



INDIAN SCHOOL MUSCAT
SENIOR SECTION
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
CLASS XII
VISTAS: ON THE FACE OF IT



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The Story-line:

Derry was a teenager, highly pessimistic and withdrawn from the mainstream society. - He developed this attitude after one side of his face was disfigured by acid. He avoided company of others and remained lonely lest he be noticed by other people. - He believed that no one loved him and his mother loved him because she was supposed to. - Well, Derry cannot be completely blamed for his pessimistic and aggressive attitude towards the world around him. - Once he heard two women commenting about his monstrous appearance. They said only a mother could love a face like his. - On another day Derry heard his parents conversing that he would not survive after their death because he was deformed. - The shock he received from these words was big. - On another occasion Derry heard his relatives saying that his being put in the hospital where he had been treated after the accident was good for him. In their opinion a deformed boy like Derry could accommodate himself with other deformed boys and girls. - Derry had his ears always open for such comments and used to respond to them in his silent way. - He concluded that the world altogether didn't need a boy like him. - One day Derry accidentally met a man called Mr. Lamb. - Mr. Lamb was an old man with a lame leg. After he became lame, Mr. Lamb began to develop a positive attitude with his deformity. - He worked hard to defeat this impairment and learnt to walk and climb ladders. - He was happy to be alive and ignored his lameness. - He made everyone his friend and had a house with no curtains and open doors. He welcomed anyone who came to him. - While Mr. Lamb took his impairment as a challenge and tried to overcome it, Derry believed that he was unwanted and lost. - His pain was physical and mental. Being a child he was not as strong as Mr. Lamb about suffering. - He couldn't take the sneering and sympathizing world as taken by Mr. Lamb. - Mr. Lamb was able to sit smart and unaffected as long as he wore trousers and sat but Derry had no way to hide his face. - After meeting Mr. Lamb Derry realized how foolish he had been to believe his parents. - For him Lamb was a man who opened the doors of his closed world in an hour's time the same of which were shut on him by his parents and therefore believed that his company with Lamb would make him a perfect person. - At the end Derry goes back to his house where his mother cross questioned him. She had instructed him not to step out of the house. - Derry tried to convince his mother that Mr. Lamb was an extremely good man but she was not ready to listen. - Ignoring his mother's thoughtless restrictions, Derry left his home and ran to Mr. Lamb's garden. - On reaching, Derry found a motionless Mr. Lamb fallen from the ladder. - He had fallen while pulling the crab apples down from the tree.

Justification of the Title:

“On the Face of it” is an informal expression used to say that something seems to be good, true etc. An individual may be quite different from what we think of him or what he or she may apparently appear to be at first glance. There is the imperative need for us to view others by removing our glasses of prejudice, hatred, hearsay and dislike. On the face of it, Mr. Lamb appears to be mysterious, lonely, lame old fellow who lives in a neighborhood house with a huge garden, but in reality he is very kind, generous, loving and altruistic. Similarly, although Derek has an ugly looking scary face, he is a fine lad of fourteen with a deep longing for love. There is nothing wrong with Mr. Lamb and Derek. What is wrong is the way people in their lives and around them view and treat them. On the face of it, there is so much of diversity, so many differences and divisions between the people and other species of the world but underneath is a oneness, a sameness – all of

them are created by God and all of them need to live and grow together with love and mutual acceptance. As the play progresses the characters' views about each other and our impression of them changes for the better. Thus, Susan Hill has quite appropriately entitled her play "On the Face of It".

Theme: People who suffer from disabilities must always look at the bright side of things and adapt reality of life bravely. At the same time the actual pain or inconvenience caused by a physical impairment is often much less than the sense of alienation felt by the person. The disabled needs support and acceptance and not our pity. The title 'On the Face of it' is used to mean that something seems to be good, true etc. but that needs to be changed when you know more about it. Appearances are deceptive and most often, we go on dealing with impressions and prejudices about others without caring to know about them actually. People know Mr. Lamb as a lonely eccentric lame old man but in reality he is a very kind and generous man who longs for company and he loves his fellow human beings along with all the other creations of God. Similarly Derek appears to be an abominable ugly boy with a huge scar on his face whom no one loves or likes or befriends. He is the object of other people's hateful stares ridicules and neglect. Even his mother does not dare to kiss him on the cheek with the scar. Yet this boy who is suffering from an acute inferiority complex has a tender and sensitive heart. He wants to love and be loved. Fortunately he meets Mr. Lamb who transforms him with his healing touch.

Short Answer Questions:

Q1. Who is Derry? What self-opinion does he hold?

Q2. Mr. Lamb says to Derry; 'it's all relative, beauty and the beast', what essentially does he mean by that?

Q3. What does Derry know about the fairy tale 'Beauty and the Beast'? Why is he not convinced by its moral?

Q4. Mr. Lamb has successfully learned to cope with his loneliness. How?

Q5. What did Derry's mothers think of Mr. Lamb?

OR

Why did Derry's mother stop him, going to Mr. Lamb?

Q6. How does Lamb try to remove the baseless fears of Derry?

Q7. Why does Derek return to Mr Lamb's garden?

Q8. Explain Mr Lamb's observation 'Everything's the same, but everything is different'

Q9. Why do kids call Mr Lamb 'Lamey-Lamb'? How does he feel about it?

Q10. Comment on the moral value of the play.

Long answer questions:

Q1. How did Mr. Lamb's meeting with Derry become a turning point in Derry's life? Both Lamb and Derry handicapped, – Derry in the beginning withdrawn and defiant, – couldn't stand people staring at him – Lamb open-minded and generous. – kept garden gate open and welcomed all, – had a positive attitude, taught Derry not to indulge in self-pity/love life, – taught him the ways of dealing with people – Derry confessed to his mother that Lamb talked of things that nobody had ever talked of – things that gave him an optimistic outlook. – Even defied his mother. – Derry's return to Lamb's garden shows his appreciation for Lamb/ restored confidence.

Q2. How did Mr. Lamb try to give courage and confidence to Derry?

Welcomed him and accepted him as he was. Told him its important to see how you are on the inside than how you look on the outside--One cannot go through life being scared and alienated- Shouldn't brood over limitations but count on his blessings- he had brain, legs, tongue, arms and thus was totally functional-this was a blessing-- Enjoy simple joys of everyday living with people around and nature, ignoring the unpleasant-see beauty in bees buzzing or humming-weeds growing-flowers blooming- attitude matters. Individuals make a difference to the problem. Extended unconditional love inspired him with love for life and instilled confidence in him to look at life in an optimistic way. Embrace his burnt face and rise above it.