DJE3D - CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

Unit I - Prose

a. Wole Soyinka	The Past Must Address its Present (Nobel Lecture)
b. Nirad C. Chaudhuri	The Eternal Silence Of These Infinite Crowds

Unit II - Poetry

a. Peter Porter	Your Attention Please
b. Kamala Wijertane	To a Student
c. George Eliot Clark	How Exile Melts into One Hundred Roses
d. Ted Hughes	Thought Fox
e. Andrew Motion	Better Life
f. Chinua Achebe	Refugee Mother and Child

Unit III - Fiction

a. V.S.Naipaul	A House For Mr.Biswas

Unit IV - Short Stories

a. Frank Sargeson	A Man and His Wife
b. Andrew Salkey	Anancy
c. Alan Paton	Ha'Penny
d.Morley Callaghan	The Snob

Unit V - Drama

a. Bertolt Brecht	Mother Courage and Her Children

Reference:

1. "An Anthology of Commonwealth Poetry" , Ed .C.D.Narasimaiah
2. "A Commonwealth Reader", Ed. Sam Sahayam & Preethi.

THIS PAST MUST ADDRESS ITS PRESENT

_ Wole Soyinka

About the author:

Soyinka was born into a Yoruba family in Abeokuta. After his study in Nigeria and the UK, he worked with the Royal Court Theatre in London. He went on to write plays that were produced in both countries, in theatres and on radio. He took an active role in Nigeria's political history and its struggle for independence from Great Britain. In 1965, he seized the Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service studio and broadcast a demand for the cancellation of the Western Nigeria Regional Elections. In 1967 during the Nigerian Civil War, he was arrested by the federal government of General Yakubu Gowon and put in solitary confinement for two years.

Soyinka has been a strong critic of successive Nigerian governments, especially the country's many military dictators, as well as other political tyrannies, including the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe. Much of his writing has been concerned with "the oppressive boot and the irrelevance of the colour of the foot that wears it". During the regime of General Sani Abacha (1993–98), Soyinka escaped from Nigeria via the "NADECO Route" on a motorcycle. Living abroad, mainly in the United States, he was a professor first at Cornell University and then at Emory University in Atlanta, where in 1996 he was appointed Robert W. Woodruff Professor of the Arts. Abacha proclaimed a death sentence against him "in absentia". With civilian rule restored to Nigeria in 1999, Soyinka returned to his nation. He has also taught at the universities of Oxford, Harvard and Yale.

Summary

Wole Soyinka's Nobel lecture, 'The Past must address its Present' is significant in the context of racial discrimination, against Blacks. In this speech Soyinka reminiscences over many incidents that threw light on the inhuman treatment meted out to the Africans. The first incident referred by him took place at Hola Camp Kenya, during the Mau – Mau Liberation Struggle. The incident involves the death of 11 detainees who were beaten to death, by the Camp officers and warders.

The Second is the incident that took place at Sharpeville where the unarmed Africans were shot dead. The Third is the incident of the burning of passes, on Digun's Day when the unarmed Blacks were killed, and many wounded. Many decades have passed since the happening of these incidents and black like Wole soyinka has been selected for a prestigious award like Nobel Prize. It may create an impression that the Racial discrimination has been erased. But Soyinka points out the paradox in his situation. The year 1986, when Soyinka got

the Nobel Award has also witnessed the association of The Swedish Prime Minister who has given his voice against racial discrimination, and the mysterious death of Samora Machel, Moxambique and the first Black Prime Minister in Plane Crash.

Pondering over the reason for these incidents Soyinka feels that it is because the white overseers had never actually experienced the human otherness of their victims. They clearly did not the reality of the victims as human beings. He also points out that oppression and "Sub – human" denigration of the blacks has been carried out by the colonial over lots in the garb of "civilizing mission". The truth is that these "traditional attitudes" are so deeply embedded in the minds of the whites that the even radical South African white "killed maimed, silenced, tortured, exiled debased and dehumanize hundreds of thousands of blacks".

Despite the pain enunciated by the inhuman treatment and the racial discrimination, the black races capacity of forgive is great. Hence they have accepted the White Culture and Literature without prejudices. Even after many years of freedom, the streets many places of this country bear the name of their oppresses. The libraries of about with books of white philosopher. Humer and Hegal without any warning "this book is dangerous for your racial self – esteem".Soyinka says that such state of existence of should not be misunderstand and uncritical capacity of black Patience Rather it has to be understood as a rational state of being within the spirit of partnership. Having focuses on the hoory pass and anachronistic present of the Africans, Soyinka concludes his speech with the plea that " this in human affront cannot be allowed to peruse our 20th Century Conscience into the 21" – People must strive for the end of racism, the eradication of " Human in equality and the consequent" 'Prize' with be universal suffrage and peace.

THE ETERNAL SILENCE OF THESE INFINITE CROWDS

-Nirad Chaudhuri

About the Author:

Nirad C. Chaudhuri is a reputed Indian journalist. He graduated from Calcutta University with first class honours in B.A.(History). He did the M.A. Degree honours course but did not take the examination as he never felt himself prepared for it- he had such a never felt himself fully prepared for it –he had such a flair for perfection. His early career was frustrating. Then he joined Government service. Later he gave it up and took to journalism. He became prominent with the publication of The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian. He has become an acclaimed Indian writer in English since then.

Summary:

"The Eternal Silence of these Infinite Crowds" is an extract from Chaudhuri's second work "A Passage to England". In this extract he brings out a striking contrast between the reserved nature of the English and the garrulousness of the Indians while travelling , and subtly points out some basic differences in character between the two races. His article is remarkably vivid, humorous, interesting and informative.

According to Chaudhuri the English people do not enter into conversation with a stranger. Even in public places they keep silence. Their silent movement in the underground railway is like "ants moving towards a hole". Chaudhuri absorbed the same silence when he went into a pub or restaurants. Both will be crowded at the lunch time. But he heard no conversation. According to him, they avoid entering into a dialogue. They knew that, others will criticize their notorious reserve.

Unlike the English, Indians are gregarious by nature. Public places such as railway station, bus stand, and club are filled with noise. The bus stops are also full of conversation. People share not only public topics but also personal matters.

YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE

- Peter Porter

Text:

The polar DEW has just warned that
A nuclear rocket strike of
At least one thousand megatons
Has been launched by the enemy
Directly at our major cities.
This announcement will take
Two and a quarter minutes to make,
You therefore have a future
Eight and a quarter minutes
To comply with the shelter
Requirements published in the Civil
Defence Code __section Atomic Attach
A specially shortened Mass
Will be broadcast at the end
Of this announcement __

Protestant and Jewish services
Will begin simultaneously__
Select your wavelength immediately
According to instructions
In the Defence Code. Do not
Take well-beloved pets (including birds)
Into your shelter-they will consume
Fresh air. Leave the old and bed-
ridden, you can do nothing for them.
Remember to-press the sealing
Switch when everyone is in
The shelter. Set the radiation
Aerial, turn on the Geiger barometer.
Turn off your television now.
Turn off your radio immediately
The Services end. At the same time
Secure explosion in the ears
Of each member of your family. Take
Down your plasma flasks. Give your children
In the C.D. green container, then put
Them to bed. Do not break
The inside airlock seals until
The radiation All Clear shows
(Watch for the cuckoo in your
Perplex panel), or your District
Touring Doctor rings your bell.
If before this, your air becomes
Exhausted or if any of your family
Is critically injured, administer
The capsules marked ‘Valley Forge’
(Red pockets in NO.1 Survival Kit)
For Painless death. (Catholics
Will have been instructed by their priests
What to do in this eventuality.)

This announcement is ending. Our President
Has already given orders for
Massive retaliation_ it will be
Decisive. Some of us may die.
Remember, statistically
It is not likely to be you.
All flags are flying fully dressed
On Government buildings-the sun is shining
We are all in the hands of God.
Whatever happens by His Will.
Now go quickly to your shelters.

Summary:

Peter Porter's "Your Attention Please" reflects the confusion and disastrous state of affairs of the contemporary times. It echoes the theme of death, division and decline as does the poems "A power of art against the degrading powers of applied science and technology. In the "famous and oft-published two minute warning", the warning stands not as a forewarning for those people alone, rather it is a pointer for humanity in general. It is a reminder to Man who is cutting of the branch he is sitting on. Immersed in a world of money, material and munitions, human values have shown a marked deterioration. In an era of competition, Time and Destruction reign supreme. This becomes obvious when the poet repeats "two and a quarter minutes" and "eight and a quarter minute." We are reminded of the futility of life as in Philip Larkin's "Ambulances." In an ironical stance, "a specially shortened mass is telecast" to signify the corrosion of spirituality. The announcement says that Protestant and Jewish services will begin simultaneously. It suggests, how in the face of death, all communal rivalries vanish into the thin air.

However, only human life is valued at least slightly here, for, people are asked to abandon their pets as "they will consume fresh air." The Homo sapiens are content with the assumption that the "fresh air" is solely theirs. The callousness of the contemporary generation is revealed in their disregard for the old and the bed-ridden-the rule is that they HAVE to be left behind. The mention of "Valley Forge" as a medicine for painless death drives home the paranoiac sense of victimization, meaninglessness of life and points a sense of nihilism.

In a satiric tone, the poet ascertains that the President has already given orders for Mass retaliation. The decision is "decisive". The ordinary citizen has no say in the matter.

Nor do the military personnel involved. This proves to be very significant in the modern-day context, where America plays Big Brother to all the other nations. Under "authoritative rule," human beings have lost their individuality and identity. This becomes more obvious when the poet asserts "statistically" it is unlikely to be "you." All flags are fully dressed on Government buildings where power reigns supreme.

There is also the conflict between religiosity and self-love that the poet projects with pungent irony. The announcer asks them to administer pills to have a painless death and thereafter the Catholics will be instructed by the priest what to do in such an eventuality. However, this is suicide or the Eternal sin for the Catholics, and the mention of a Catholic priest seeing to their final rites is outright obnoxious.

The superfluity of advanced science and technology is stressed here. The nuclear weapon is itself a child of science and technology. Nevertheless, the helplessness of Science in the face of a calamity caused by itself is made explicit here. The omnipresence of Science is reinforced by devices like the Geiger barometer, CO, Valley Forges, plasma flask, television. They enhance the theme of the victory of Science over Art and Life.

The poem is therefore a harsh indictment on the race for power politics and amassing of weapons of mass-destruction in the modern times. The best way to win a war is to prevent it .Peter Porter asserts: "The truth is a story forcing me to tell it .It is not/ my story or my truth." It is an eternal truth that has its foundations rooted in humanity.

TO A STUDENT

-Kamala Wijeratne

Text:

I know why your eyes leap away
When they meet mine,
Why they quickly stray
From their quiet contact.

I do know your ears are stopped
Against my voice.
The echoes of gun-shots have blocked
All extraneous sound,
Blasts of grenades have cracked the drums,
(you fear for brother, friend and lover.)

My eyes as they see yours
See torn pieces of human flesh,
Suspended from bushes and trees;
Fragments of splintered bones,
Shreds of olive green;
The roads spewing human blood.
My ears echo burst of landmine.
(I tremble for men of kindered blood.)

But why can't your irises lock with mine?
Our ears stop all unkind sound?
Let us shake off these brand names
And search for a herb that heals,
And make a cooling poultice to cure mass lunacy.

Leave behind those Ilions and Carthages to antique dealers,
Let us plan fresh methodology to stop other Hiroshimas.

About the Author:

Kamala Wijeratne is from the Central part of Sri Lanka, from the town called Kandy, which is considered the cultural capital. Her birthplace is Ulapone, a sleepy village about thirty kilometers away to the North, along the Kandy Talawakele road. She received her early education at Teldeniya and subsequently in Kandy and Gampola. She is a graduate of the University of Peradeniya (University of Ceylon then). She started her career as a teacher. Subsequently she lectured at the Teacher's College, Peradeniya and later on joined the National Institute of Education as a Chief Project Officer. At present she works at the University of Colombo and the University of Sri Jayawardhanapura as a visiting lecturer.

She started writing in her teens while yet at school. However serious writing started only in 1983 with the publication of the Smell of Araliya. Two years later A House Divided was printed followed by the Disinherited and That one talent. A White Sari and other poems followed. These were all poetic compositions. In 1998 her first collection of short stories was published entitled Death by Drowning and other stories. In 2001 she published Millenium Poems which was awarded the State Literary Prize for English Poetry. After a lapse of over

five years she published A Prayer to God Upulvan in 2007. She is at present putting together a collection of short stories ‘To a Student’.

Summary:

'To a Student' is an excellent poem by the Sri Lankan poet, Kamala Wijeratne. It is a plea for peace and harmony. The island nation is terribly torn to pieces because of the racial war between the two groups-Tamils and Singhalese. Torn pieces of human flesh suspending from bushes and trees, fragments of splintered bones and the roads spewing human blood are some of the pathetic and fearful sights the poet-teacher sees everywhere like his students. That is why, the students do not listen to the class lessons. Moreover, because of the racial prejudice, perhaps, they do not have eye contact with the teacher. The poet is aware of the fact that the ears of the students are 'stopped 'against her voice. Gun-shots and blasts of grenades have cracked their ear drums. Her students fear for their brothers, friends and lovers as she 'trembles' for men of kindred blood. She feels that there must be a fresh methodology to end the racial war in order' to stop other Hiroshimas'. The poem is in the form of an address to a student.

HOW EXILE MELTS INTO ONE HUNDRED ROSES

- George Eliot Clarke

Text:

I climb to whylah falls because I thirst,
Hunger, for you, Shelley and shake to touch
Your house that slides down mount Eulah to fog-
The misery of the Sixhiboux River
My five-winter exile how melts
To roses gorged where tears once hammered dirt
I dream the poems I sent all smell of grass
And gold dairies sprouted in a tumbler,
While song cartwheels in air scrubbed deaf to threats
Of disaster and fiddle-eights cry out
With crows, wedding memory with desire,
And I peep through pined distance to your home
Pushkin drawls dirty songs, his banjo packed
With blue bells and may flowers pump core whoops,
Cackles, tells him to keep-a strumming, man!

Othello looses pants, spills into bed
With Liana, and their feet never touch
The floor until morning, Pushkins voice twangs
Then smelling of plug tobacco and staggered
By home-stilled rum, he winks, out in coras lap.
I ramble home and find lover's fleshed mermaids
And drunk sailors kiss in the sixhiboux,
Bearded, black saints, ricking of oil, comb fields.
That plunge to poverty no budgets soother,
Reverend Langford hollers against silk
And money, devil booze and bingo chips
And false communion between the sexes
Then slinks to Liana once O's done
Mrs. Belle brooks gulps maijuana smoke
Uncorus seventy-five years of gossip
To preach scotch-breathed sermons of tinfoil-winged
Angels nauled-from pines or palled naked
From sties, Shelley, we wrest diammod for coal
Scrounge pears from guild and stones lost penury
Works filty rags of our magnificence
Or planners bull doze our flowers into dirt
I love you, sweets-yours eye black with sorrow.
Your sphinx-like smile, your breasts like ripe apple
I hurry home, weary of seeking love
In banks and rust, lusting to clench you tight
While night is wet with fire, the earthly taste
Of mushroom black with dew, the ash of figs
And sweet love until crows us her in dawn
Shelley, I pick my steps out of earth!

Summary

"How Exile Melt into One Hundred roses" is written by George Eliot Clarke. It is one of the part of a long narrative poem *Whylah falls* which was published in 1990. It won the "Archibard Lampman Award" for poetry in 1991. It clearly reveals the circumstances of

Africadian people (African and Africadian people) living in Novascotia around the period of 1930's.

The main theme of the poem "Whylah Falls" is recounting the lives of poor Black Canadian in rural South Western Novascotia in 1930. This poem opens with X, the hero who is standing beside the house of Shelley and talks to himself. At first he describes Shelley's house which was situated nearby Mount Eulah and River Sixhiboux, covered with fog. Then he speaks of his "Exile" to Paris for five years of exile has made his love intense and their love is symbolized by.

Then he thinks of the letter which he sent to Shelley while he was in Paris. Afterwards he peeps into Shelley's house and sees Pushkin, his brother who is singing songs with his banjo and his mother Cora enjoys it with enthusiasm.

X imagines that Shelley longs for him and his love. Her eyes must be turned to black because of sorrow. Her smile must be like a Sphinx, and European statue which has the body of a lion and human face.

Then the poet describes the Africadians as black saints with beards. One can realize their poverty through appearance. They work hard to separate diamonds from coal but they remain poor. They are very much addicted to alcoholic drink and gambling. They hardly run their life in Novascotia.

By this poem, Clarke vividly explains about the condition of Africadians in Novascotia and love between X and Shelley. His symbolism the poem is greatly profound.

THE THOUGHT FOX

-Ted Hughes

Text:

I imagine this midnight moment's forest:
Something else is alive
Besides the clock's loneliness
And this blank page where my fingers move.

Through the window I see no star:
Something more near
Though deeper within darkness
Is entering the loneliness:

Cold, delicately as the dark snow,
A Fox's nose touches twig, leaf;
Two eyes serve a movement, that now'
And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints into the snow
Between trees, and warily a lame
Shadow lags by stump and in hollow
Of a body that is bold to come

Across clearing, an eye,
A widening deepening greenness,
Brilliantly, concentratedly,
Coming about its own business

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox
It enters the dark hole of the head.
The window is starless still: the clock ticks,
The page is printed.

Summary

It is the midnight. The time is imagined by the poet as a forest. It appears to him that he is in a forest. He is sitting in a room. The clock is ticking. His fingers are moving on a blank page. He is all alone. The other things happening at that time are his finger moving and the clock ticking. He feels that there is something else also in addition to his presence. He feels the presence of something alive. He cannot see even a single star from his window but he feels that something is moving through this darkness. He feels that something is coming towards him and that thing wants to disturb his solitude. He perceives that a fox is coming through the forest. Then he feels that the fox's nose has touched a twig and next, a left. As the fox moves onwards, it leaves distinct footprints on the snow between the trees in the forest. Then the poet perceives the fox continuing to move forward. The fox's attention seems to be fixed. It moves only the dark hole of his head. Suddenly there takes a turn in the activity. The clock is still ticking. But the page before the poet is no longer blank now. The incident has a symbolic implication. There was, in reality, no fox at all. It was just a thought

which had entered the poet's mind just as a fox enters a forest and then jumps out of it. This thought has found expression in the poem. The poet records his thought on the piece of paper; on that blank page. The page is lying before him. His fingers are moving on it. The thought is much like the fox entering a forest. His thought has been given the shape and the body of a fox. Perhaps this is the reason for the tile of the poem, *The Thought-Fox.*

Critical Appreciation

The Though Fox is a famous poem from *The Hawk in the Rain*. Hughes uses poetic marks like that of the fox and particularly of the wolf. The fox here is a symbol of the contradictory nature of things. The scope of this symbol gradually extends from personal to universal significance. The poet is a very indirect manner sets the tone of the process by which a poem gets written. Inspiration is the most important thing for a poet. A poet waits also for the onrush of an idea through his brain. A poet needs solitude; loneliness; silence.

The idea or though gradually takes shape in the mind of the poet. It enters as the fox enters the forest; a dark forest. A thought also enters the deep recess of a poet in a very silent manner. The phrase *'The Thought-Fox'* has been used as a title for this poem.

Imagery – A series of images can be found here. The opening line contains the following image: "I imagine this midnight moment's forest". Here the poet imagines that he is sitting in a forest at midnight. Then comes the image of a lonely clock. After that we have blank page and the feeling that something else is also alive. There are no stars in the sky. Then comes the image of a fox's nose touching a twig and a leaf. The brilliantly, concentratedly eyes of the fox form another image of the poem.

Deeper Meaning – Like several other poems, it deals with the conflict between two selves. The poem commences with an exposition of the protagonist's imagined picture. As the poem develops the figment of imagination develops from airy nothing to receive a habitation and a name. The imagined self becomes a reality for the speaker and works out into the uttered word, the poem.

BETTER LIFE

- Sir Andrew Motion

Text:

You think I must be asleep when you sit at my bedside
and well might I be what with the late afternoon hush
now the other residents have all retired to their rooms
but no I am not asleep although you could say uncertain

whether I am myself alone or the sum of those I remember
whose voices have become mine along with their destination.
I can say this at least. I was born a Brixham girl and dad's ship
was the pride of the fleet so every day when they came ashore
I had my pick of the mackerel in their beautiful shiny blue suits.
But then again I was stationed on the flying boats. Wasn't that
a lovely time? The way they came in very low over the harbour
and the deep green water lifted up to greet them or seemed to.
Ask yourself this question. Is it only when you become like me
that you will hear what I have to tell you? Make your mind up.
Here's me when we were in Llandudno on our honeymoon.
I painted my toenails red. If you cared to look you could see
I still have my toenails red. I do this by myself with no help.
And that's me dancing round the house – it was the fresh air
kept me going, without a single brown penny in my purse.
You see what I am saying. I am living here among you
and you pay no attention or decide what I am thinking
which is not worth your attention. I am every single colour
in the rainbow but you see no colour. You see the colour grey.
We have singing here at night or perhaps it has begun already.
Can you hear them singing? You would not believe how old I am
without feeling it. I tell myself that is because I have looked after
everybody. When I go to the doctor now I find the door is closed.
Do I knock? Once I'm inside it gets better. I say give me a minute.
I am Richard and I am perfectly able-bodied thank you
and also of perfectly sound mind. What can I do for you?
The chances are I know more than you about most things.
I landed on Gold Beach on D-Day then worked as a brewer.
It was a useful life. Defending the realm, than making beer.
Now I am waiting for my telephone to ring. It never does ring.
If you were looking this way you would see my right hand
stretching towards you with something I have to pass over.
When I open my fingers you must look at the gift carefully.

You may well not recognise it to start with although soon
you will see it is the very thing you can never do without.
Who are we talking about? My name is Peter and in one way
or another I was married to Steve for 57 years. Today I am alone.
The pain is very strong because nobody would miss me if I died.
It would affect nobody. I am Simon, aged 67. I am Liz, aged 82.
I am Helen, aged 72 and I do tatting and keep fit on Wednesdays.
I am Ali and I am a widow and I think if you don't do anything
then God won't do anything. This is Mehmet. And this here Geti.
I am Ron, and I enjoy a few boiled potatoes and a drop of broth.
I am not a lover of sweet things. I like simple bread and butter
and a bit of fish. My friend Rowena likes a slice of sponge cake.
Open the window and let me hear the geese flying across.
Can you hear what I am saying? Are you paying attention?
I love to hear the geese flying and know their ways home.
As for me, I was born in 1939 and all our people came down
from Staffordshire and Cheshire; I class myself a Traveller
not a Gypsy. When I was a boy we had a horse and wagon.
I had to make a fire and put the horses out to graze at dawn
then I had to bring them back close beside the wagon at dusk.
When dad bought a bus, which we called a freezer box, he sold
the horses. I stood and cried. I was a big lad. It was not the same.
You couldn't smell the horses. Our people are in Magna Carta.
I had the life of Reilly. Now I have a serious illness and won't last
but when I count my blessings at night I have a load of blessings.
I love God and want to die. What better thing is there to live for?
Is that you leaving now? Very well. As for me I have not done.
I am still the child that loves to arrive by night in a new place
then wakes early to pull the curtains back on sunlight pouring
into a bay I had never seen before where big pelts of seaweed
left to dry by the retreating tide and the dainty orange crabs
crawling across them and the pebbles are everything I need

About the author:

Motion was born on 26 October 1952 in London; his mother was Catherine Gillian Bakewell (known as Gillian) and his father Andrew Richard Michael Motion (known as Richard). The family moved to Stisted, near Braintree in Essex, when Motion was 12 years old. Motion went to boarding school from the age of seven joined by his younger brother. Most of the boy's friends were from the school and when Motion was in the village he spent a lot of time on his own. He began to have an interest and affection for the countryside and he went for walks with a pet dog. Later he went to Radley College, where, in the sixth form, he encountered Peter Way, an inspiring English teacher who introduced him to poetry – first Hardy, then Philip Larkin, W. H. Auden, Heaney, Hughes, Wordsworth and Keats.

When Motion was 17 years old, his mother had a horse riding accident and suffered a serious head injury requiring a life-saving neurosurgery operation. She regained some speech, but she was severely paralysed and remained in and out of coma for nine years. She died in 1978 and her husband died of cancer in 2006. Motion has said that he wrote to keep his memory of his mother alive and that she was a muse of his work. When Motion was about 18 years old he moved away from the village to study English at University College, Oxford; however, since then he has remained in contact with the village to visit the church graveyard, where his parents are buried, and also to see his brother, who lives nearby.

REFUGEE MOTHER AND CHILD

-Chinua Achebe

Text:

No Madona and Child could touch
that picture of a mother’s tenderness
for a son she soon would have to forget
The air was heavy with odours
of diarrhea of unwashed children
with washed –out ribs and dried-up
bottoms struggling in labored
steps behind blown empty bellies. Most
mothers there had long ceased
to care but not this one; she held
a ghost smile between her teeth
and in her eyes the ghost of a mother’s

pride as she combed the rust-coloured
hair left on his skull and then __
singing in her eyes_ began carefully
to part it… In another life this
would have been a little daily
act of no consequence before his
breakfast and school; now she
did it like putting flowers
on a tiny grave.

Summary:

In 1967, civil war broke out in Nigeria when the Catholic dominated province of Biafra fought for independence from the Muslim dominated Central state. During those fateful years Achebe worked as an ambassador for the Biafran government. The Biafrans suffered badly. The poet's first hard experience of the hardship and struggle inspired him to write "Refugee Mother and Child". The poem is about Achebe's encounter with a mother and child in a refugee camp. He describes a heart breaking image of a mother who is clinging on to her son who is about to die.

The refugee mother is different from other mothers as she still cherished and loved her son. While the other mothers had already stopped caring for their children as survival was not the most important thing and there was no hope of survival for their children anyway. Even the divine love of Madonna for her son cannot be matched with the refugee mother's love. The poem stirs the heart of readers. It is charged with pathos.

Chinua Achebe presents vivid pictures of the fifth and squalor of the refugees. The poem points out the pitiable fact that the refugees are not provided even the basic medical facilities. The children in the refugee camp are affected by diarrhea but there is no water to wash them. So the air is heavy with odours. They have 'washed out' ribs and dried up bottoms. They are struggling to walk with their 'blown empty bellies'. As a result of the sad plight of the living conditions most mothers have become insensitive to their wards and their sufferings. But this refugee mother is made of different stuff.

The refugee mother, full of tenderness knows well that her child has only a remote possibility of survival. A sense of pride runs through her when she "combed the rust- coloured hair left" on her son's skull which is an act that tends towards the closing up of the life of the child.

A HOUSE FOR MR. BISWAS

-V.S.Naipaul

A CHAPTER- WISE SUMMARY OF *A HOUSE FOR MR. BISWAS*

PART ONE:

Chapter: 1

Biswas's birth and parentage are described in this chapter. Biswas's father, Raghu is a miser. Raghu's wife, Bipti gets angry with him and goes to her mother, Bissoondaye who lives in a village. Biswas is born here at midnight which is considered an inauspicious time. His birth, in the wrong way' at an unfavorable time, his sneezing and his having six fingers on one hand are misconstrued by all. It is believed that he will 'eat up' his parents. An astrologer says that the boy's father should be allowed to see his son only on the twenty-first day. He should not look directly at the child but see only his image reflected in a brass container filled with coconut oil. The astrologer also predicts that Biswas should not be allowed to go near ponds and rivers. The boy, Biswas takes a calf out. The calf falls into a pond and dies. The frightened Biswas hides himself in his father's bedroom. Not knowing this, Raghu dives into the pond to search for Biswas, only to get entangled in the weeds and drown.

After Raghu's death, the family is scattered. Biswas's sister Dehuti is adopted by Bipti's sister, Tara. Bipti and Biswas leave home and live in a separate house in Pagotes, not with the arrogant Tara but with some of her husband's dependent relations. As for Biswas's brothers Pratap and Prasad, they are sent to Felicity to work on sugar-estates. Poor Biswas is plagued by a feeling of homelessness and loneliness.

Chapter: 2

Bipti decides to put Biswas in the Canadian Mission School run by Lal. Lal is a hypocrite. Having been converted to Presbyterianism from a low Hindu caste, he holds all unconverted Hindus in contempt. He asks Biswas to bring his 'birth' certificate. Bipti and Tara get a birth certificate from the mercenary solicitor, Ghany by paying him ten dollars. Lal is very harsh and beats his students into submission with his tamarind rod. He teaches nothing more than elementary arithmetic such as 'ought ought's are ought and ought twos are ought'. Biswas befriends his class-mate Alec and learns from him how to draw letters attractively. He impresses Lal by writing the sentence' I am an ass' beautifully on the black-board. After spending six years at the school, Biswas is apprenticed by Tara to work under the pundit Jairam.

Jairam is also a mercenary. He is keen on collecting coins and gifts from devotees. One day, unknown to Jairam, Biswas eats two of the Gros Michel bananas gifted by a devotee. Jairam find it out and compels the frightened Biswas to eat a large number of bananas. The poor boy relieves himself on his handkerchief in the dead of night and throws it away early the next morning through the window. Unexpectedly, the bundle falls on the oleander tree in the garden. The oleander flowers are polluted Jairam flares up and promptly dismiss Biswas.

The sympathetic Tara sends Biswas to her husband‘s rum shop to assist her husband’s brother Bhandat who has already been left in charge of the shop. Bandat who is keeping a mistress steals money and puts the blame on Biswas and soundly thrashes him.

The sensitive Biswas leaves home, swearing to get a job on his own. His sister Dehuti’s Husband, Ramchand meets him by chance and takes him to his hut. Biswas find his sister leading a loveless life there.

Next, Biswas bumps into his former friend Alec who has established himself as sign-painter. Alec helps Biswas get the job of a sign-painter. In order to study several types of letters, Biswas reads the novels of Hall Caine and Marie Corelli. The sign-painting job is irregular and so Biswas leaves it off and becomes a conductor on one of Ajodha’s (Tara’s husbands) buses. Alec and Bhandat’s boys take Biswas frequently to brothels. Biswas soon becomes disgusted with this loose life. He begins to yearn for genuine love and sweetness and romance. It is in this mood of expectation that he goes to Hanuman House where he meets his future wife, Shama.

Chapter: 3

Hanuman House on the High Street at Arwacas marks the next stage in Biswas’s life. This house, with its thick walls, looks like ‘an alien white fortress’. Biswas is employed as a sign-painter by Mr. Tulsi, the mistress of Hnauman House, to paint sign for the Tulsi store on the ground floor of Hanuman House. Pundit Tulsi, the founder of the family, emigrated as a laborer from India and settled down in Trinidad where he achieved a meteoric rise. He was planning to return to India when he got killed in a car accident. Many rumors, some romantic and some scurrilous, were spread about him. Seth, the brother-in-law of the widow, Mrs.Tulsi, is all-in-all in the household. He tells Biswas that he is employing him only because he is an Indian, a Hindu and a Brahmin but. Instead of bestowing any monetary concessions on him reduces his wages to the rock-bottom level.

Biswas gives an anonymous love letter to Shama, the last daughter of Mrs. Tulsi. Mrs.Tulsi and Seth pretend to appreciate Biswas's romance and trap him into marrying Shama. Biswas consents to the marriage, hoping that the Tulsis would boost his economic status. But his dreams do not come true. He comes to be treated as nothing more than a slave. Biswas cannot tolerate his disrespectful treatment. He retaliates by calling the Tulsis name __ Seth is a big bull, Mrs. Tulsi is a cow and her two sons are monkeys. To infuriate them more, he starts an association called the Arwacas Aryan Association (the AAA) to promote the independence and educational status of women. Last, Biswas gargles and spits on Owad, the last of Mrs. Tulsi's sons and also throws uneatable food on him from his (Biswas's) room upstairs. This leads to a clash. All the Tulsis join together and beat up Biswas and send him to the Chase to take charge of the food shop of the Tulsi estate there.

Chapter: 4

This chapter is aptly name Chase as it describes the misfortune chasing Biswas even after he leaves Hanuman House and takes over the Tulsi food-shop at the Chase. The food business does not flourish in spite of the expensive house-blessing ceremony conducted by Hari, the domestic priest of the Tulsi household. Biswas's wife Shama begets three children, Savi, Anand and Myna, in quick succession. Biswas is swindled by buyers and lawyers. In order to make up for the losses, the food shop is insured and then burnt, at Seth's suggestion. Seth gets a compensation of seventy-five dollars from the insurance company and passes it on to Biswas. Out of interest in his welfare, Seth next make Biswas manage of his estate at Green Vale.

Biswas, who originally hated Seth and Mrs. Tulsi for the tyrannical ways, gradually begins to like them for their abiding interest in his welfare.

Chapter: 5

After the collapse of his food-shop at the Chase, Biswas shifts to Green Vale at the suggestion of Seth. Seth asks him to be a driver-cum-supervisor at a salary of twenty-five dollars a month. His work is to supervise the work done by the laborers on the Tulsi sugarcane estate. Biswas is diffident as he has no previous experience in doing such supervisory work. He takes it up only because of Seth's pressure. Biswas is pained as laborers hold him in undisguised contempt. Seth visits the estate every Saturday to pay the workers their wages.

One day Seth gives Biswas seventy-five dollars which, he says, is the compensation paid by the insurance company for the burnt food shop at the Chase. Biswas plans to save this money and adding some more to it, built a pucca house of his own, with wooden walls a wooden ceiling and a galvanized iron roof.

Christmas brings Biswas a mixed package of joys and sorrows. In the Tulsi household, only the daughters stay at home and the sons-in-law are sent away to visit their parents on Christmas Eve. Leaving his barracks at Green Vale, Biswas visits his mother and Tara first and then Hanuman House. He brings with him a huge doll's house and presents it to his daughter, Savi. His mother-in-law, Mrs.Tulsi criticizes him for giving a gift only to his daughter and disappointing all the other children, including his son Anand who demands a car. Shama is also angry with her husband for having caused disappointment to all the other children and their mothers. In a fit of rage, she smashes the doll's house gifted to Savi. To console Savi, Biswas takes her with himself to Green Vale. On the way, he is booked by a police constable for riding his bicycle without a license and a head-light. As Biswas does not bribe the constable, the latter says threateningly that he will issue a summon to Biswas soon.

Savi is not quite happy with her father in the barracks. She starves herself rather than eat the food given by the neighbors in the barracks. Shama and her children revisit the barracks and Savi sticks with her mother. Shama talks apologetically to Biswas for having broken the dolls house. She goes back to Hanuman House with all her children, including Savi. She becomes pregnant for the fourth time. Thinking of his uncertain future, Biswas is filled with terror and anxiety. He feels himself alienated. He begins to rave ad talks to himself loudly at night. Anand is ill-treated at Hanuman House. Nobody sympathizes with him for his poor physique. Once he is terrified by his teacher and defecates in the class-room itself and is derided at by his mates. Fearing mockery, he refuses to go back to school. For his misdemeanor at school, he is made to remain kneeling for a long time. Seeing this, Biswas is infuriated and takes Anand with himself back to the barracks.

Biswas decides to build a house for himself, with two bedrooms, a drawing room and a gallery, where he can live comfortably with all his children. Seth magnanimously donates him a site on which to build his dream house. Biswas fixes up a builder-cum-carpenter by name Maclean who is really a cheat. He assures Biswas that he, Maclean, can build him a house with just three hundred dollars. Biswas has only a hundred dollars and plunges into the construction work, hoping to finish the house little by little as and when he gets money. He visits Tara and Ajodha intending to borrow from them the money he needs to build the house.

But he is too hesitant to ask for money bluntly. Tara and Ajodha sense his needs but, being miserly and selfish, they do not volunteer to give him any financial assistance.

Biswas returns to the barracks, disappointed. Maclean cheats Biswas into buying worthless secondhand material and manages to complete only one of the proposed two bed-rooms. The laborers are restless because of the stringent measures taken by Seth to evacuate them from their traditional land. They become hostile towards Biswas. Biswas moves into the new house, though only one room has been completed and that too defectively. He takes Anand to keep company with him. He also rears a dg which he names Tarzan.

Tarzan is killed by two thugs. A violent storm breaks out. It rains torrentially. The new roof, ill-fixed, is torn off. The oil lamp goes off. In the dark Anand is frightened and screams wildly. Biswas keeps calling out for divine help. An old neighbor by name Ramkhilawan enters Biswas's dark room with great difficulty and lights the extinguished room.

Chapter: 6

In a sick condition, Biswas and Anand are brought to Hanuman House and nursed back to health. Shama gives birth to a female child. Seth informs Biswas that his newly built house has been burnt down by the hostile labourers. Biswas's savings are exhausted. Seth asks Biswas, rather mercilessly, to do something or other to better his position. Without inform Shama or seeing his newly born baby, Biswas leaves Hanuman House, carrying with himself only his small suit-case which contains his brushes and other accessories required for painting. His intention is to go to Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad, where his brother-in-law Ramchand is working as warden of a lunatic asylum.

PART TWO:

Chapter: 1

Stung by Seth's remarks, Biswas leaves his family at Hanuman House and walks along the road without any definite idea as to where to go. His brother-in-law, Ramchand's hints that he (Biswas) could find avenues for improvement in the city of Port of Spain, has swayed him and so, without any hesitation, he gets into a bus bound for that city. He does not have much difficulty in locating Ramchand's house. Ramchand advises him to take rest. Biswas is impressed with the talent and memory power exhibited by Dehuti's younger son. Biswas is restless and visits several tourist spots in and around Port of Spain in the company of Ramchand. Some of the places that he visits are the Botanical Gardens, the Rock Gardens, the Government House, the Chancellor Hill and last but not least, the harbor where ships

from all parts of the world come and go. Biswas notices many Negroes. He is struck by their strange customs and manners. In the Negro families, women dominate men and children often get beaten up inhumanly. The city is organized methodically. Street lights are switched on and off at fixed times. Garbage is collected at night and carted off in the early hours of the morning.

Biswas is again preyed upon by feelings of fear and anxiety. At Ramchand's suggestin, he goes to a clinic which is crowded with patients. He has only three dollars in his pocket which he knows is not sufficient to get effective medical treatment. So he walks out, thinking of Mark Twain's novel, *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* in which the boys, Tom and Huck, though poor, live happily.

Next, Biswas walks along a road which is full of newspaper offices such as the offices of *The Guardian, The Gazette, The Mirror, The Trinidad Sentinel, etc.* Seeing the office of *The Trinidad Sentinel,* he recalls his association with his journalist friend, Misir, who used to contribute articles to the *Sentinel* and get paid at the rate of a cent a line. Biswas particularly remembers an article that appeared long ago in the *Sentinel*, beginning 'Amazing Scenes were witnessed yesterday'. Vaguely hoping to become a prosperous journalist, Biswas steps into the office of the *Sentinel* wishing to talk to the editor. The receptionist makes him wait for some time. Impatient, Biswas imagines himself assaulting the receptionist and shooting the editor and reporters dead. Biswas looks calm but his mind is seething with violence. This shows him to be a potential schizophrenic.

After much waiting, Biswas meets the editor, Burnett, and wishing to impress on him, talks of having read the works of Marie Corelli, Samuel Smiles, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, etc. He confesses that he has written many articles but that none of them have been published. He says that he can paint signboards. The editor asks him to paint signs such as 'No Entry', 'No Hands Wanted', etc. Biswas does this work with real interest and at the same time imagines himself writing obscene words on walls, causing embarrassment to female passers-by. Visiting him in the evening, the editor is impressed with his performance and at once appoints him a temporary sign-painter, to work one month without pay. Biswas accepts the offer.

This is the first rung in the ladder which Biswas starts climbing rapidly. Next, the editor asks him to write stories for the *Sentinel*. However, he stipulates that the stories should be such as to electrify his added nerves. That is, he needs exciting stories. Biswas tries to meet the editor's expectations by writing horror stories. The very titles that he chooses for his stories are uncommon – 'Four Children Roasted in a Hut Blaze', "White Baby Found on

A Rubbish Heap', 'Daddy Comes Home in A Coffin', 'U.S. Explorer's Last Journey On Ice'. The last story attracts the editor and it is published intact. Biswas visits shops from foreign countries to study sensational developments. The editor appreciates his writing prowess and appoints him on the staff at a salary of fifteen dollars a fortnight.

Biswas's rising fame as a writer gains him the respect of the Tulsi household. Even the 'she-fox' Mrs. Tulsi respects him and invites him and his family to come and live with her in her house at Port of Spain. Biswas shifts with his wife and children to Mrs. Tulsi's new house. Of course, he has to pay a rent of eight dollars a month and Shama has to do the major part of the household chores. Mrs. Tulsi's last son, Owad sails to England to prosecute higher studies in the medical field. Everybody, including Biswas, bids him a tearful farewell. Owad's studing in England, just as his elder brother, Shekhar's marrying a Christian girl, shows the readiness of the Tulsi family to absorb a foreign culture.

Biswas's lean and lanky son, Anand shows an interest in creative writing. His essay on his near drowning in the sea attracts the headmaster's attention and he asks the boy to work hard and develop his hidden talent. Biswas is keen on improving Anand's skill and so arranges for his undergoing extra coaching after school hours. Also, he allows the boy to buy whatever book he wants at the school shop.

Chapter: 2

A new regime takes over the administration of *The Trinidad Sentinel*. The editor Burnett is sacked and Biswas is sent to the insipid Sunday section. Also, the new staffs are given certain rigid guidelines. Biswas has to write such articles as to support the establishment. He cannot express the truth. As a result, his articles become very dull. Prices go up but the salaries of the staff are not hiked proportionately. Shama has to economize in all matters, including cooking. Anad does not like the tasteless meals made by his mother. He is pained by the frequent quarrels between his parents.

After Owad's departure to England, Mrs. Tulsi goes back to Hanuman House. The relationship between Seth and Mrs. Tulsi is strained. Seth comes to Port of Spain with his lorries. He destroys Biswas's rose garden and parks his lorries there, to the dismay of Biswas, Shama and Anand.

Chapter: 3

Seth breaks with Mrs. Tulsi and leaves Hanuman House with his wife and children and settles down in a house of his own in a back street not far away. Seth's treacherous

activities come to light one by one. He has all along been furtively diverting the funds of the Tulsi household and strengthening his own financial position. His ultimate aim is to seize hold of Hanuman House itself. He is such a wily trickster that he cannot be exposed or caught red-handed.

Mrs. Tulsi suddenly decides to shift from Hanuman House to her estate at Shorthills which is among mountains on the north-eastern side of Port of Spain. Mrs. Tulsi magnanimously invites Biswas and his family to come and live with them at Shorthills, offering them free board and lodge. Biswas is in dire need of somebody to protect him as he is in danger of being ousted from *The Trinidad Sentinel*. So he gladly accepts Mrs. Tulsi's offer and shifts to Shorthills with his family. He is able to save his salary. He also earns some additional money by stealing pears and lemons from the Tulsi estate and selling them at Port of Spain. In the absence of the watchful Seth, many other inmates also steal with ease. Thus W.C. Tuttle, one of the Tulsi sons-in-law, cuts the cedar trees on the estate and sells them and appropriates the money himself. In the same way Govind, another of the sons-in-law, misappropriates the Tulsi property by selling lorryloads of oranges, pears, lemons and grapefruits and keeping the money himself. The ageing Mrs. Tulsi is cheated right and left.

Some good things occur at Shorthills. Seven of Shama's nieces are married off on the same day. A huge cherry tree that has grown in front of the house is cut off and a pandal is erected in order to accommodate the guests. On the wedding day, seven bridegrooms arrive with their singers, musicians and dancers in seven big processions. It is a gala ceremony. After the function is over, the Tulsi household shrinks considerably as all the newly married brides depart with their grooms.

The Shorthills causes many practical difficulties, especially to the children. The children have all been admitted in schools in Port of Spain. It is inconvenient for them to go by bus. So Tuttle agreed to carry them in his lorry, not free but charging them the bus fare. Finally, the Tulsis buy a huge V8 van into which all the children are squeezed. Frequently the vehicle breaks down and the children have to get down and push the van to make the engine start. Once Savi, sitting close to the door, gets her finger crushed when the door is jammed shut.

A series of tragedies occur. Sharma, one of the sons-in-law, dies unexpectedly, leaving his wife berserk with grief. A week later, Hari, the family priest whom everyone (except Biswas) respected and reverenced passes away. A fortnight later, news reaches the Tulsi home that Padma, the wife of Seth, had died. It is rumoured that she must have been

either poisoned or beaten to death by Seth. Many report having seen the spirit of Padma wandering about and trying to pass on dark messages to those who are alive.

Chinta, one of the Tulsi daughters, raises a hue and cry, saying that her eighty dollars has been stolen. All places are searched in vain. Biswas alone does not allow his room to be searched. All suspect him. Biswas is piqued. He builds a house in a month and moves into it with his wife and children. Unfortunately, a forest fire burns down his house at night and the Biswases take shelter in the Tulsi home once again.

Chapter: 4

After his house at Shorthills is partially burnt down. Biswas and his family come back to the Tulsi home in Port of Spain, which is already overflowing with many disgruntled elements from the Tulsi home. W.C. Tuttle and Govind, with their families, are entrenched in the Port of Spain home. They keep wrangling over minor matters. Tuttle's radio is blaring at the highest pitch all the time. The quarrel among the elders infects the children also. To escape from his pandemonium, Biswas rushes to the *Sentinel* office as early as possible.

The Trinidad Sentinel is redesigned to attract readers. The management starts a fund to help people who are destitute. Biswas is assigned two new duties – (i) to visit those who apply for financial assistance and find out if they are really destitute and deserve to be helped and (ii) to write heart-rending articles in the *Sentinel* to elicit donations from the rich. Biswas does his job in right earnest, visiting the low and the lost living below the poverty line in unhygienic places. He even visits a prostitute for examining her pathetic condition. Some widows belonging to the Tulsi household apply for financial assistance, hoping that their relative would use his good offices to help them. But Biswas does not yield to their pressure because these applicants have the rich Mrs. Tulsi to fall back on.

To escape from the noisy atmosphere at home during week-ends, Biswas takes his children to Pagotes to meet Jagdat (one of the two sons of Bhandat) who has been adopted by the rich Tara and Ajodha.

Biswas's mother Bipti dies. Biswas, his wife and brothers attend the funeral.

Mrs. Tulsi's son Owad passes an entrance examination and gets a scholarship to go abroad to prosecute his higher studies.

Chapter: 5

Anand goes to college. Biswas's attention is concentrated on his son's studies. He loses interest in his vocation as a journalist. He feels as though he is living in an airless void.

Fortunately he gets a government job as a Community Welfare Officer at a higher salary. So he resigns the journalist's job. His present boss is an understanding lady called Miss Logie.

Tuttle builds a house in Woodbrook and goes there with his wife and children. Mrs. Tulsi leaves the Shorthills home and comes and settles down in the Port of Spain home in the room previously occupied by Tuttle. Her youngest son Owad is on the point of returning from London. The house is renovated to receive him.

Chapter: 6

Owad returns from England, brimming with enthusiasm for communism. He says that, while in England, he attacked Winston Churchill's conservatism and went about canvassing support for the Labour Party. He praises the communist Russia where women are equal to men in all spheres. Biswas's son Anand is influenced by Owad's ardour for communism.

Owad is narrow-minded. He does not like his brother Shekhar's wife Dorothy's cousin who has got a degree from the McGill University of Canada.

Mrs. Tulsi insults Biswas and asks him to leave her home. Biswas buys a house from a solicitor's clerk by borrowing four thousand dollars from Ajodha. The new house is situated on Sikkim Street.

Chapter: 7

The house that Biswas buys from the solicitor's clerk is found to be full of defects. Mainly, it has no back door and the pillars supporting the staircase-landing are rotten. Yet, Biswas reconciles himself to the new house and settles there with his wife and children. He particularly likes the laburnum tree which he grows in front of the house.

Epilogue:

The Community Welfare Department is closed by the government and so Biswas loses his job. Fortunately, he is reabsorbed by The Trinidad Sentinel. Savi gets a scholarship to go abroad. Anand also goes to England for higher studies. His letters to Biswas are few and far between and not quite heartwarming. Biswas is depressed and has successive heart-attacks. Savi comes back home and stays with Biswas.

Biswas dies suddenly of heart-attack. His death is briefly mentioned in a small column in *The Trinidad Sentinel* : 'Journalist Dies Suddenly'. Biswas's sisters condole with her.

An outline of the story:

Biswa is born with six fingers on one hand at an inauspicious hour past midnight in a small village. Pundit Seetaram predicts that the boy should not go near rivers of ponds and that he will cause the death of his father, Raghu. Biswas's mother Bipti is very fond of him. She keeps him indoors and does not allow him to go near rivers. However, she allows him to tend a calf. His brothers, Pratap and Prasad, engage themselves in many activities. One evening the calf drowns in a pond. The villagers believe that Biswas has also drowned. Nobody knows that he has hidden himself in the house, fearing punishment for having caused the death of the calf. Raghu dives into the pond to search for Biswas, only to get drowned. The family is scattered after Raghu's death. Both Pratap and Prasad go to far-off places in search of employment. Biswas's sister, Dehuti is adopted by Bipti's elder sister, Tara, who is childless. Bipti and Biswas live in a small mud-hut at Pagotes. Their needs are met by Tara.

Biswas is put in a Canadian mission school run by the harsh task-master, Lal. Students are terrified into submission by his merciless caning. From his class-mate Alec, Biswas learns the art of calligraphy. He also manages to learn the three R's. After spending six years at school, Biswas is apprenticed to the priest Jairam to learn priestly craft. The boy does not such irreligious things as stealing bananas and defecating in his bed-room out of fear. Instead of forgiving him for his minor lapses, Jairam dismisses him at once.

Next, Tara sends Biswas to her husband's rumshop to assist his brother Bhandat who is in charge of the shop. Bhandat steals money from the shop to maintain his Chinese mistress. To avoid being exposed, he calls Biswas a thief. Embittered, Biswas leaves he shop and becomes a sign-painter, thanks to his former class-mate Alec's guidance. The income that he gets is not regular.

Biswas goes to the nearby city Arwacas where he gets the job of painting an advertisement on the walls of the Tulsi Store. The shop is owned by a wealthy widow, Mrs. Tulsi and her domineering relatives, Seth. Biswas falls in love with Mrs. Tulsi's last daughter, Shama and impulsively writes her a love note. He is caught red-handed and trapped into marrying Shama. Biswas's hope tht he will get a sumptuous dowry do not materialize. He is humiliated by the Tulsis. Much friction is generated between the two sides.

To avoid further aggravation, Seth sends Biswas and Shama to the nearby village, the Chase, to run the Tulsi food-shop there. Biswas is inexperienced and sells goods on credit. The crafty villagers refuse to repay the debts. To avoid confrontation with the aggressive villagers, the food-shop is insured and then burnt down at the suggestion of Seth and Biswas

gets a compensatory amount of seventy-five dollars from the insurance company. Shama begets four children in quick succession, Savi, Anad, Myna and Kamla.

Next, Seth sends Biswas to Green Vale to supervise the labourers working on the Tulsi sugarcane estate there. Biswas wants to have a house of his own to accommodate his large family. The builder-cum-carpenter Maclean mulcts Biswas's savingsby foisting shoddy goods on him. Only one room is completed by Maclean. A storm breaks out and dismantles Biswas's jerry-built house. Biswas is taken back to the Tulsi home. The labourers in Green Vale, exacerbated by Seth's efforts to evacuate them from their land, set fire to Biswas's incomplete house.

At the suggestion of his brother-in-law, Ramchand, Biswas goes to Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad, hoping to get a job there suited to his talent. Fortune smiles on him. He is appointed to contribute sensational short stories to the journal, *The Trinidad Sentinel*. This marks the beginning of an upswing in Biswas's life. In the meantime, Seth breaks with Mrs. Tulsi and lives in a separate house with his wife and children in a nearby street. Mrs. Tulsi and the remaining members of her family leave their traditional Hanuman House and settle in their bungalow in the nearby Shorthills. Impressed with his rise, Mrs. Tulsi asks Biswas to come and settle down at the Shorthills mansion with his wife and children. Biswas once again builds a house for himself in a nearby place. Unfortunately, this house is razed down overnight by a forest fire.

Biswas and his family once again shift to the Tulsi house in Port of Spain. Breaking with Mrs. Tulsi who has also come to Port of Spain, Biswas buys a house built by a solicitor's clerk. He borrows five thousand dollars at an exorbitant interest for Tara's husband Ajodha in order to pay the solicitor's clerk. Only after buying the house does Biswas discover the many serious defects in it such as the weak pillars and the absence of a back door.

Biswas gets a government job as Community Welfare Officer at a higher salary. Now happen a series of unfortunate developments which deepen his gloom. Both Savi and Anad are abroad. Savi is prospering but Anand has some serious problem. Biswas senses it though Anad does not inform his father about it. The government suddenly closes down the community development department. Biswas is re-absorbed at *The Sentinel* at a lower pay. This is a humiliating fall for Biswas. The inability to pay back the loan to Ajodha, combined with the uncertainty of Anad's future, eats out Biswas's heart. He has heart-attacks twice and is hospitalized. *The Trinidad Sentinel* sacks him mercilessly. Savi comes back. Despite her loving care, Biswas has another heart-attack which proves fatal. Biswas dies and is cremated

on the banks of a muddy river. His friends and relatives find in his demise nothing more than an occasion to get together. Their grief is shallow. Shama realizes that her life has become empty. In a cold, formal obituary notice, The Trinidad Sentinel says briefly:
'Journalist Dies Suddenly'.
An agonized life comes to an end at last.

A MAN AND HIS WIFE

- Frank Sargeson.

Text:

It was during the Slump, when times were bad. Bad times are different from good times, people's habits aren't quite the same. When the slump was on, you didn't have to worry about certain things. They way you were dressed, for instance. Along the street you'd meet too many who were as hard put to it as you were yourself. That's one thing the slump did, it put a certain sort of comradeship into life that you don't find now.

During the slump people had to live where they could, and a lot of them lived in sheds and wash- houses in other people's backyards. I lived in an old shed that had once been a stable, and it was all right except for the rats. It was out towards the edge of the town, and there were two of us living there, and my cobber was on relief work like myself. There'd been some trouble between him and his wife, so when he had to get out he came and lived with me. It cut the rent in half, and there was room enough. And Ted was quite a good hand at rigging up a table and suchlike out of any odds and ends he could pick up. He got quite a lot of pickings from a rubbish tip that got the place pretty snug, which it needed to be for the winter. It wasn't a bad sort of life. We never went short of tucker, though a few times we had to raid a Chinaman's garden after we'd spent all our money in the pubs. As a single man, I'd only get about a day and a half's relief work a week, and drew fourteen shillings. Ted got more but of course there was his wife, and he had to part up.

I knew Ted only casually until I struck him on relief. He hadn't long been in the town. He'd had a good job in a pub. But he went on the booze once too often. To start with he wasn't so hot with a shovel, and the gang used to pull his leg, but he was a good-tempered bloke and as I say there grew up that comradeship when the slump was on. It was pretty hard for him when his wife got her separation, because it was all in the paper, and everybody started making jokes. When she got in court his wife certainly got going about the sort of husband he was. Besides always getting drunk, she said, she kept a dog, and he'd talk to the dog when he'd never talk to her. He was always taking the dog for walks too, and once when

she tried to go along as well he locked her in the wash-house and never let her out until he came home. Well, our gang certainly thought up plenty of jokes about that dog.

When he came to my place, Ted brought the dog. It was nothing special, just a dog, but Ted was certainly found of it. He had it sleeping at the foot of his bed, and I only put up with it because it was good for rats. But later on it got under a bus along the road and that was the finish. Ted took it pretty hard, but he wasn't the sort that ever says much. He never told me anything about the trouble he'd with his wife. There are men who'll talk to you about such things, but it's more often you find women that way. And Ted's wife was the sort. She'd call sometimes to collect her money, though if Ted saw her coming up the road he'd hook off if he could before she got near. And if he couldn't I'd hook off while they had their Barney. But usually Ted would have a fair idea when she was coming and wouldn't be around, and then Mrs.Watts would talk to me. She was quite all right, Quite a nice woman, though always a bit on edge so to speak. She'd say quite a lot. Ted spent too much on drink, she said, but it was the trouble. A man ought to put his wife first, she said. She wouldn't have minded so much if it had been another woman. She couldn't understand it, she said. Well, maybe I couldn't either, so I felt sorry for Mrs.Watts. But I felt sorry for Ted too, so I never told her when the dog was done in. I thought maybe things would come right if they were just left alone.

It didn't work out though, because one day Ted came home with a canary, and he certainly began to think the world of that canary. It just about made me think that might be a bit unnatural, though I didn't think he was, because one night when some of the gang were round and we were all a bit stickered, Ted told about how his missis once ran a fish shop and had a girl serving behind the counter for a pound a week. And it was only a shame she was worth the money, Ted said. His wife used to complain that the pound made too big a hole in the profits, but as for him he reckoned the girl was well worth the money. But of course we all chipped in to say he was a dirty old man, and it was no wonder his missis had kicked him out.

But about the canary, Ted loved that bird. He worshipped it. And anyway, it certainly could sing. Ted'd make himself late for work in the morning talking to it and seeing it was all O.K., and he paid a neighbour's little girl sixpence a week to always run over and put the cage inside the window if it came on to rain. And when we got home it was no good expecting him to lend a hand because he'd just want to sit down and kid to the bird. I'd tell him he was a goat, but it did not good. Even when the dinner was cooked it was no good telling him to come and eat, he'd sooner just sit there and kid to the bird.

There was another thing too. Ted'd get all hot and bothered if anybody began to take too much of an interest in his bird. He didn't mind me so much, though I sort of felt I had to keep off the grass. It was when there was a crowd round that he'd get properly hot and bothered. We'd have some rare old times some evenings when there was a crowd round, usually some of the boys in the gang. We'd fill up the baby. We had a big demijohn that we used to call the baby, and we'd all put in and then toss it to see who'd go and get her filled up. And an old suitcase that Ted'd got from the rubbish tip came in handy for the purpose. Well, evenings when we'd had the baby filled would get Ted all hot and bothered. Because once they were a bit stonkered the boys would want to have a bo-peep at the bird while he was asleep. If you were careful you could under the clock Ted put over the cage at night and see him standing on one leg with his head tucked in, and his feathers all fluffed up. And it was certainly great to see him sleeping there, especially considering the noise and the smoke. He'd always be a bit unsteady on his one leg and the boy'd are give about that, some saying it was because of his heart beating, and others he was only balancing. But of course Ted'd be all on edge trying to keep everybody away, and he'd go crook if somebody moved the cloth too much and woke the poor little blighter up, which was usually what happened. Well, for months on end Ted just about lived for that canary. Then later on he decided it didn't get enough exercise inside the cage, so he tried a stunt. We'd shut the door and the window and Ted'd let the bird out the cage, and it certainly seemed to enjoy the outing and Ted thought he was a clever bloke when he 'd taught it to sit on his shoulder, though when he put seed in his hair to get it to go on top it wasn't a success, because the bird got its feet tangled, and I had took at off some hair to get it away , which reminded me how once on a sheep farm I found a little skeleton tangled in the wool on a sheep's back. In the end though, Ted did a stupid thing, he let the window open while the bird was having its outing. I said wasn't he taking a risk, but he said no, the bird loved him too much ever to fly away. And certainly for a time it just did its usual stuff, sitting on Ted's shoulder and hopping about on the table. Though when it decided to go it didn't waste anytime. It up and nipped out that window just as fast as if it was a sparrow that had blown in by mistake. For a time it hung about in a tree while Ted walked round and round underneath with the cage in his hand. And watching the pair of them I thought the bird was rubbing it in, because up in the tree it sounded to me as if it was singing better than ever it did before.

The next morning Ted was gone before I was awake. The cage was gone too, and Ted never turned up at work and lost a day's pay. It was no good though, he never found the bird. Later on we talked it over and I said he'd better try another dog, but he said no. I've sill got

the wife, he said. Yes, I said. The wife never let me down, he said no, I said. It was all I could think of to say. He put his things together and went right away, and it wasn't long before I was going round regularly twice a week for a game of cards with the pair of them. But right until the finish of the slump I was living on my own, and occasionally I'd sort of wish that Ted hadn't been so careless with his canary.

About the author:

Frank Sargeson was born in 1903 in Hamilton. He took a law course at Auckland University College and spent some time in England. Since he returned in 1928, he has lived in various parts of the North Island, but the Waikato and the King Country remain his particular area. Like John Mulgan, he can report most faithfully the speech of the casual North Islander, still to be distinguished at that time, so the linguistic experts say, from the lingo current in the South.

His first book, *Conversation with my Uncle*, is a set of stories related to the depression-born novels of John Lee, Robin Hyde, and John Mulgan. D'Arcy Cresswell wrote that when it appeared in the mid-thirties "it was as though the first wasp had arrived, a bright aggressive little thing with a new and menacing buzz ... it prefers jam, any kind of bright, sweet, sticky, falsified jam, and open windows and the smell of dishonest cooking. And soon it was evident that the suburbs, where they have flowers on the piano and eiderdowns on the beds, were being severely stung."[16]

Summary:

"A Man and His Wife" is a study of husband –and –wife relationship. Petting a dog, a man loses his wife. Losing the dog, he keeps a bird. The bird gives him the slip and he goes back to square one-he returns to his wife. The story subtly spotlights the human instinct for comradeship. The language is plain and straightforward, Down-to-earth and colloquial, it is firmly rooted in the idiom of New Zealand speech.

In this short story Ted had some trouble with his wife, and they had separated. Ted had a good job in a pub. But he drank heavily and could not continue that work. The trouble between Ted and his wife Mrs. Watts, was revealed in the court. Mrs. Watts complained that Ted did not give more importance to his wife. He used to spend most of his time with a dog. So she decided to leave her husband. At last they were separated.

After that Ted came to live with Frank. He brought the dog with him. He allowed the dog to sleep at the foot of his bed. One day the dog was killed in an road accident. Ted was very sad. But he did not express his sadness. After the death of the dog, he brought a canary. He started spending all his time with the canary. He talked and played with it. One day the canary flew

out through the window. Ted felt sad again and went to search the bird. But he found nothing. Finally he went back to his wife.

ANANCY

(Andrew Salkey)

Text:

I am going to tell you a story about a spider. The spider's name is Anancy. The story is such a wonder story that not even Anancy himself would want to tell it. And that's the mystery of things, believe me.

Well, now, Anancy was a real big spider, the kind of spider with heaps of shoulder muscles, a black-hairy chest and a night-black frighten-children beard on his chin. Anancy was really a frightened-up spectacle of all things powerful and massive. He was a miracle of terror. All the same, though, he had a certain sort of high-class dignity together with all the strong presence that most spiders carry around with them. And this high-class dignity, this sort of big-house pride, was also a form of strength. It was a strength in the way that veins and muscles in the arm are sure signs of stress, strain and strength.

When Anancy walked about the place, he looked like a sort of a war memorial rumbling and tumbling at earthquake time. Anancy was the kind of spider who could do plenty of things, like swim-in-river, climb tall-tall mountains and run long-long races. Anancy was a great-time trickster and a giant-wrestler, as well. Total everybody called his name and still calling it in a hush-hush voice: "Who is Anancy? Man, Anancy is a giant wrestler! Anancy is a fair-ground of powers and muscles! Anancy is a spider is a champion is a strangler is a basinful of big-house pride is a real terror is an ocean of magic with his hands and feet!"

Now, one day some fat news reached Anancy and the news said that the ghosts from the far-far country parts were thinking of holding a real serious wrestling match; and because Anancy is all that he is, he decided sudden-like that he would go to the far-far country and take part in the match with the ghosts.

Well, when total everybody in Anancy's village heard that Anancy was going to do, some of his wrestler friends felt doubtful and tormented-up, some of his political spider friends started to put bets on him, some decided that they would pray plenty for Anancy, and some just stood shaking their head of worries and sighing heaps of sympathetic sighs.

But Anancy had a mother and a father. And he loved them in a great respectful way. But they didn't like the wrestling match idea, at all, at all. Anancy's mother started to tell

Anancy that it is a foolish business for him to wrestle against ghosts because ghosts can read a spider's mind and they can see clear-like total everything that a spider's going to do before he actually does it.

All that Anancy said to that was: "One ghost is a hundred ghosts, and a hundred ghosts is only one ghost. A ghost is only a ghost to me".

But Anancy's mother and father were arguing with plenty of love in their hearts for him. They kept reminding him of the days when he couldn't even see straight of the days when the shadow of a hoe at the slant used to frighten him, of the days when the smallest noise used to make him draw up all his spider legs under himself and shudder. They tried hard to talk protection into him but all he said was: "I'm Anancy."

When his mother and father were pleading, all he doing was stretching out his arms and yawning a wide tired yawn, and going on like he was bored and frightened about total nothing in the world.

Later on that same day, he went back to his mother and because she was so sad, Anancy whispered some nice-nice words in her ears, and the nice-nice words made her sad face light up with twinkle eyes and merry-merry heart. Then he gave her some corn meal and cassava flour and asked her to make some cassava cakes for him. He rubbed his arms with sweet herbs and he tensed up his muscles. Afterwards, he stepped outside and gave away some juicy mangoes and nuts to the children spiders who were always standing around his hut. He shut his door and rested himself for a while. Then he went up to his mother and asked her for the cassava cakes. She was looking pale and mournful as if she saw a funeral standing up in front of her instead of her own son. She cleared her throat and told him that the cassava cakes were not ready. Anancy wrinkled up his eyes and was angry bad-bad. He was puffing and blowing inside himself like a heap of brand-new bellows.

Well, Anancy didn't wait to hear what his mother was going to explain to him; he just ups and left her and ran down the road to meet his best friend, Brother Tacuma, was a calm-sea, thoughtful sort of spider, constantly walking by Anancy's side and constantly smiling through dark thinking eyes. This was so much Brother Tacuma's way of behaving that he got the name of "conscience of all spiders".

So now, Anancy and Brother Tacuma started to walk to the far-far country parts where the ghosts were waiting to open the wrestling match. So they were walking in all sorts of darkness in the forest, and different bad sounds and bird noises were making some terrible confusion in both their heads. Trees and leaves and twigs and branches were having some faces of evilness and dead-skull laughter. There was no brightfulness in the forest at all. Big

lizards and scorpions and cobra-snakes were all over the place; and they were looking ugly and hungry like forty days in the wilderness.

When Brother Tacuma and Anancy got out of the forest they were so tired and full of sleepy eyes and tight muscles that total everything seemed to look like one big blur of confusion and hurricane happenings. Still, now that Anancy actually reached the far-far country of the ghosts, he ran into some good luck. He heard of a new rule that the ghosts had just passed. And this was it: "When anybody comes to wrestle with a ghost and the ghosts beats up that person, the custom is for the conquering ghost to carry that person away and to dash that person's head against a sharp rock stone which is a special river rock stone fixed up for that purpose."

Now neither Anancy nor Brother Tacuma liked the new rule at all. Stomach turned over flip-flip when they saw that the ghosts were doing to the persons whom they were conquering. After watching those horrible happenings, up comes a small-small ghost to talk to Anancy and Brother Tacuma. Listen to how he's talking to them in a nose voice. "So you two small-time wrestlers come to the match. I recognize you Anancy. You still among the living, eh? We'll have to see about that."

To that speech Anancy just bowed his head and started to stretch his muscles. That was how Anancy answered the small-small ghost. But the small-small ghost wasn't satisfied. Hear him: "Anancy! You think that pride is a good thing to have, eh? You think that pride is a good mirror for you to see yourself in properly? Up and down this country we break all such mirrors."

After a little foot shifting, clearing of throats, hustling here and there, and things really began to look like business. Anancy started to fight, now. Even though it was broad daylight the silence that was surrounding everything and everybody was like the silence of a Sunday morning. The first ghost contestant was a tall-tall ghost with hands and feet like an old-time electronic fan, actually going on mad and circular like an old-time electric fan. The first ghost was tough like a crocodile skin and still like ice; and because he was stiff like ice, he was also slipper out of this world. But Anancy moved up and down like he was a great jack-in-the-box in a trance. He dived into the ghost, twisted him up and twisted him round, and before you could say Jack Mandora, he dropped him like a piece of rolled –up silver paper. After that, he grabbed the ghost and dashed him down on the river rock stone. As soon as the ghost touched the rock stone, he was splintered fine like icing sugar, and just as white as that.

Brother Tacuma started to feel a proud feeling for Anancy. He just looked at Anancy and smiled a lovely-brother-smile at him.

Then another ghost came out and challenged Anancy with plenty hot breathing, insults and wild nose-talking. This ghost had four heads, a big central head with three other heads sitting on it. Anancy looked at him, cute-lie. Anancy moved up and down the wrestling ring and began to spin himself like a bright spinning two-and-six piece. When he was doing that the four-headed ghost began to get dizzy and all his eight eyes turned over and became jumbled up like plenty marbles twirling in a circle. After that, Anancy stepped heavy and stepped light and danced round and round until sudden-like the ghost's four heads dropped off. When they touched the ground, they rolled away in four different corners of the ring and the body of the ghost was crumpled up like dry grass.

Well, now after that pretty victory, another ghost walked into the ring. This ghost had eight heads, and it could think eight times as fast as Anancy. But already Anancy was ready and quick and brisk he was throwing his hands around the ghost's neck. As Anancy did that, the eight heads dropped off and rolled away like marbles. Then Anancy grabbed the next ghost who had ten heads and beat him up as if nothing happened.

He beat up the twelve-headed one, the fourteen-headed one, the sixteen-headed one, the eighteen-headed one and the twenty-headed one. You won't believe me when I tell you that the heads were rolling all over the place like wild red cabbage, and the eyes were blinking neons turning over and over, showing white, black and red. The whole place was a total of heads and eyes!

By this time, Anancy was really causing the ghosts a lot of worry head. So the ghosts who had promoted the wrestling match decided to hold a Ghosts United Conference. Big meeting of nose accents going on in deep session! After they had talked plenty Summit talking, they found the answer to the Anancy problem. And this was the answer to the problem : Anancy must fight his own spirit. Imagine that, now! Anancy actually fighting Anancy! Yet, that's the mystery of things, believe me. Body against spirit! (Of course, this is one spirit that will have only one head.)

Well, both of them stood up and faced each other, the Anancy's body facing his own spirit. Their eyes made four as they looked at body facing his own spirit. Their eyes made four as they looked at each other. All the total ghosts were holding a long low-breathing silence. Sudden-lie, Anancy's spirit looked at Anancy's body, saw right through it and Anancy's body felt all crumpled-up-like.

After all the trembling brain and soul messages between body and spirit, Anancy's spirit made a flash-of-lightning movement and lifted up Anancy's body and dashed it against the rockstone. And Anancy's body was splintered up into small pieces like plenty showers of confetti.

So listen to the ghosts, now: "Ai-ya-ai! At last it's come to pass! At last! Who ever heard of anybody fighting against his own life! Serve him right! Serve him damn right! Proud and stupid spider!"

After that the chief of the ghosts walked into a thick clump of bush-john, picked some berries off the push-john tree and squeezed the juice into the eyes of all the dead ghosts. Quick-like, all of the conquered ghosts jumped up and began to live again and talk in their old-time nose voices.

Brother Tacuma who was watching the chief ghost, decided to do total everything he saw the chief ghost do. So Brother Tacuma went into the thick clump of bush-john picked some berries off it and squeezed the juice into Anancy's right eye, then, into his left eye. As soon as he did that, quick-like. Anancy came back to life and returned to his normal spider self. Yet, even though Anancy was restored to his living body again, he was feeling very angry and he started to grumble and quarrel with his spirit for being a Judas person to him. He told his spirit that he hated the bad treachery which it did to his body. And the row lasted for a long time.

When the ghosts returned to find Anancy and to pick up his pieces and to eat him for supper, they didn't see him at all. But they heard him far off. They heard him shouting out loud in the distance, quarrelling with his spirit and running away as fast as he could go from the far-far country parts. So the ghosts decided to chase Brother Tacuma and Anancy.

The ghosts were running made races and Anancy and Brother Tacuma wre running even faster. The ghosts started catching up, now. The speed is pure power-house speed between them! But Anancy and Brother Tacuma were getting nearer home, now. The ghosts opened out to a bigger speed and the forest was making plenty celebrating noises like hurricane wind.

Anancy and Brother Tacuma turned the last comer and headed for the door that led into Anancy's mother's hut. The ghosts were coming quicker, now. They were flying low like madness and cursing hot fever. Then, Anancy, sudden-like, from nowhere, started to feel weak and he felt like all his total courage and power was oozing out of him. As he was having that weak sensation, he gave up the high speeding and he began to slow down. As he was slowing down, quick-like, something burst way deep down inside him. Anancy's spirit,

who had been having a big disagreement with Anancy's body, decided to show that he was no Judas person at all. So Anancy's spirit (one-time conqueror and only conqueror of Anancy) shot out of Anancy's sweating body and began to tackle the ghosts. Anancy's spirit performed some terrible wrestling tricks on the ghosts. After about the count of twelve, most of the ghosts who were chasing Anancy cried out in plenty aches and pain and they turned round the other way and ran back to the far-far country parts, all the same, many of them couldn't move because they were too battered and splintered.

As soon as the ghosts were no more, Anancy's spirit made a real flying come-back to Anancy's body. And as that was happening a joyous, heaven-come-to-earth smile spread itself all over Anancy's face. Brother Tacuma saw the joyous, heaven-come-down-to-earth smile on Anancy's face and he, too, felt a happy feeling swelling deep down inside himself. And Anancy made Brother Tacuma know that a person is truly strong only after that person's spirit has proved him.

About the Author:

Andrew Salkey was born in 1928, is a noted Jamaican writer. Hailing from a middle class family, he depicts the peasant life in the West Indies in a powerful novel *A Quality Of Violence (1959*), dealing primarily with the primitive cults of Jamaica at the turn of the century. He uses a more refined idiom in his second novel Escape to an *Autumn Pavement (1960*), which probes the inward stress of a middle class Jamaican family transplanted into the London Proletariat. He has published four volumes of verse and edited anthologies of Caribbean writings.

Summary:

"Anancy is one of the most popular Caribbean folk-tales. It is a fable. Salkey uses a traditional myth in a new shape to explore new experiences and new problems. Though Anancy , a weak but cunning spider, he exposes the problem of the Blackman in the New world. Anancy symbolizes the weakness of the Black-man. In spite of slavery and suppression the spirits of the African West Indians remain undefeated. Though treated with contempt by others, he is sure of securing his rightful place under the sun. Salkey's narration is simple but the language is colloquial, marking the strange style of West Indian English.

One day Anancy heard the news that the ghosts were going to conduct a wrestling match.. So he was very interested to take part in the match. But few of his wrestling friends were doubtful about his victory and some of them started betting. His mother also stopped him not to participate in the match, and told that it was a foolish business to wrestle against ghosts. At last Tacuma and Anancy reached the ghost country to participate in wrestling

match. The match started. While Anancy's turn came , he killed the ghosts one by one. So the ghosts decided to stop his spirits by using magic. However Anancy's spirit was fighting against his body. The ghosts easily dashed Anancy's body on the rock stone. His body was splintered into small pieces.

The chief ghost took some bodies from the "Bush John Tree" and squeezed the juice into the eyes of all the dead ghosts. They all got up once. Brother Tacuma who was watching the ghost did the same to Anancy's body. At once Anancy's body got life and started fighting against the ghost.

HA'PENNY

(Alan Paton)

Text:

Of the six hundred boys at the reformatory, about one hundred were from ten to fourteen years of age. My Department had from time to time expressed the intention of taking them away, and of establishing a special institution for them, more like an industrial school than a reformatory. This would have been a good thing, for their offences were very trivial, and they would have been better off by themselves. Had such a school been established, I should have liked to be Principal of it myself, for it would have been an easier job; small boys turn instinctively towards affection, and one controls them by it, naturally and easily.

Some of them, if I came near them, either on parade or in school or at football, would observe me watchfully, not directly or fully, but obliquely and secretly; sometimes I would surprise them at it, and make some small sign of recognition, which would satisfy them so that they would cease to observe me, and would give their full attention to the event of the moment. But I knew that my authority was thus confirmed and strengthened.

The secret relations with them were a source of continuous pleasure to me. Had they been my own children I would no doubt have given a greater expression to it. But often I would move through the silent and orderly parade, and stand by one of them. He would look straight in front of him with a little frown of concentration that expressed both childish awareness and manly indifference to my nearness. Sometimes I would tweak his ear, and he would give me a brief smile of acknowledgement, or frown with still greater concentration. It was natural, I suppose, to confine these outward expressions to the very smallest, but they were taken as symbolic; and some older boys would observe them and take themselves to be included. It was a relief, when the reformatory was passing through times of turbulence and

trouble, and when there was danger of estrangement between authority and the boys, to make those simple and natural gestures, which were reassurances to both me and them that nothing important had changed.

On Sunday afternoon when I was on duty I would take my car to the reformatory and watch the free boys being signed out at the gate. This simple operation was watched by many boys not free, who would tell each other, 'In so many weeks I'll be signed out myself'. Among the watchers were always some of the small boys, and these I would take my turns in the car. We would go out to the Potchefstroom Road with its ceaseless stream of traffic, and to the Baragwanath crossroads, and come back by the Van Wyksrus road to the reformatory. I would talk to them about their families, their parents, their sisters and brothers, and I would pretend to know nothing of Durban, Port Elizabeth, Potchefstroom, and Clocolan, and ask them if these places were bigger than Johannesburg.

One of the small boys was Ha'penny, and he was about twelve years old. He came from Bloemfontein and was the biggest talker of them all. His mother worked in a white person's house, and he had two brothers and two sisters. His brothers were Richard and Dickie, and his sisters Anna and Mina.

'Richard and Dickie? I aksed.

'Yes, meneer.'

'In English,' I said, Richard and Dickie are the same name.'

When we returned to the reformatory, I sent for Ha'penny's papers; there it was plainly set down Ha'penny was a waif, with no relatives at all. He had been taken in from one home to another, but he was naughty and uncontrollable, and eventually had taken to pilfering at the market.

I then sent for the Letter Book, and found that Ha'penny wrote regularly, or rather that others wrote for him till he could write himself, to Mrs. Betty Maarman, of 48 Vlak Street, Bloemfontein. But Mrs. Maarman had never once replied to him. When questioned, he had said, perhaps she is sick. I sat down and wrote at once to the Social Welfare Officer at Bloemfontein, asking him to investigate.

The next time I had Ha'penny out in the car I questioned him again about his family. And he told me the same as before, his mother, Richard and Dickie, Anna and Mina. But he softened the 'D' of Dickie, so that it sounded like Tickie.

'I though you said Dickie,' I said.

'I said Tickie,' he said.

He watched me with concealed apprehension, and I came to the conclusion that this waif of Bloemfontein was a clever boy, who had told me a story that was all imagination and had changed one single letter of it to make it safe from any question. And I thought I understood it all too, that he was ashamed of being without a family and had invented them all. So that no one might discover that he was fatherless and motherless and that no one in the world cared whether he was alive or dead. This gave me a strong feeling for him, and I went out of my way to manifest towards him that fatherly care that the State, though not in those words, had enjoined upon me by giving me this job.

Then the letter came from the Social Welfare Officer in Bloemfontein, saying that Mrs. Betty Maarman of 48Vlak Street was a real person, and that she had four children, Richard and Dickie, Anna and Mina, but that Ha'penny was no child of hers, and she knew him only as a derelict of the streets. She had never answered his letters, because he wrote to her as 'Mother,' and she was no mother of his, nor did she wish to play any such role. She was a decent woman, a faithful member of the church, and she had no thought of corrupting her family by letting them have anything to do with such a child.

But Ha'penny seemed to me anything but the usual delinquent; his desire to have a family was so strong, and his reformatory record was so blameless, and his anxiety to please and obey so great, that I began to feel a great duty towards him. Therefore I asked him about his 'mother'.

He could not speak enough of her, nor with too high praise. She was loving, honest and strict. Her home was clean. She had affection for all her children. It was clear that the homeless child, even as he had attached himself to me, would have attached himself to her, he had observed her even as he had observed me, but did not know the secret of how to open her heart, so that she would take him from the lonely life that he led.

'Why did you steal when you had such a mother?' I asked.

He could not answer that; not all his brains or his courage could find an answer to such a question, for he knew that with such a mother he could not have stolen at all.

'The boy's name is Dickie,' I said, 'not Tickie.'

And then he knew the deception was revealed. Another boy might have said, 'I told you it was Dickie,' but he was to intelligent for that; he knew that if I had established that the boy's name was Dickie, I must have established other things too. I was shocked by the immediate and visible effect of my action. His whole brave assurance died within him, and he stood there exposed, not as a liar, but as a homeless child who had surrounded himself

with mother, brothers and sisters, who did not exist. I had shattered the very foundations of his pride, and his sense of human significance.

He fell sick at once, and the doctor said it was tuberculosis. I wrote at once to Mrs. Maarman, telling her the whole story, of how this small boy had observed her, and had decided that she was the person he desired for his mother. But she wrote back saying that she could take no responsibility for him. For one thing, Ha'penny was a Mosuto, and she was a coloured woman; for another, she had never had a child in trouble and how could she take such a boy?

Tuberculosis is a strange thing; sometimes it manifests itself suddenly in the most unlikely host, and swiftly sweeps to the end. Ha'penny withdrew himself from the world, from all Principals and mothers, and the doctor said there was little hope. In desperation I sent money for Mrs. Maarman to come.

She was a decent, homely woman, and, seeing that the situation was serious, she, without fuss or embarrassment, adopted Ha'penny for her own. The whole reformatory accepted her as his mother. She sat the whole day with him, and talked to him of Richard and Dickie, Anna and Mina, and how they were all waiting for him to come home. She poured out her affection on him, and had no fear of his sickness, nor did she allow it to prevent her from satisfying his hunger to be owned. She talked to him of what they would do when he came back, and how he would go to school, and what they would buy for Guy Fawkes Night.

He in his turn gave his whole attention to her, and when I visited him he was grateful, but I had passed out of his world. I felt judged in that I had sensed only the existence and not the measure of his desire. I wished I had done something sooner, wiser, more prodigal.

We buried him on the reformatory farm, and Mrs. Maarman said to me, 'When you put up the cross, put he was my son.'

'I'm ashamed,' she said, 'that I wouldn't take him.'

'The sickness,' I said, 'the sickness would have come.'

'No,' she said shaking her head with certainty. 'It wouldn't have come. And if it had come at home, it would have been different.

So she left for Bloemfontein, after her strange visit to a reformatory. And I was left too, with the resolve to be more prodigal in the task that the State, though not in so many words, had enjoined upon me.

About the Author:

Alan Paton (1903-1988), a South African novelist, was born in Pietermaritzburg. He was educated in the University of Natal. He served as a teacher in Natal School for eleven

years. Then he became the principal of Diepkloof Reformatory, Johnnesburg (1935-1948). The principalship provided those insights into the segregated living conditions of the Blacks that illumine his first novel *Cry, The Beloved country (1948)*. He tried to prick the white South Africa's long-established racial irregularities. His short stories are mainly based on his reformatory experiences. He earned reputation as "the man who removed the barbed wires and grew geranium," in the Reformatory.

Summary:

One day Paton saw a small boy named "Ha'penny''. He was about twelve years old. He was a talkative boy. He said that he was from Bloemfontein and his mother Mrs.Maarman worked in a white person's house and he had two brothers Richard and Dickie and two sisters Anna and Mina. But Paton came to know from his record that Ha'Penny was an orphan and used to write letters to Mrs.Betty Maarman of 48,Viak street. But he did not receive any reply from her. Paton asked the boy again about his family. But he replied the same. Later Paton discovered that Ha'Penny did not want to show him as an orphan. So the author decided to help the boy with fatherly care.

Paton found out through a social welfare officer that Mrs.Maarman of Viak street was a real person and she had a four children but Ha'penny was not her child. The lady knew him only as a derelict. Moreover she never liked to have any kind of relationship with this boy. From this pathetic situation Paton found that Ha'penny imagined Mrs.Maarman as his mother and longed for affection.

When Ha'penny was affected by tuberculosis, Paton immediately wrote to Mrs.Maarman to come to reformatory. But he didn't receive any reply from her. So again he wrote a letter telling the whole story of Ha'Penny. Atlast she came and talked with him affectionately. She assumed that he would be alright and would be happy at her home. But it was too late. Ha'penny died. Mrs.Maarman felt very sad and ashamed of her delay in adopting the boy

THE SNOB

(Morley Callaghan)

Text:

It was in the book counter in the department store that John Harcourt, the student, caught a glimpse of his father. At first he could not be sure in the crowd that pushed along the aisle, but there was something about the color of the back of the elderly man's neck, something about the faded felt hat, that he knew very well. Harcourt was standing with the

girl he loved buying a book for her. All afternoon he had been talking to her, eagerly, but with an anxious diffidence, as if there still remained in him an innocent wonder that she should be delighted to be with him. From underneath her wide-brimmed straw hat, her face, so fair and beautifully strong with its expression of cool independence, kept turning up to him and sometimes smiled at what he said. That was the way they always talked, never daring to show much full, strong feeling. Harcourt had just bought the book, and had reached into his pocket for the money with a free, and had reached into his pocket for the money with a free, ready gesture to make it appear that he was accustomed to buying books for young ladies, when the white-haired man in the faded felt hat, at the other end of the counter, turned half toward him, and Harcourt knew he was standing only a few feet away from his father.

The young man's easy words trailed away and his voice became little more than a whisper, as if he were afraid that everyone in the store might recognize it. There was rising in him a dreadful uneasiness; something very precious that he wanted to hold seemed close to destruction. His father, standing at the end of the bargain counter, was planted squarely on his two feet, turning a book over thoughtfully in his hands. Then he took out his glasses from an old, worn leather case and adjusted them on the end of his nose, looking down over them at the book. His coat was thrown open, two buttons on his vest were undone, his hair was too long, in his rather shabby clothes he looked very much like a workingman, a carpenter perhaps. Such a resentment rose in young Harcourt that he wanted to cry out bitterly. 'Why does he dress as if he never owned a decent suit in his life? He doesn't care what the whole world thinks of him. He never did. I've told him a hundred times he ought to wear his good clothes when he goes out. Mother's told him the same thing. He just laughs. And now Grace may see him. Grace will meet him.'

So young Harcourt stood still, with his head down, feeling that something very painful was impeding. Once he looked anxiously at Grace, who had turned to the bargain counter. Among those people drifting aimlessly by, with hot red faces, getting in each other's way, using their elbows but keeping their faces detached and wooden, she looked tall and splendidly alone. She was so sure of herself, her relation to the people in the aisles, the clerks behind the counters, the books on the shelves, and everything around her. Still keeping his head down and moving close, he whispered uneasily, 'Let's go and have tea somewhere, Grace.'

'In a minute, dear,' she said.

'Let's go now'.

'In just a minute, dear,' she repeated absently.

‘There’s not a breath of air in here. Let’s go now’.

‘What makes you so impatient?’

‘There’s nothing but old books on that counter.’

‘There may be something here I’ve wanted all my life,’ she said, smiling at him brightly and not noticing the uneasiness in his face.

So Harcourt had to move slowly behind her, getting closer to his father all the time. He could feel the space that separated them narrowing. Once he looked up with a vague, sidelong glance. But his father, red-faced and happy, was still reading the book, only now there was a meditative expression on his face, as if something in the book had stirred him and he intended to stay there reading for some time.

Old Harcourt had lots of time to amuse himself, because he was on a pension after working hard all his life. He had sent John to the university and he was eager to have him distinguish himself. Every night when John came home, whether it was early or late, he used to go into his father and mother’s bedroom and turn on the light and talk to them about the interesting things that had happened to him during the day. They listened and shared this news world with him. They both sat up in their night clothes, and, while his mother asked all the questions, his father listened attentively with his head cocked on one side and a smile or a frown on his face. The memory of all this was in John now, and there was also a desperate longing and pain within him growing harder to bear as he glanced fearfully at his father, but he though stubbornly, ‘I can’t introduce him. It’ll be easier for everybody if he doesn’t see us. I’m not ashamed. But it will be easier. It’ll be more sensible. It’ll only embarrass him to see Grace.’ By this time he knew he was ashamed, but he felt that his shame was justified for Grace’s father had the smooth, confident manner of a man who had lived all his life among people who were rich and sure of themselves. Often when he had been in Grace’s home talking politely to her mother, John had kept on thinking of the plainness of his own home and of his parent’s laughing, good-natured untidiness, and he resolved desperately that he must make Grace’s people admire him.

He looked up cautiously, for they were about eight feet away from his father, but at that moment his father, too, looked up and John’s glance shifted far over the aisle, over the counters, seeing nothing. As his father’s blue, calm eyes stared steadily over the glasses, there was an instant when their glances might have met. Neither one could have been certain, yet John, as he turned away and began to talk hurriedly to Grace, knew surely that his father had seen him. He knew it by the steady calmness in his father’s blue eyes. John’s shame grew, and then humiliation sickened him as he waited and did nothing.

His father turned away, going down the aisle, walking erectly in his shabby clothes, his shoulders very straight, never once looking back. His father would walk slowly down the street, he knew, with that meditative expression deepening and becoming grave.

Young Harcourt stood beside Grace, brushing against her soft shoulder, and was made faintly aware again of the delicate scene she used. There, so close beside him, she was holding within her everything he wanted to reach out for, only he felt a sharp hostility that made him sullen and silent.

'You were right, John,' she was drawling in her soft voice. 'It does get unbearable in here on a hot day. Do let's go now. Have you ever noticed that department stores after a time can make you really hate people?' But she smiled when she spoke, so he might see that she really hated no one.

'You don't like people, do you?' he said sharply.

'People ? What people? What do you mean?'

'I mean,' he went on irritably, 'you don't like the kind of people you bump into here, for example.'

'Not especially. Who does? What are you talking about?'

'Anybody could see you don't,' he said recklessly, full of a savage eagerness to hurt her. 'I say you don't like simple, honest people, the kind of people you meet all over the city.' He blurted the words out as if he wanted to shake her, but he was longing to say, 'You wouldn't like my family. Why couldn't I take you home to have dinner with them? You'd turn your nose at them, because they've no pretensions. As soon as my father saw you, he knew you wouldn't want to meet him. I could tell by the way he turned.'

His father was on his way home now, he knew, and that evening at dinner they would meet. His mother and sister would talk rapidly, but his father would say nothing to him, or to anyone. There would only be Harcourt's memory of the level look in the blue eyes, and the knowledge of his father's pain as he walked away.

Grace watched John's gloomy face as they walked through the store, and she knew he was nursing some private rage, and so her own resentment and exasperation kept growing, and she said crisply, 'You're entitled to your moods on a hot afternoon, I suppose, but if I feel I don't like it here, then I don't like it. You wanted to go yourself. Who likes to spend very much time in a department store on a hot afternoon? I begin to hate very stupid person that bangs into me, everybody near me. What does that make me?'

'It makes you a snob.'

'So I'm a snob now?' she asked angrily.

‘Certainly you’re a snob,’ he said. They were at the door going out to the street. As they walked in the sunlight, in the crowd moving slowly down the street, he was groping for words to describe the secret he had always had about her. ‘I’ve always known how you’d feel about people I like who didn’t fit into your private world,’ he said.

‘You’re a very stupid person,’ she said. Her ace was flushed now, and it was hard for her to express her indignation, so she stared straight ahead as she walked along.

They had never talked in this way, and how they were both quickly eager to hurt each other. With a flow of words, she started to argue with him, then she checked herself and said calmly, ‘Listen, John, I imagine you’re tired of my company. There’s no sense in having tea together. I think I’d better leave you right here.’

‘That’s fine,’ he said. ‘Good afternoon.’

‘Good-bye.’

‘Good-bye.’

She started to go, she had gone two paces, but he reached out desperately and held her arm, and he was frightened, and pleading, ‘Please don’t go, Grace.’

All the anger and irritation had left him; there was just a desperate anxiety in his voice as he pleaded, ‘Please forgive me. I’ve to talk to you like that. I don’t know why I’m so ruder or what the matter is. I’m ridiculous. I’m very ridiculous. Please, you must forgive me. Don’t leave me.’

He had never talked to her so brokenly, and his sincerity, the depth of his feeling, began to stir her. While she listened, feeling all the yearning in him, they seemed to have been brought closer together, by opposing each other, than ever before, and she began to feel almost shy. ‘I don’t know what the matter is. I suppose we’re both irritable. It must be the weather,’ she said. ‘But I’m not angry, John.’

He nodded his head miserably. He longed to tell her that he was sure she would have been charming to his father, but he had never felt so wretched in his life. He held her arm tight, as if he must hold it or what he wanted most in the world would slip away from him, yet he kept thinking, as he would ever think, of his father walking away quietly with his head never turning.

About the Author:

Morely Callaghan is one of Canada’s best –known writers of the 20th Century. He was born in 1903. He started writing short stories during his studenthood. His stories were published in a number of American magazines. He was a qualified lawyer, and naturally his stories focused on a social outcasts and the conflict between material and moral values.

Summary:

"The Snob" is a psychological study of human attitudes. It reveals how hidden conflicts affect people's lives and behavior. Often a person grumbles about certain shortcomings in others of which he himself is guilty. He fails to realize that he is obsessed with some traits that he denounces in others.

John Harcourt the protagonist of this story and his lady –love went to the store to purchase a book. When they were at the counter John saw his father coming at the end of the same counter. He felt uncomfortable and embarrassed. Moreover he felt irritated by his father's shabby clothes. His coat was thrown open, two buttons on his vest undone and his hair was too long. For these reasons he neglected to introduce Grace his lady-love to him and he tried to leave the place. This made a struggle between John and his lady love. Both of them started blaming one another. At last John Harcourt charges his lady -love a snob, a little later realizing that he is the real snob.

MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN

-- Bertolt Brecht

SCENE 1

It is the spring of 1624, he eighth year of the Thirty Years' War (1618 – 48). The Swedish Commander, Oxenstierna has sent his men to recruit soldiers for the campaign in Poland since the long drawn-out war is making a fresh start. The sergeant and the recruiting officer are looking out for cannon fodder. The sergeant hasn't been able to recruit many soldiers even though he has tried to bribe them. He tells the sergeant:

You can't take a man's word any more, Sergeant. There's no loyalty left in the world, no trust, no faith, no sense of honour. I'm losing confidence in mankind, Sergeant.

The Sergeant agrees with him:

What else can you expect with peace running wild all over the place? You know what The trouble with peace is? No organisation. And when do you get organisation? In a War. Peace is one big waste of equipment. . . . That's the story: no organisation, no war!

The inverted values of the military become ironically apparent in the conversation. Peace is condemned as a wasteful disorder and war applauded for his discipline and organisation, the irony being that such military organisation will in the long run produce the vast civilian dislocation and destruction which is war. This outrageous viewpoint generates a

kind of willy challenge that alerts the audience to pay critical attention to the action that follows.

The sound of a harmonica is heard and Mother Courage enters the scene. She is sitting with her dumb daughter Kattrin on the canteen wagon drawn by her two sons, Eilif and Fyos (Swiss Cheese). She greets the Sergeant. When asked to reveal her identity, Mother Courage replies that they are "tradespeople" and starts singing about what she sells:

Here's Mother Courage and her wagon!

Hey, Captain, let them come and buy!

Beer by the keg! Wine by the flagon!

Let your men drink before they die!

She has floated this new enterprise as her fear of war of outstripped by her hope of business prospects. The contradiction lies in the fact that she wants to maintain her family by means of the war while keeping them safely out of it. The conflict between her mother-love and her keen business acumen suggest the tragic potential of the play.

When the sergeant asks where the "riff-raff" is from, Eilif replies that they are from the Second Finnish Regiment. When asked to show their papers, Swiss Cheese says, "But this is Mother Courage!" Mother Courage elucidates, "They call me Mother Courage, cause I am afraid I'd he ruined. So I drove through the bombardment of Riga like a mad woman with fifty loaves of bread in my cart. They were going mouldy, I couldn't please myself."

But the sergeant wants "no funny business"; he insists on seeing the papers. Mother Courage rummages among papers in a tinbox and shows them to the sergeant.

Here, Sergeant! Here's a Bible – I got it Altoting to wrap my cucumbers in. Here's a

Map of Moravia – God knows if I'll ever get there – the birds can have it if I don't. And

here's a document saying my horse hasn't got foot and mouth disease – pity he died on

us, he cost fifteen gliders, thank God I didn't pay it. Is that enough paper?

Irritated by her evasive replies, the sergeant asks Mother Courage whether she is pulling his leg, which indeed she is for she has no papers to prove her identity and that of her family. He asks her to show the licence to which she replies: "Show a little respect for a lady and don't go telling these grown children of mine I'm pulling anything of you. What would I want with you? My licence in the Second Finnish Regiment is an honest face. If you wouldn't know how to read it, that's not my fault, I want no rubber stamp on it anyhow."

To the recruiting officer this is “an act of insubordination”. He tells Mother Courage: “Do you know what we need in the army? Discipline!” And Mother Courage’s cheeky retort is:

“I was going to say sausages.”

Three Children by Different Fathers

Mother Courage tells the Sergeant that her name is Anna Fierling but her children are not Fierlings. “Must they all have the same name?” she asks. Pointing to her elder son, she tells the Sergeant:

This fellow, for instance, I call him Eilif Noyocki – he got the name
From his father who told me he was called Koyocki. Or was it
Moyocki? Anyhow, the lad remembers him to this day. Only the
Man he remembers is someone else, a Frenchman with a pointed
Beard. But he certainly has his father’s brains – which man could
Whip the breeches off a farmer’s backside before he could turn
Around. So we all have our own names.

Her second son is a Swiss “but he happens to be called Feyos, a name that has nothing to do with his father, who was called something else- a military engineer, if you please, and a drunkard!” Feyos has nothing to do with the Frenchman. “When he came, I was with a Hungarian. He was a very honest man. The boy takes after him.” She calls Feyos, Swiss Cheese because “he’s good at pulling the wagon”. Her dumb daughter Kattrin Haput is “half German….and we’ve seen the whole wide world together the wagonload and me.”

When the sergeant calls her sons oxen and keeps interrogating Mother Courage, Eilif shows his bravado, “Mother! May I smack him in the Kisser?” She asks him to keep out and tries her sales talk with the sergeant and the recruiting officer,” And now, gentlemen, what about a brace of pistols? Or a belt? Sergeant? Yours is worn clean through.” But he is looking for recruiting strong young men as soldiers. Mother Courage is quickly on the defensive. “A soldier’s life is not for sons of mine!” But it means money and fame, the recruiting officer tells her and he asks Eilif to come near him. Mother Courage warns him, “Let him alone! He’s not for you!” She then tries another ruse:”Officer, I’ll report you to the Colonel and he’ll throw you in goal. His lieutenant is courting my daughter.’ But the sergeant is adamant on recruiting Eilif: “What have you got against the service, wasn’t his own father a soldier? Didn’t you say he died a soldier’s death?” But Eilif, Mother Courage says, is “just a baby. You’ll lead him like a lamb to the slaughter. I know you’ll get five gliders for him.”

When all her efforts fail, Mother Courage draws a knife and threatens the sergeant: "Yes, just you try, and I'll cut you down like dogs! We sell cloth, we sell ham. We are peaceful people!" The sergeant jeers: "You're peaceful all right: your knife proves that. Why, you should be ashamed of yourself. Give me that knife, you hag! You admit you live off the war, what else *could* you life off? Now tell me, how can we have a war about soldiers?.... Call yourself Mother Courage and then get scared of the war, your breadwinner? Your sons aren't scared, I know that much."

Mother Courage tries to divert their attention by pretending to read their fortune through a draw of lots. She foresees death for all of them, telling them, "You're just a corpse on furlough." Their number is up. "You cheated yourself the day you enlisted." Having said this, she says that they must get back to work. But the sergeant takes away a willing Eilif with him. Mother Courage wails, "Unhappy mother that I am, rich only in a mother's sorrow. He dies. In the springtime of his life, he must go. If he's a soldier, he must bite the dust, it's clear." She asks Eilif to use his head and not thoughtlessly plunge into action and endanger his life. All the same, Mother Courage manages to sell a belt to the Sergeant who assures her, "Being a soldier isn't the worst that could happen. You live off war and keep you and yours out of it, do you?" As for himself, "I always stay in the rear. There's no safer spot for a sergeant to be. You can send the others ahead in quest of fame."

Now Swiss Cheese and Kattrin pull the wagon. As it gets underway, the sergeant sings:

When a war gives you all you earn
One day it may claim something in return.

Confronted by the professionals of war Mother Courage hopes to protect her family by her own professional acts, ranging from comic evasiveness to drawing a knife. Her game of fortune-telling with black crosses is a clever manoeuvre to prevent her sons from being recruited, first by putting off the sergeant and then by frightening her own children. Within the overall scheme of the play it provides a frame of suspense and becomes loaded with dramatic irony. According to Brecht, "With her eldest she is afraid of his bravery, but counts on his cleverness. With the second she is afraid of his stupidity but counts on his honesty. With her daughter she is afraid of her pity but counts on her dumbness. Only her fears prove to be justified."

SCENE 2

During the next two years (1625 – 26) Mother Courage journeys through Poland in the baggage train of the Swedish army. She now arrives at Wallhof Castle is seen haggling with

the cook of the Swedish commander over the price of a capon that he wishes to purchase for the commander's dinner. She tells him categorically that "in a siege, my price for a giant capon is fifty hellers." The cook tries to tell her, "But we're not 'in a siege', we're doing the besieging it's the other side that's 'in a siege'." She relies, "A fat lot of difference that makes, we haven't got a thing to eat either." People are all "skin and bones" and they are even out of field rats. "Didn't you see the soldiers running five deep after one hungry little field rat?" The farmers, they haven't a thing. But may be they are hiding it, the cook tries to argue. Mother Courage, however, insists that they are all ruined. "They're so hungry I've seen 'em digging up roots to eat… That's how things are round here." And they continue bargaining over the price of the capon. The cook would rather cook stale beef for dinner than buy the capon from her at that outrageous price even if he has to cook it for five hours. And Mother Courage advises him, "Put plenty of pepper in it, so the Commander won't smell the smell."

The Swedish Commander enters his tent, accompanied by the Chaplain and Eilif. He is particularly pleased with Eilif's daring act of bravery and wants to feast him. He calls him a "happy warrior" and tells him: You've played a hero's part, you've served the Lord in his own Holy War, that's the thing! And you'll get a gold bracelet out of it when we take the town if I have any say in the matter. We come to save their souls and what do they do, the filthy, irreligious sons of bitches? Drive their cattle away from us, while they stuff their priests with beef at both ends!" All that Eilif has done when he found that the peasants did was to hide their oxen and driven them to a safe forest stealthily at night. The towns-people were to pick up the oxen from there. "I let them get their oxen in peace-they ought to know better than me where they are, I said to myself. Meanwhile I made my men crazy for meat. Their rations were short and I made sure they got shorter. Their mouths 'd water at the sound of any word beginning with M, like mother . . . . The rest was a walk over. Only the peasants had clubs and outnumbered us three to one and made a murderous attack on us…. And so we got to talking, I came right down to business…. Like I wanted to buy. That foxed 'em. So while they were scratching their heads, I reached for my good sword and cut 'em to pieces. Necessity knows no law, huh?" That is how Eilif "fixed the peasants and grabbed the twenty bullocks" – a feat for which he is by the commander. The Chaplain is making inane statements while commenting on Eilif's valorous act all the time and the Swedish Commander tells Eilif that he has "the makings of a Julius Caesar, why, you should be presented to the King!... Oh, Eilif, you don't how I value a brave soldier like you!"

Mother Courage has been listening to the commander's praises of her son. She tells the cook: "He must be avery bad commander… Because he needs brave solders. If his plan of campaign was any good why would he need brave soldiers, wouldn't plain, ordinary soldiers DO?" She adds that in a good country virtues won't be necessary. "Everybody could be quite ordinary, middling, and, for all I care, cowards."

Meanwhile Eilif sings the song of the Fishwife and the Soldier for the benefit of the commander and the Chaplain, the refrain of which is: It's the life of a hero for me!" Mother Courage continues the song concluding it with:

But the lad and his laughter are lost in the night!

And he floats with the ice to the sea.

As the commander gets restless for his dinner Eilif and Mother Courage meet. They are happy to see each other. Mother Courage tells him that they all "happy as ducks in a pond"; Swiss Cheese is the paymaster in the Second Regiment and she and Kattrin are doing well in their trade. She congratulates Eilif for not surrendering "when the four peasants let fly at you and tried to make mincemeat of you!" Didn't I teach you to take care of yourself? You Finnish devil, you!" She has anyway sold her capon to the cook for her son's feast in the Swedish Commander's tent.

SCENE 3

Three years pass after the last episode, Mother Courage is taken prisoner along with a part of the Finnish Regiment. She and her daughter Kattrin live outside the tent of the Finnish Regiment where she conducts her business now. Her clothes are drying on a rope one end of which is tied to her wagon and the other a cannon. When the action opens, Kattrin is folding the clothes while Mother Courage is bargaining with an ordnance officer over to a bag of bullets. Swiss Cheese, who is now the paymaster of the regiment, looks on. Another character is introduced in this scene-that of Yvette Pottier, a young and good-looking prostitute who is seen drinking while sewing at a coloured hat.

Mother Courage and the ordnance officer are bargaining over the bag of bullets he wishes to sell her. He doesn't have money to serve drinks to the colonel and his men. Mother Courage berates him for selling the bullets and sending the soldiers "out to fight with nothing to shoot with". Mother Courage bargains hard over the price but the ordnance officer suggests that she could sell them to another ordnance officer of the regiment and give him an inflated receipt. He can't to do it himself as they are friends and he doesn't trust him.

While settling the price for the bag of bullets, Mother Courage hands over his underwear to Swiss Cheese asking him to take care of it and adding.

> *It's October now, autumn may come at any time; I purposely don't say it must come, I've learnt from experience there's nothing that must come, not even the seasons.*

She, however, advises him to balance his books. "Don't forget they made you paymaster because you're honest and so simple you'd never think of running off with the cash." When the ordnance officer goes with Swiss Cheese, Mother Courage warns him, "Don't teach him any hanky-panky."

Mother Courage is confident that, with all the different countries joining the war, it would last for another four to five years and "If I took ahead and make no mistakes business will be good." She then chides Yvette for drinking in the mourning as she is ill. But Yvette tells Mother Courage that rumours have been spread about her illness, which have affected her business. "They're all liars, Mother Courage. They all avoid me like a stinking fish. Because of those lies…. But pride isn't for the likes of us, you eat dirt or down you go."

Yvette starts singing a song describing her present plight-how she was in love with an army cook, a blond Dutchman and how he deserted her. This, she says, will hold a moral for Mother Courage's "innocent daughter" Kattrin and harden her against love, although Mother Courage says that love is "something no one ever gets hardened against". In her song, Yvette describes the carefree days of her early youth and her "heaven-born" love for the Dutch cook, warning Kattrin to "beware of thin men". She then goes swaying behind the wagn. Mother Courage adds her bit by telling Kattrin never to be involved with a soldier. She is glad that Kattrin is dumb because "you'll never contradict yourself, you'll never want to bite your tongue off because you spoke out of turn. Dumbness is a gift from God."

The commander's cook appears on the scene with the Chaplain of the regiment. The Chaplain has brought a message for Swiss Cheese from Eilif while the cook has accompanied him for "a little whiff of the balmy trees". Mother Courage reluctantly gives some money for Eilif to the Chaplain, saying, "He's speculating in mother love, he ought to be ashamed of himself." The cook says that she won't have to part with money for long now that Eilif is going with his regiment:

> *to his death maybe. Send him some more money, or you'll be sorry,*
> *You women are hard-and sorry afterwards. A glass of brandy*
> *wouldn't cost very much, but you refuse to provide it, and six feet*
> *under goes your man and you can't dig him up again.*

But the Chaplain is of the view that, since it is a war of religion, it would be a blessing to fall in this war. The cook makes fun of the Chaplain:

> *Correct. In one sense it's a war because there's fleecing, bribing, plundering, not to mention a little raping, but it's different from all other wars because it's a war of religion. That's clear. All the same, it makes you thirsty.*

He has come there to drink because the Chaplain says he is "bewitched" by Mother Courage. To this, she offers a drink to the Chaplain; otherwise he would be "making improper advances out of sheer boredom". When the Chaplain inquires about Kattrin, "this captivating young person", Mother Courage warns him to lay off her daughter: "She's not a captivating young person, she's respectable young person." The three of them go behind the cart and start talking politics. Mother Courage concludes cynically:

> *To hear the big chaps talk, the wage war from fear of God and for all things*
> *Bright and beautiful, but just look into it, and you'll see they're not so silly:*
> *They want a good profit out of it, or else the little chaps like you and me*
> *won't back 'em up.*

In the meanwhile, Kattrin has put on Yvette's hat and is practicing her sexy walk. Drums roll, cannons are fired and the soldiers start shouting as they were not prepared for the sudden and surprise attack from the Catholic forces. Mother Courage hurriedly collects her washing from the cannon. The cook goes, leaving the pipe he has been smoking for Mother Courage, who moans: "This would happen when we were just making money." The Chaplain is also about to leave but Mother Courage gives him a cloak to cover his Protestant robes. Yvette comes looking for her hat and boots. She gets back her disfigured hat but Kattrin has already put on her boots and hidden them under her skirt.

Swiss Cheese comes rushing to the spot. He is carrying the regiment's cash box. Mother Courage ask him to throw it away, telling him, "Your paymastering days are over!" But it is a trust, Swiss Cheese replies. Mother Courage warns Kattrin to take off Yvette's red boots or she would be mistaken for a whole by the Catholic soldiers:

> *When a soldier sees a clean face, there's one more whore in the world.*
> *Specially a Catholic soldier. For weeks on end, no grub. Then, when they*
> *Get some by way of plunder, they jump on top of the womenfolk.*

She asks Kattrin to rub some dirt on her face and look "like you've been rolling in muck. Don't tremble. Nothing can happen to you now."

She stops Swiss Cheese from putting the regimental cash box in her wagon because if it is found there, all of them would be hanged, The Chaplain changes the flag flying on top of the wagon from a Protestant to a Catholic flag as the thunder of cannons grows.

Three days later, Mother Courage, Kattrin, Swiss Cheese and the Chaplain sit anxiously eating. Swiss Cheese is worried what his sergeant might say now that he has been missing with the cash box for three days. This exasperates Mother Courage:

> *Here you sit-one with his religion, the other with his cash box, I don't know which is more dangerous.*

She is, however, happy that she hasn't done "badly". The Catholic soldiers have let her off lightly because "they needed a canteen. May be it's all for the best. We're prisoners. But so are lice n fur." She is not bothered about who wins the war or who is defeated.

> *Who's defeated? The defeats and victories of the chaps at the top*
> *Aren't always defeats and victories for the chaps at the bottom,*
> *it's only their honour that's lost, nothing serious….. But in general*
> *both defeat and victory are a costly business for us that haven't*
> *got much. The best thing is for politics to get struck in the mud.*

She is, however increasingly worried about Swiss Cheese's qualms of conscience about the regimental cash box: "Swiss Cheese, your sense of duty worries me. I've brought you up to be honest because you're not very bright. But don't go too far!"

She then goes away with the Chaplain to buy some meat from the market because "no one can hunt out meat like him, sure as a sleepwalker. He can tell a good piece of meat from the way his mouth waters." But she warns Swiss Cheese of the predicament he is in, as also Kattrin from wearing Yvette's red boots:

> *But she disgraces herself for money, you do it for nothing-for pleasure.*
> *I told you, you must wait for peace. No soldiers! Save your proud, peacock ways for peacetime!*

Sergeant Cheese plans to hide the cash box in the mole whole by the river so that he can retrieve it at night and take it back to the regiment. That would really surprise his sergeant. But two Catholic soldiers appear on the scene at that time and Swiss Cheese runs away with the cash box despite Katrin's protests.

Mother Courage returns. Kattrin rushes at her to tell her what has happened. She is shocked to find that Swiss Cheese has taken the cash box away. The Chaplain informs her that Swiss Cheese has been arrested by two Catholic soldiers, who now bring him to her. Swiss Cheese professes innocence but they hurt him and take him away.

In the evening the Chaplain consoles Major Courage and Kattrin. He sings the *Song of the Hours* about how Jesus was crucified for no fault of his by the heathens. The Catholic soldiers want two hundred gilders for releasing Swiss Cheese and Mother Courage is desperate: "It's only a matter of money, but where can we get money?" The Chaplain suggests that she sell her wagon to raise the bribe money so that her son is free.

Yvette appears on the scene with an old colonel. She wants to buy Mother Courage's wagon. But she is prepared to pawn it because "in war time you don't find another wagon like that so easy." And Yvette insists that Mother Courage sell the wagon and the colonel would provide the money for her son's freedom as Swiss Cheese's life is at stake. She sends Yvette to haggle over the price of her son's freedom because they are "corruptible" and "bribable". But the Catholic soldiers don't budge from two hundred gliders. Now that Swiss Cheese has thrown the cash box into the river, there is no hope of Mother Courage recovering her money. She says:

> *I can't pay it! I've been working thirty years. She's (Kattrin) twenty-five and still no husband. I have her to think of. So leave me alone. I know what I'm doing. A hundred and twenty or no deal.*

By the time she agrees to pay two hundred gilders, it is too late. Swiss Cheese is shot dead by the Catholic soldiers and they bring his body on a stretcher. Yvette shouts at her: "Now you've done it – with your haggling. You can keep the wagon now. He got eleven bullets, that's what."

Mother Courage refuses to identify her son's dead body when it is brought to her. They simply lift up the body from the stretcher and throw it in the carrion pit. "He has no one that knows him."

SCENE 4

Mother Courage is seen outside an officer's tent. She has come to lodge a complaint against soldiers who have "cut everything in my wagon to ribbons with their sabres and then claimed a fine of five thalers for nothing and less than nothing." The scrivener advises her not to lodge a complaint as she had a Protestant paymaster (Swiss Cheese) with her earlier. But she insists and the scrivener asks her to wait till the captain's arrival.

A disgruntled young shoulder comes. He is causing and abusing the captain for taking away the reward due to him and "spending it on brandy for his whores". An older soldier tries to calm him, but the young soldier is adamant. Mother Courage joins the issue,

but asks the young soldier to take it easy. He may have to pay delay for his outburst. When he tells her that he won't stand for injustice, she asks him,

> *But how long? How long won't you stand for injustice? One hour? Or two? You haven't asked yourself that, have you?.... I only say, your rage won't last. You'll get nowhere with it, it's a pity. If your rage was a long one, I'd urge you on. Slice him up, I'd advise you. But what's the use if you don't slice him up because you can feel your tail between your legs? You stand there and the captain lets you have it.*

The young soldier sits down and Mother Courage knows that his fury is spent now. She advises him:

They know us through and through. They know how they must work it. Be seated! And we sit. And in sitting there's no revolt. Better not stand up again-not the way you did before-don't stand up again. And don't be embarrassed in front of me, I'm no better, not a scrap. We don't stick our necks out, do we, and why not? It wouldn't good for business. Let me tell you about capitulation.

She then sings *The Song of the Great Capitulation*, adding her own comments on the plight of the poor and the downtrodden and little homilies. At the end, the young soldier gets up and leaves. So does Mother Courage. Both of them decide not to lodge their complaints to the captain. "I've thought better of it," Mother Courage tells the scrivener. "I'm not complaining."

SCENE 5

Two year passed. The war covers wider and wider territory. Forever on the move, Mother Courage's wagon crosses Poland, Moravia, Bavaria, Italy and again Bavaria. It is the year 1631 now and Mother Courage's wagon is now parked in a war-ruined village. General Tilly has been victorious; his troops have ransacked the prosperous city of Magdeburg. The Chaplain has been tearing linen shirts for bandaging the wounded villages and now Mother Courage refuses to part with any more shirts to help the Chaplain in his humanitarian work.

Mother Courage also refuses to serve the soldiers who have no money to buy liquor from her canteen wagon. She complains: "What, you can't pay? No money, no brandy! Then can play victory marches, they should pay their men." A soldier explains: "I arrived too late for the plunder. The Chief allowed one hour to plunder the town it's a swindle. He's not inhuman, he says. So I suppose they bought him off."

Kattrin tries to support the Chaplain's demand for more linen for bandages. Mother Courage stops her from entering the wagon and she shouts at the Chaplain: "They have nothing and they pay nothing ….. Think they'd ever let go of anything? And now I'm supposed to pay. Well, I won't!"

A soldier tells her that in a bombardment they can't pick and choose whether the inhabitants of a town are Protestants or Catholics; all have to equally suffer the consequences of a war. But Mother Courage does not budge from her position. She categorically tells the Chaplain that she cannot give him any more linen even after Kattrin threatens her with a board. "With all I have to pay out-taxes, duties, bribes…. I'm giving nothing. I daren't, I have myself to think of." But the Chaplain forcibly takes away the shirts and tears them in strips for bandages.

Kattrin runs into the burning farmhouse to save a child who is tapped in there. Mother Courage is worried about the roof of the farmhouse caving in. She asks the Chaplain to save Kattrin, but he refuses to do so. At the same time, she cautions him. "Go easy on my linen." Kattrin drags a baby out of the burning farmhouse. "Another baby to drag around, you must be pleased with yourself. Give it to its mother this minute! Or do I have to fight you again for hours till I get it from you? Are you deaf?" She asks a soldier standing by to go and ask the victory marchers to stop the music they are playing, adding, "I have nothing but losses from your victory!"

IN the meanwhile, Kattrin is seen rocking the child she has rescued and "half humming a lullaby". Mother Courage orders her to give the baby back to its mother while asking the soldier to pay for the drinks he has consumed. But the soldier says he has nothing. At this Mother Courage snatches the fur coat he is carrying ("it's stolen anyhow," she says) in return for his drinks, while the Chaplain is still worrying about the wounded in the village.

SCENE 6

The year is 1632. Tilly's victory is ironically followed by his funeral. Inside a canteen tent the scrivener and the Chaplain are playing draughts while Mother Courage and Kattrin are taking an inventory of goods in their wagon.

The Chaplain observes that Tilly's funeral procession is just starting out and Mother Courage comments that it is a pity because the Chief has died in an accident. At the same time, she is counting the items in her stock like twenty-two pairs of socks and four lanterns. As she pours a drink for a soldier she reprimands him for skipping Tilly's funeral. The soldier's explanation is: "They shouldn't have handed the money out before the funeral.

Now the men are all getting drunk instead of going to it." The scrivener says that he has missed the funeral because of the rain. Mother Courage adds another reason to it: "It's different for you. The rain might spoil your uniform." She is also sorry that no church bells are ringing for the departed General because all the churches have been bombed out of existence by Tilly's troops. When a soldier asks for brandy, she wants be paid first and she won't allow him to enter her tent as only officers are allowed inside. He'll have to drink his brandy outside rain or no rain. She also comments on the General's recent troubles.

> *The chief had his troubles lately, I hear. There was unrest in the Second Regiment because he didn't pay them but he said it was a war of religion and they must fight free of charge.*

They keep talking about the war heroes as well as speculating how long the war is going to last, while Mother Courage is busy with her inventory. The Chaplain comments:

> *I say, you can't be sure that the war will ever end. Of course it may have to pause occasionally-for breath, as it were-it can even meet with an accident-nothing on this earth is perfect-a war of which we could say if left nothing to be desired will probably never exist. A war can come to a sudden halt-from unforeseen causes-you can't think of everything-a little oversight and the war's in the hole, and someone's got to pull it out again! The someone is the Emperor or the King or the Pope. They're such friends in need, the war has really nothing to worry about, it can look forward to a prosperous future.*

A soldier starts singing at the Wagon's counter about this being a holiday from the incessant shooting they have to indulge in a war and the love-making that he must get over before war starts again, while the scrivener mulls over peace. "In the long run you can't live without peace!" he exclaims but the Chaplain does not agree with him. "War is like love," he says, "it always finds a way. Why should it end?" Mother Courage agrees. She tells Kattrin, "Be sensible, the war'll go on a bit longer, and well make a bit more money, then peace'll be all the nicer." When it is peace, she will find a husband for her dumb daughter, she assures her. When Kattrin leaves with the scriveners to get more supplies for the wagon, Mother Courage is not worried. She tells the Chaplain, "She's not so pretty anyone would want to ruin her." And the Chaplain compliments her"

> *The way you run your business and always come through is highly commendable, Mother Courage-I see how you got your name.*

To which Mother Courage replies, "The poor need courage. They're lost, that's why." And then she asks the Chaplain to chop some wood for her. The Chaplain sees the

pipe that the cook has left behind and which Mother Courage has been smoking. He tells her, "It's bitten half-way through! He's a man of great violence! It is pipe of a man of great violence, you can see that if you've any judgement left!"

The Chaplain makes a veiled proposal of marriage to Mother Courage by telling her, "Mother Courage, I have often thought that-under a veil of plain speech-you conceal a heart. You are human, you need warmth." But she refuses to take any notice of it. She tells him, "I've no mind to start having a private life."

Kattrin returns alone from the market, dragging all the goods she has bought. She is breathless, with a wound across the eye and forehead. Mother Courage asks her not to worry as it is only a flesh wound and she would bandage it; the wound will heal in a week. "It will never show, though it wouldn't bother me if it did… So this wound is really a piece of luck." No one will now look at Kattrin and she'll be safe. "There'll be a scar. She needn't wait for peace now." Mother Courage is happy, though. "This is war. A nice source of income, I must say!"

When the Chaplain suggests that it is a historic moment while General Tilly is being lowered into the grave, Mother Courage snaps:

> *It's a historic moment to me when they hit my daughter over the eye. She's all but finished now, she'll never get a husband, and she's so mad about children! Even her dumbness come from the war. A soldier stuck something in her mouth when she was little. I'll not see Swiss Cheese again, and where my Eilif is the Good Lord knows. Curse the war!*

SCENE 7

As the war continues, Mother Courage prospers. She, the Chaplain and Kattrin now pull the wagon by turns. They have now got new wares. Mother Courage wears a necklace of coins. For her, "war is a business proposition" and she won't let anyone spoilt it for her. "War feeds the people better," she sings. "Those who stay at home are the first to go," she asserts as she pulls her wagon.

SCENE 8

The same year King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden falls in the battle of Luzen and there is temporary peace which threatens Mother Courage with ruin.

It is a summer morning outside an army camp. An old woman and her son bring a bedding to sell it to Mother Courage, who tells them that people don't even have houses to

live in and in such circumstances they have no use of a feather bed. They tell her that they have been walking for twenty miles to sell it.

Peace has been declared. Bells toll, the King of Sweden, we are told, has been killed. Mother Courage refuses to believe that "peace has broken out-when I've just done and bought all these supplies!" The young man prepares to go home with his mother, while Mother Courage is shattered. She tells Kattrin to put on her black trees as they are going to church to pray for Swiss Cheese.

The Chaplain asks Mother Courage whether he can don his Protestant priest's coat on again, but she advises him to get "the exact news first", adding, "I'm glad about the peace even though I'm ruined. Atleast I've got two of my children through the war. Now I'll see my Eilif again."

The cook arrives "for a brief conversation" and Mother Courage asks him about her son. He tells her that Eilif should be there any minute. She tells him about Kattrin's wound and her predicament now that peace has been declared:

The peace has broken my neck. On the Chaplain's advice, I've gone and bought a lot of supplies. Now everybody's leaving and I'm holding the baby.

The cook calls the Chaplain "a windbag" who has "a most unhealthy attitude to women. I tried to influence him but it was no good. He isn't sound." Mother Courage is worried about her business; and wonders whether "they can hand out all this pay that's in arrears" to soldiers.

The Chaplain has put on his pastor's coat now and there is an argument between him and the cook who accuses him of advising Mother Courage to "buy superfluous goods on the pretext that the war would never end". He accuses the Chaplain of giving "unwanted advice" and of "unprincipled behavior". The Chaplain accuses Mother Courage of being "a hyena of the battlefield" and living off war.

As the argument between the Chaplain and the cook becomes heated, Yvette Pottier enters, dressed in black. She is now older, fatter and heavily made up. She is now a widow of a rich colonel. She is shocked to see the cook at Mother Courage's establishment for he is the same person who had professed undying love for her and then deserted her. Mother Courage is happy to learn that at least Yvette has "got somewhere in the war".

Yvette is livid on seeing the cook, who now calls himself Mr. Lamb, where in reality her first lover, Peter Piper "who turned the women's heads." Yvette calls him "damnable whore hunter," "miserable cur", "inveterate seducer" and "a hoary ruin," who is "still dangerous even in decay". Worried about her ruined business in peacetime, Mother Courage

seeks Yvette's help in disposing of the goods she has collected "before the prices fall". They leave while the cook and the Chaplain are still quarrelling.

After they leave, Eilif is brought there. He is in handcuffs and escorted by two soldiers with halberds. He is to be executed for stealing cattle from a peasant in peacetime-the same feat for which he had been honoured and feasted by his commander during wartime. He has been brought there to see his mother for the last time. But she is no there and he doesn't want to see Kattrin. He goes away with the soldiers, asking the cook and the Chaplain not to tell his mother anything about him and his fate. The Chaplain offers to accompany him, but Eilif doesn't want him. All the same, the Chaplain leaves to pray for him in his last hours, advising the cook not to tell Mother Courage anything about Eilif.

Mother Courage arrives back on the scene. She is happy that "peace is over, the war's on again, has been on for three days!" She is glad she didn't sell her stuff. She asks Kattrin to pack so that they are off with their wagon again soon: "Kattrin, the peace is over we're on the move again." The cook informs her that Eilif had come to see her a while ago. "Only he had to go away again." Mother Courage is happy that "the war couldn't get him". She wants to know whether he has done any "heroic deeds", to which the cook darkly hints, "He's done one of them again." He goes to enlist again in the war and Mother Courage consoles herself: "Well, it wasn't such a long peace, we can't grumble". The cook and Kattrin now drive the wagon while Mother Courage sings as her wagon moves ahead.

SCENE 9

It is now the autumn of 1634 and the great war of religion has lasted sixteen years. The maximum havoc has been caused in Germany, half of whose population has been killed while the other half is dying of plague. Hunger stalks the land and wolves prowl the empty streets. Towns have been burned down by marauding troops. Business is bad for Mother Courage. She and the cook are dressed in shabby clothes as they park their wagon outside a half-ruined parsonage. They are hungry and approach the parsonage for some hot soup. They start singing so as to attract the parson's attention.

The cook has received a letter from his home town, Utrecht, informing him that his mother has died and he has inherited the inn that she managed. Mother Courage is also tired of wandering in the ravaged countryside. She says:

> *"I feel like a butcher's dog taking meat to my customers and getting none myself. I've nothing more to sell and people have nothing to pay with… Nothing grows any more, only thorn bushes. In Pomerania I hear the villagers have been*

eating their younger children. Nuns have been caught committing robbery…
If only we could find a place where there's no shooting, me and my children-
what's left of them-we might rest a while.

The cook suggests that both of them could go to Utrecht and manage his mother's inn together. In any case, he has decided to go to Utrecht, with or without Mother Courage. But she needs some time to talk it over with Kattrin. She tells her: "In the long run, this is no life, on the road. You might be killed any time. You're eaten up with lice." But the cook doesn't want Kattrin to go with them as her ugly and deformed figure might put off his customers. "If you're bringing her, it's all off," he tells Mother Courage. Kattrin should keep the wagon and earn her own living on the streets.

Kattrin overheads their conversation and prepares to leave. The cook sings a song about how great people like Solomon, Julius Caesar and Socrates have been felled low by their wisdom and bravery. Even godliness does not help in such dire times. He asks Mother Courage to think over his proposal, but she is adamant about not leaving the place without her dumb daughter, who is now all packed and ready to leave. She tells Kattrin that she is not going to Utrecht with the cook; "he can have Utrecht and his lousy inn" for all she cares, and adds,

And don't think I've sent him packing on your account. It was the wagon.
You can't part us, I'm too used to it, you didn't come into it, it was the wagon.

She asks Kattrin to harness herself to the wagon and the cook leaves. Mother Courage consoles herself and her daughter: "This winter'll pass-like all others."

SCENE 10

During the winter of 1653 Mother Courage and Kattrin pull the wagon along the roads of Central Germany in the wake of the even more flattered armies. They come to prosperous farmhouse where someone is singing inside about a lovely rose "blooming" and "the balmy air perfuming". He is "enchanted" with the garden they have. The inmates have no cause to worry during the harsh winter because they are cosy and warm inside in the shelter of their farmhouse. This is in sharp contrast to the bedraggled and tired condition of Mother Courage and Katrin, who stop by for a while to listen to the song and then move on.

SCENE 11

It is January 1636. The Catholic troops threaten the Protestant town of Halle. The war is not yet near its end. Mother Courage's wagon is parked near a farmhouse with a straw roof. Mother Courage has gone out, leaving Kattrin behind in the care of the peasant family.

At night, a lieutenant and three soldiers come on a recce to find out about the town and its people. They knock at the door of the farmhouse. The old peasant couple, their young son and Kattrin are inside. They ask the young peasant to show them the way to the town. The young man tells them categorically, "I don't help Catholics." They strike him with a pike and threaten to kill the cattle in the farmhouse. It is the threat to their cattle that makes the young peasant lead them into the town for their sudden attack on the sleeping civilians.

The old peasant is alarmed at the appearance of the soldiers on the outskirts of Halle and prays, "God have mercy on the town and all within!... There'll be an attack, and they'll be slaughtered in their beds." There is no watchman to sound the alarm of the impending attack as they must have killed him by now. The old couple are worried about their own safety "with that cripple", i.e. Kattrin. Only if they could make a sign to the towns-people. They ask Kattrin to pray to God as they do.

In the meanwhile Kattrin takes out a drum from under her apron, climbs up the roof and pulls up the ladder. She starts beating the drum so as to warn the towns-people. The lieutenant comes running back and the old couple protest their innocence at the noise, "We're innocent, sir, there's nothing we can do. She did it, a stranger!"

The lieutenant order Kattrin to stop drumming and throw down the ladder. But she does not pay any heed to the threats hurled at her and tone on playing on the drum. The lieutenant then thinks of making another noise "louder than the drum," "a peacetime noise" to counter the noise of Kattrin's drum. The old peasant starts chopping wood to drown the noise of the drum.

The soldiers then decide to set fire to the farmhouse to "smoke her out". Kattrin starts laughing. They threaten to smash the wagon, but Kattrin still goes on drumming as hard as she can. The soldiers start firing at her and Kattrin is hit. She gives the drum another feeble beat or two, then slowly collapses. The lieutenant is relieved: "That's an end to the noise." But the last beats of drum are lost in the din of the cannon from the town. Mingled with the thunder of cannon alarm bells are heard in the distance. Kattrin has succeeded in her mission of alerting the towns-people of the impending disaster by sacrificing her life. As the first soldier puts it, "She did it."

SCENE 12

It is early morning the next day. Mother Courage is sitting by Kattrin's body near her wagon as the drums and pipes of the troops marching recede. The peasants are standing

beside her. They urge Mother Courage to leave. They tell her, "If you hadn't gone off to the town to get your cut, may be it wouldn't have happened." Mother Courage tells them that may be Kattrin is asleep and starts singing a lullaby. Now that Swiss Cheese and Kattrin are dead, she is worried about her elder son Eilif (who she doesn't know has been executed).

She decides to leave after giving money to the peasants for her daughter's funeral expenses. She harnesses herself to the wagon, saying, "I hope I can pull the wagon by myself. Yes, I'll manage, there's not much in it now. I must start up again in business." She shouts to the passing regiment of soldiers, "Hey! Take me with you" as they are signing their way the devastation that awaits them.

Detailed Summary:

Scene I forms a complete episode, almost resembling a one-act play with it introduction, conflict, climax, switch in action and anti-climatic end. This conforms to the episodic structure of the epic theatre. Yet this scene almost functions like a traditional exposition. The war setting is provided, the protagonists are introduced, their characters outlined, the basic conflict pinpointed and the tragic curve of the action of the play clearly indicated since here the war already takes away one of Mother Courage's children. It also establishes the mode of witty dialectical irony which encourages critical alertness. In certain ways, therefore, Scene I serves as an epitome of the whole play.

Scene 2 treats two concurrent actions which converge briefly at the end. In the kitchen Mother Courage is engaged in hard bargaining with the commander's cook. She demonstrates how quick profits can be made in wartime by seizing the right moment to inflate prices. During the battle of wits between two professionals a sudden turn of situation occurs when the commander bring Eilif and wants to feast him as a hero. Mother Courage not only takes the fresh advantage of the situation but refuses to relinquish her shrewd business sense even in the joy of discovering her own son as the honoured guest.

In the war camp the commander and his establishment values are ruthlessly exposed. The hollowness of a war of religion becomes apparent from the contemptuous treatment meted out to the Chaplain. Even the high praise accorded to Eilif for stealing cattle seems a routine formality, concealing the ulterior motive of exploiting his bravery for risky military adventures. This provokes Mother Courage to voice her cynicism regarding the "great virtues" and impels her to slap Eilif for his act of daring. Brecht's dialectical method of ironically juxtaposing opposed gests for attitude towards the same incident both amuses and compels the spectator to think and reorientate his views about heroism. The audience in its turn might well view Eilif's "heroic deed" as nothing short of thuggery sanctified by war.

Although Mother Courage and Eilif both congratulate themselves complacently on profiting from war, an undercurrent of danger is sensed by the audience in Eilif's song. Even Swiss Cheese has enlisted as a paymaster, and Mother Courage seems to be silently acquiescing to the demands of war without being sufficiently aware of the threat to her children.

Scene 3 displays its ravages, clearly emphasizing the tragic dimension of the play. Mother Courage's underhand deal in ammunition links up the mater-of-fact corruption of both war and business. A camp Idyll, with Mother Courage admonishing her children, advising the prostitute, entertaining friends and talking politics, is suddenly shattered by a surprise attack. In the ensuing disorder the focus is on the energy and competence with which Mother Courage copes with such familiar war situations, taking care of every item and promptly switching over to the enemy camp. The Chaplain's religious volte-face further exposes the meaninglessness of a war of religion.

Yet Mother Courage's apprehension about Swiss Cheese hiding his cash box proves correct. In her absence on a business spree Swiss Cheese is arrested. This genuine emotional crisis in the play poignantly reveals the contradiction between her love for her son and her anxiety about her means of survival. She haggles over the bribe, realizing too late that the case is lost. Swiss Cheese loses his life, as it were, by the margin of difference of a few gilders and miscalculated timing. Though Mother Courage seems positively guilty, the audience is also made to realize her excruciating tragic dilemma: how could she and her dumb daughter survive without their wagon? Her silent agony, coupled with strength of will in denying her son's body, gives Mother Courage a tragic stature through intense but controlled suffering heroically endured.

Scene 4 is a gestic one, typical of Brecht's structure. It contributes little to the plot development but underlines a major political idea. It demonstrates how quickly the people capitulate to authority and how easily their rebellion, born of a "short anger", peters out. Mother Courage teaches capitulation to the young soldier and learns to surrender in her turn. Yet Brecht's dialectical method also poses the alternative possibly of "a long rage", leading to revolt and social intervention which the audience is expected to understand. The sympathy which Mother Courage had generated in the previous scene is withdrawn by the alienation technique of this "social problem" scene.

Scene 5 depicts the consequences of Tilly's victory at Magdeburg on the little people. To the music of a victory march, which sounds like mockery, the soldiers are out for drink and loot. While the Chaplain retrieves some of his professional dignity by rescuing peasants

from a ruined farmhouse, Mother Courage takes the hard businessline of refusing her linen shirts for bandages. Kattrin not only violently opposes her mother but risks her own life to save a baby from a burning house. Compared to Kattrin's spontaneous act of love, Mother Courage's hard-heartedness appears unnatural and perverse. The point being made is that, having sacrificed her son to the wagon, she has become a distorted human creature, "a hyena of a battlefield".

Each character in this scene adopts a different gestus to the human disaster, so that the spectator is made to constantly shift and re-focus his response. By holding together in antithetical tension several conflicting attitudes the scene offers a kaleidoscopic view of war's harrowing reality and encourages "complex seeing".

General Tilly's victory is ironically followed by his funeral in this scene. Expectedly, the focus is on the life and reactions of ordinary people, who seem to care little for heroes. As drums and funeral music are heard in the distance, soldiers get drunk on their pay. Mother Courage utilizes the lull in battle to take an inventory of her goods, while simultaneously delivering a parodic funeral oration. The Chaplain's cynical declaration that war is unlikely ever to end distresses Kattrin who keenly waits for peace, but Mother Courage hopes to make more money if the war lasts. Again, sharply contrasted attitudes towards war and peace are deliberately juxtaposed for the audience to do some rethinking.

The scene closes with a sharp indictment of war as Kattrin enters, loaded with goods but with an injury over her eye. She is now permanently disfigured and her hopes of marriage lost. She silently blames her mother for it by rejecting the red boots she once desired. For once Mother Courage curses the war, recognizing it as the miserable source of income which it is. In the play's design the widespread destructiveness of war is gradually closing in on Mother Courage and her children.

Scene 7 is also gestic. It deliberately interrupts the action to demonstrate Mother Courage's contradictory attitude to war. It shows how quickly and blatantly Mother Courage has forgotten her bitter lessons, having prospered in business. The audience is pulled up with a shock to see Mother Courage's volte-face: she seems bribed by war to sing its praise as "a business proposition."

Scene 8 shows temporary peace. As is Brecht's practice, different responses and reactions to peace are mounted together, as in a montage. Mother Courage feels cheated since the supplies she has bought up are likely to remain unsold. Her commercial attitude makes a sharp contrast to that of normal towns-people who enjoy a sense of relief. Peace brings back both the impoverished cook and the former camp prostitute Yvette who has made

good in the war. As its proper business, peace stimulates personal relationships as well as mutual bickering. While mother Courage makes haste to dispose of her goods, Eilif appears under arrest. The kind of "heroic deed" which had earned him applause in wartime now ironically leads him to his death. Brecht underlines the relativity of morals in society as well as the degeneration in human behavior the war perpetrates.

In the recurrent pattern of the play Mother Courage loses another son when she is away on a business trip. In this case, however, she remains unaware of Eilif's death, nourishing her illusions about him till the end. The tragic irony is doubled when she returns joyfully to announce that war has already broken out and promptly moves over to her own side (Swedish camp). Eilif was just unlucky enough to have been executed during such a short peace.

Sixteen years of war has brought nothing but devastation and death to the people. In Scene 9 the chronicle play takes a leap in time to depict Mother Courage and the cook reduced to beggary. Yet after careful deliberation she rejects the cook's offer of a home in Utrecht because of her love for her dumb daughter. Or is it really or her attachment to the wagon, as she assures Kattrin? Probably both.

Scene 10 marks a pause in the action to indicate the utter desolation of the camp followers. Compared to the householder with the garden Mother Courage and her daughter represent destitute wandering homelessly like "damned souls". Like the earlier Scene 7, to which it forms and antithesis, this one also offers a social gestus.

The climax of the play is reached in the penultimate scene, Scene 11. The town of Halle is threatened with an ambush. Kattrin is alone in the tattered wagon parked near a farmhouse, while Mother Courage is once again away in town a business errand.

When the soldiers break in at night, the peasants, habituated to such wartime contingencies, react in routing gestures of self-defence promptly capitulate and resort to ritual prayer. Against the apathy of the peasants Kattrin's alertness attracts attention. Hearing of the endangered children, Kattrin immediately attempts to save the town. Her intelligence, courage and determination seem almost incredible. The drum she had been clutching when disfigured (Scene 6) now serves as her instrument for warning the town. Neither the promise of sparing her mother nor the battering of the wagon can stop her drumming. She takes the threat to her own life as a final challenge. Urged on by the pity for the children and fear for herself, streaming with tears, she rises above her mother's teaching by refusing to capitulate. Kattrin displays the kind of courage which contrasts sharply with her mother's. Hers is the self-sacrificing heroic courage of the martyr.

In the dialectical pattern of the play the mute creature triumphs in the noise contest, the most helpless renders real help. Resembling a miracle "the stone speaks", and the prayers of the peasants are unexpectedly, if ironically, answered despite their own inaction and hostility to Kattrin. Kattrin performs the life-saving human miracle at the cost of her own life.

This is the most intensely dramatic scene of the play. Attention is riveted on Kattrin who elicits our sympathy with her every move and gesture, till sympathy becomes complete identification or empathy. Towards the end of his career Brecht conceded that his epic theatre could accommodate such dramatic scenes and moments of empathy along with estrangement and alienation effects.

In the last scene Mother Courage is seen in the archetypal image of the mother, bending over and singing a lullaby to her dead daughter. She refuses to accept the fact that Kattrin is no more, but sentimentality is warded off by the self-regarding content of her song: in the midst of poverty her child must have plenty; other people's children must be deprived to provide her child with luxuries. When forced to recognize Kattrin's death, she reacts in a dazed and mechanical manner. Finally, she harnesses herself to the almost empty wagon to follow the army once more and "start up again in business". Her illusion that one son is alive is matched by hr blindness regarding the unprofitable and destructive nature of the war.

According to Brecht, Mother Courage does not understand or learn anything from her war experience, and this is "the bitterest and most meaningful lesson of the play". In the tradition of epic theatre it is the spectator who is expected to see and learn. "A play is more instructive than reality, because in it the war situation is set up experimentally for the purpose of giving insight," Brecht declared.

Although Brecht would have Mother Courage condemned, the audience responds to both the character and the play in a more complex way that any simple anti-war propaganda might suggest. The final stage image of Mother Courge's exit, pulling her wagon alone-an obvious contrast to her jaunty entry with her children in Scene 1 – acquires a profound ambivalence. On the one hand, she looks bowed and tattered like an old car horse dragging her dilapidated wagon –the emblem of her sordid business; on the other hand she becomes a symbol of human endurance through her "heroic determination to somehow, almost anyhow, keep on pulling the wagon," as Tennessee Williams observed. Her wagon may thus suggest the life of "little people" doggedly rolling on despite hardship and catastrophe. Ultimately the two seemingly opposed impressions coalesce, since Mother Courage is actually both. Till the end she remains a "great living contradiction", making a disturbing pact on the audience.