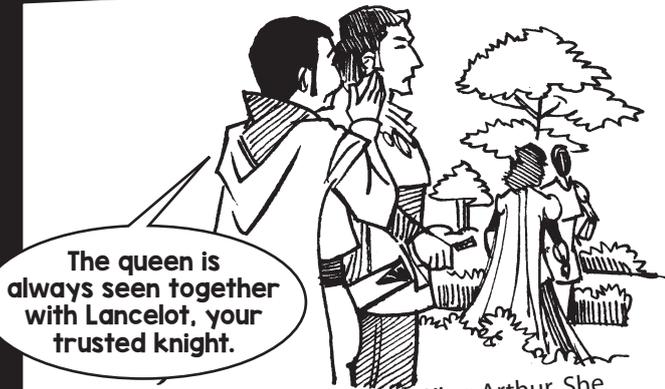


Guinevere, his queen presents King Arthur with a round table where the strongest knights in the land would gather and sit. He then meets Lancelot, a knight who later becomes his good friend.

My lord, that is just a bad dream. Think nothing of it.



Arthur and Guinevere plan to crown Mordred as the next king. That night he has a dream and in his dream he is warned that Mordred is a bad man. He relates the dream to his queen who dismisses it as just a bad dream.



The queen is always seen together with Lancelot, your trusted knight.

Morgan thinks of ways to remove King Arthur. She begins to make the King suspect his wife of having a relationship with his knight, Lancelot.



Thou shall leave my palace from this very moment!

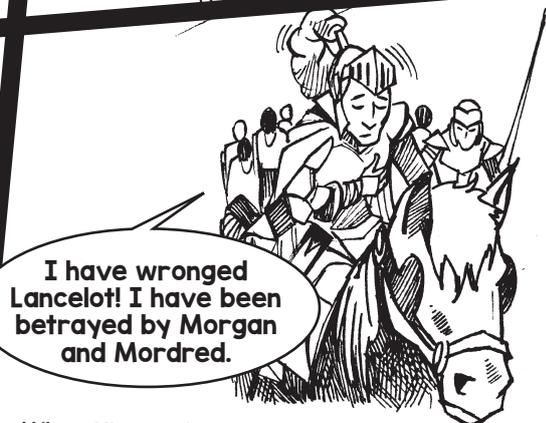
Out of jealousy, King Arthur banishes Lancelot from his castle.



There will be no peace unless Lancelot is dead!

Guards, put the queen behind bars.

To overthrow the king, Morgan instigates the King to seek out Lancelot and kill him. King Arthur leaves the castle to capture Lancelot. At this time, Morgan puts the queen in prison and crowns her son Mordred as the king.



I have wronged Lancelot! I have been betrayed by Morgan and Mordred.

When King Arthur learns of Morgan and her son's plot to overthrow him, he seeks out Mordred, the traitor. Many of King Arthur's men die in the battle. King Arthur is seriously injured.



Please throw my magic sword into the water.

When Lancelot and his soldiers finally arrive, King Arthur is dying. He tells Lancelot to throw his magic sword into the water.



Goodbye, my friend. Take care of my queen, Lancelot.

Come with me, King Arthur.

King Arthur bids Lancelot goodbye and tells him to find Guinevere and to take care of his beloved queen.

Online Quick Quiz 12

