

SECTION-C: Play

What will I learn?

- Use post-reading strategies to critically evaluate the text and give a personal opinion.
- Observe that writers portray these universal emotions through their preferred genre and according to their socio- cultural context.
- Critically analyse literary texts.
- Analyse how writer has used language and style.
- Interpret the literary themes with real life situations, social and cultural norms.
- Express personal responses to the given literary text through creativity and imagination.
- Analyse the given play with respect to various elements.
- Express their personal response to the overall effect of the given literary text.
- Know the elements of drama (plot characters, theme, setting, dialogue).
- Know that the purpose of literature is to entertain, inform and persuade the reader/audience in diverse ways.
- Make connections between one's own life and the characters, events, motives and causes displayed in literature.
- Recognize recurring themes and the existence of universal human emotions across literary works.

Introduction

Play can be defined as a literary work meant for theatrical performance through a particular medium, i.e. stage, screen, or radio. Drama and play are considered the same.

A play is divided into different acts for a better narration of the story and effective structure. Each act is further divided into a number of scenes with different characters and settings.

A play has mainly these elements:

- a plot - an arrangement of incidents of the story
- characters - people, or other beings, around which the story revolves
- dialogue - the conversation between the characters
- setting - time and place where a story is set

At the crux of the play are conflict and resolution. The play's structure follows the trajectory of introduction, the rise of action, climax, fall of action, and conclusion. There are various types of plays such as tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, melodrama, science fiction, etc.

About 'A Visit to a Small Planet'

Gore Vidal's 'A Visit to a Small Planet' is a science-fiction comedy. It follows the exploits of Kreton, an alien from a distant and technologically more advanced planet, who observes Earth as his hobby. He intends to see the Civil War during 1861; but mistakenly, he lands nearly a century later in Manassas, Virginia. Nevertheless, he decides to stay and starts his own war to have a little fun.

Though the play was written in 1957, it is still relevant. The story and characters are simple. Vidal originally wrote this play as a television script. After its success, he reworked it for the stage. Later, a movie was also made on it. Here only the first act of the play is given with few changes for better performance.

A VISIT TO A SMALL PLANET**Characters in the Play**

1. Kreton
2. Roger Spelding
3. Ellen Spelding
4. Mrs. Spelding
5. John Randolph
6. General Powers
7. Aide

SCENE I

(The room is comfortably balanced between the expensively decorated and homely. ROGER SPELDING is concluding his TV broadcast. He is a middle-aged, unctuous, and resonant. His wife, bored and vague, knits passively while he talks at his desk. Two technicians are on hand, operating the equipment. His daughter, ELLEN, a lively girl of twenty, fidgets as she listens.)

SPELDING:

(Into microphone) ... And so, according to General Powers ... who should know if anyone does ... the flying object which has given rise to so much earth's orbit. It is not, as many believe, a secret weapon of this country. Nor is it a spaceship as certain lunatic elements have suggested. General Powers has assured me that it is highly doubtful there is any form of life on other planets capable of building a spaceship. "If any travelling is to be done in space, we will do it first." And those are his exact words....which winds up another week of news. *(Crosses to pose with wife and daughter)*. This is Roger Spelding, saying good night to Mother and Father America, from my old homestead in Silver Glen, Maryland, close to the warm pulse beat of the nation.

TECHNICIAN:

Good show tonight, Mr. Spelding.

SPELDING:

Thank you.

TECHNICIAN:

Yes sir, you were right on time.

(Spelding nods wearily, his mechanical smile and heartiness suddenly gone.)

MRS. SPELDING: Very nice, dear. Very nice.**TECHNICIAN:**

See you next week, Mr. Spelding.

SPELDING:

Thank you boys.

(Technicians go.)

SPELDING:

Did you like the broadcast, Ellen?

ELLEN:

Of course I did, Daddy.

SPELDING:

Then what did I say?

ELLEN:

Oh, that's not fair.

SPELDING:

It's not very flattering when one's own daughter won't listen to what one says while millions of people...

ELLEN:

I always listen, Daddy, you know that.

MRS. SPELDING: We love your broadcasts, dear. I don't know what we'd do without them.**SPELDING:**

Starve.

ELLEN:

I wonder what's keeping John?

SPELDING:

Certainly not work.

- ELLEN:** Oh, Daddy, stop it! John works very hard and you know it.
- MRS. SPELDING:** Yes, he's a perfectly nice boy, Roger. I like him.
- SPELDING:** I know. I know: He has every virtue except the most important one: he has no get-up-and-go.
- ELLEN:** Precisely. He doesn't want to get up and he doesn't want to go because he's already where he wants to be on his own farm which is exactly where I'm going to be when we're married.
- SPELDING:** More thankless than a serpent's tooth is an ungrateful child.
- ELLEN:** I don't think that's right. Isn't it "More deadly ...?"
- SPELDING:** Whatever the exact quotation is, I stand by the sentiment.
- MRS. SPELDING:** Please don't quarrel. It always gives me a headache.
- SPELDING:** I never quarrel. I merely reason, in my simple way, with Miss Know-it-all here.
- ELLEN:** Oh, Daddy! Next you'll tell me I should marry for money.
- SPELDING:** There is nothing wrong with marrying a wealthy man. The horror of it has always eluded me. However, my only wish is that you marry someone hard-working ambitious, a man who'll make his mark in the world. Not a boy who plans to sit on a farm all his life, growing peanuts.
- ELLEN:** English walnuts.
- SPELDING:** Will you stop correcting me?
- ELLEN:** But, Daddy, John grows walnuts...
(John enters, breathlessly.)
- JOHN:** Come out! Quick! It's coming this way. It's going to land right here!
- SPELDING:** What's going to land?
- JOHN:** The spaceship. Look!
- SPELDING:** Apparently you didn't hear my broadcast. The flying object in question is a meteor not a spaceship.
- (John has gone out with Ellen. Spelding and Mrs. Spelding follows.)*

MRS. SPELDING: Oh, my! Look! Something is falling! Roger, you don't think it's going to hit the house, do you?

SPELDING: The odds against being hit by a falling object that size are, I should say, roughly, ten million to one.

JOHN: Ten million to one or not it's going to land right here, and it's not falling.

SPELDING: I'm sure it's a meteor.

MRS. SPELDING: Shouldn't we go down to the cellar?

SPELDING: If it's not a meteor, it's an optical illusion ... mass hysteria.

ELLEN: Daddy, it's a real spaceship. I'm sure it is.

SPELDING: Or maybe a weather balloon. Yes, that's what it is. General Powers said only yesterday...

JOHN: It's landing!

SPELDING: I'm going to call the police ... the Army! *(Bolts inside.)*

ELLEN: Oh look how it shines!

JOHN: Here it comes!

MRS. SPELDING: Right in my rose garden!

ELLEN: May be it's a balloon.

JOHN: No, it's a spaceship and right in your own backyard.

ELLEN: What makes it shine so?

JOHN: I don't know but I'm going to find out.

(Runs off towards the light.)

ELLEN: Oh, Darling, don't! John, please! John, John come back!

(Spelding wide-eyed returns.)

MRS. SPELDING: Roger, it's landed right in my rose garden.

SPELDING: I got General Powers. He's coming over. He said they've been watching this thing. They ... they don't know what it is.

ELLEN: You mean it's nothing of ours?

SPELDING: They believe it ... *(Swallows hard)* ... it's from outer space.

ELLEN: And John's down there! Daddy, get a gun or something.

- SPELDING:** Perhaps we'd better leave the house until the army gets here.
- ELLEN:** We can't leave John.
- SPELDING:** I can. *(Peers near-sightedly)* Why, it's not much larger than a car. I'm sure it's some kind of meteor.
- ELLEN:** Meteors are blazing hot.
- SPELDING:** This is a cold one....
- ELLEN:** It's opening The whole side's opening! *(Shouts)* John! Come back! Quick ...
- MRS. SPELDING:** Why, there's a man getting out of it! *(Sighs)* I feel much better already. I'm sure if we ask him, he'll move that thing for us. Roger, you ask him.
- SPELDING:** *(Ominously)* If it's really a man!
- ELLEN:** John's shaking hands with him. *(Calls)* John darling, come on up here ...
- MRS. SPELDING:** And bring your friend ...
- SPELDING:** There's something wrong with the way that creature looks ... if it is a man and not a ... not a monster.
- MRS. SPELDING:** He looks perfectly nice to me.
(John and the visitor appear. The visitor is in his forties, a mild, pleasant-looking man with side-whiskers and dressed in the fashion of 1860. He pauses when he sees the three people, in silence, for a moment. They stare back at him, equally interested.)
- VISITOR:** I seem to've made a mistake. I am sorry. I'd better go back and start over again.
- SPELDING:** My dear sir, you've only just arrived. Come in, come in. I don't need to tell you what a pleasure this is ... Mister ... Mister...
- VISITOR:** Kreton ... This is the wrong costume, isn't it?
- SPELDING:** Wrong for what?
- KRETON:** For the country, and the time.
- SPELDING:** Well, it's a trifle old-fashioned.
- MRS. SPELDING:** But really awfully handsome.
- KRETON:** Thank you.
- MRS. SPELDING:** *(to husband.)* Ask him about moving that thing off my rose bed.
(Spelding leads them all into living room.)

- SPELDING:** Come on in and sit down. You must be tired after your trip.
- KRETON:** Yes, I am a little (*Looks around delightedly*) Oh, it's better than I'd hoped!
- SPELDING:** Better? What's better?
- KRETON:** The house ... That's what you call it? Or is this an apartment?
- SPELDING:** This is a house in the State of Maryland, U.S.A.
- KRETON:** In the late 20th Century! To think this is really the 20th Century. I must sit down a moment and collect myself. The real thing!
(*He sits down.*)
- ELLEN:** You ... You're not an American, are you?
- KRETON:** What a nice thought! No, I'm not.
- JOHN:** You sound more English.
- KRETON:** Do I? Is my accent very bad?
- JOHN:** No, it's quite good.
- SPELDING:** Where are you from, Mr. Kreton?
- KRETON:** (*Evasively*) Another place.
- SPELDING:** On this Earth, of course!
- KRETON:** No, not on this planet.
- ELLEN:** Are you from Mars?
- KRETON:** Oh dear no, not Mars. There's nobody on Mars ... at least no one I know.
- ELLEN:** I'm sure you're teasing us and this is all some kind of publicity stunt.
- KRETON:** No, I really am from another place.
- SPELDING:** I don't suppose you'd consent to my interviewing you on television?
- KRETON:** I don't think your authorities will like that. They are terribly upset as it is.
- SPELDING:** How do you know?
- KRETON:** Well, I ... pick up things. For instance, I know that in a few minutes a number of people from your army will be here to question me and they ... like you ... are torn by doubt.
- SPELDING:** How extraordinary!

ELLEN:

Why did you come here?

KRETON:

Simply a visit to your small planet. I've been studying it for years. In fact, one might say, you people are my hobby. Especially, this period of your development.

JOHN:

Are you the first person from your ... your planet to travel in space like this?

KRETON:

Oh my no! Everyone travels who wants to. It's just that no one wants to visit you. I can't think, why. I always have. You'd be surprised what a thorough study I've made. *(Recites)* The planet, Earth, is divided into five continents with a number of large islands. It is mostly water. There is one moon. Civilization is only just beginning....

SPELDING:

Just beginning! My dear sir, we have had....

KRETON:

(Blandly) You are only in the initial stages, the most fascinating stages as far as I'm concerned ... I do hope I don't sound patronizing.

ELLEN:

Well, we are very proud.

KRETON:

I know and that's one of your most endearing primitive traits. Oh, I can't believe I'm here at last! *(General Powers, a vigorous product of the National Guard, and his Aide enter.)*

POWERS:

All right folks. The place is surrounded by troops. Where is the monster?

KRETON:

I, my dear General, am the monster.

POWERS:

What are you dressed up for, a fancy-dress party?

KRETON:

I'd hoped to be in the costume of the period. As you see I am about a hundred years too late.

POWERS:

Roger, who is this joker?

SPELDING:

This is Mr. Kreton ... General Powers. Mr. Kreton arrived in that thing outside. He is from another planet.

POWERS:

I don't believe it.

ELLEN:

It's true. We saw him get out of the flying saucer.

POWERS:

(To Aide) Captain, go down and look at the ship. But be careful. Don't touch anything. And don't let anybody else near it. *(Aide goes)* So you're from another planet.

- KRETON:** Yes. My, that's a very smart uniform but I prefer the ones made of metal, the ones you used to wear, you know: with the feathers on top.
- POWERS:** That was five hundred years ago ... Are you sure you're not from the Earth?
- KRETON:** Yes
- POWERS:** Well, I'm not. You've got some pretty tall explaining to do.
- KRETON:** Anything to oblige.
- POWERS:** All right, which planet?
- KRETON:** None that you have ever heard of.
- POWERS:** Where is it?
- KRETON:** You wouldn't know.
- POWERS:** This solar system?
- KRETON:** No.
- POWERS:** Another system?
- KRETON:** Yes.
- POWERS:** Look, Buster, I don't want to play games: I just want to know where you're from. The law requires it.
- KRETON:** It's possible that I could explain it to a mathematician but I'm afraid I couldn't explain it to you, not for another five hundred years and by then of course you'd be dead because you people do die, don't you?
- POWERS:** What?
- KRETON:** Poor fragile butterflies, such brief little moments in the sun.... You see we don't die.
- POWERS:** You'll die all right if it turns out you're a spy or a hostile alien.
- KRETON:** I'm sure you wouldn't be so cruel.
(Aide returns; he looks disturbed.)
- POWERS:** What did you find?
- AIDE:** I'm not sure, General.
- POWERS:** *(Heavily)* Then do your best to describe what the object is like.

- AIDE:** Well, it's elliptical, with a fourteen foot diameter. And it's made of an unknown metal which shines and inside there isn't anything.
- POWERS:** Isn't anything?
- AIDE:** There's nothing inside the ship: No instruments, no food, nothing.
- POWERS:** *(To Kreton)* What did you do with your instrument board?
- KRETON:** With my what? Oh, I don't have one.
- POWERS:** How does the thing travel?
- KRETON:** I don't know.
- POWERS:** You don't know. Now look, Mister, you're in pretty serious trouble. I suggest you do a bit of cooperating. You claim you travelled here from outer space in a machine with no instruments....
- KRETON:** Well, these cars are rather common in my world and I suppose, once upon a time, I must've known the theory on which they operate but I've long since forgotten. After all, General, we're not mechanics, you and I.
- POWERS:** Roger, do you mind if we use your study?
- SPELDING:** Not at all. Not at all, General.
- POWERS:** Mr. Kreton and I are going to have a chat. *(To Aide)* Put in a call to the Chief of Staff.
- AIDE:** Yes, General.
- (Spelding rises, leads Kreton and Powers into next room)*
- SPELDING:** This way, gentlemen.
- (At the door Spelding speaks in a low voice to Powers)*
- POWERS:** I hope I'll be the one to get the story first, Tom.
- POWERS:** There isn't any story. Complete censorship. I'm sorry but this house is under martial law. I've a hunch we're in trouble. *(He shuts the door Spelding turns and re-joins his family).*
- ELLEN:** I think he's wonderful whoever he is.
- MRS. SPELDING:** I wonder how much damage he did to my rose garden....

JOHN: It's sure hard to believe he's really from outer space. No instruments, no nothing ... boy, they must be advanced scientifically.

MRS. SPELDING: Is he spending the night, dear?

SPELDING: What?

MRS. SPELDING: Is he spending the night?

SPELDING: Oh yes, yes, I suppose he will be.

MRS. SPELDING: Then, I'd better go make up the bedroom. He seems perfectly nice to me. I like his whiskers. They're so very ... comforting. Like Grandfather Spelding's.

(She goes.)

SPELDING: *(Bitterly)* I know this story will leak out before I can interview him. I just know it.

ELLEN: What does it mean, we're under martial law?

SPELDING: It means we have to do what General Powers tells us to do.

(He goes to the window as a soldier passes by) See?

JOHN: I wish I'd taken a closer look at that ship when I had the chance.

ELLEN: Perhaps he'll give us a ride in it.

JOHN: Travelling in space! Just like those stories. You know: intergalactic drive stuff.

SPELDING: If he's not an impostor.

ELLEN: I have a feeling he isn't.

JOHN: Well, I better call the family and tell them I'm all right.

(He crosses to telephone by the door which leads into the hall.)

AIDE: I'm sorry, sir, but you can't use the phone.

SPELDING: He certainly can. This is my house....

AIDE: *(Mechanically)* This house is a military reservation until the crisis is over: Order General Powers. I'm sorry.

JOHN: How am I to call home to say where I am?

AIDE: Only General Powers can help you. You're also forbidden to leave this house without permission.

SPELDING: You can't do this!

AIDE: I'm afraid, sir, we've done it.

ELLEN: Isn't it exciting!

SCENE II

A handsomely furnished study, many books and a globe of the world. Kreton sits down compliably beside the globe which he twirls thoughtfully. The door opens and Powers enters.)

POWERS: Are you deliberately trying to confuse me?

KRETON: Not deliberately, no.

POWERS: We have gone over and over this for two hours now and all that you've told me is that you're from another planet in another solar system....

KRETON: In another dimension. I think that's the word you use.

POWERS: In another dimension and you have come here as a tourist.

KRETON: Up to a point, yes. What did you expect?

POWERS: It is my job to guard the security of this country.

KRETON: I'm sure that must be very interesting work.

POWERS: For all I know, you are a spy, sent here by an alien race to study us, preparatory to invasion.

KRETON: Oh, none of my people would dream of invading you.

POWERS: How do I know that's true?

KRETON: You don't, so I suggest you believe me. I should also warn you: I can tell what's inside.

POWERS: What's inside?

KRETON: What's inside your mind?

POWERS: You're a mind reader?

KRETON: I don't really read it. I hear it.

POWERS: What am I thinking?

KRETON: That I am either a lunatic from the earth or a spy from another world.

POWERS: Correct. But then you could've guessed that. *(Frowns)* What am I thinking now?

KRETON: You're making a picture. Three silver stars. You're pinning them on your shoulder, instead of the two stars you now wear.

POWERS: *(Startled)* That's right. I was thinking of my promotion.

KRETON: If there's anything I can do to hurry it along, just let me know.

POWERS: You can. Tell me why you're here.

KRETON: Well, we don't travel much, my people. We used to but since we see everything through special monitors and re-creators, there is no particular need to travel. However, I am a hobbyist. I love to gad about.

POWERS: *(Taking notes)* Are you the first to visit us?

KRETON: Oh, no! We started visiting you long before there were people on the planet. However, we are seldom noticed on our trips. I'm sorry to say I slipped up, coming in the way I did ... but then this visit was all rather impromptu. *(Laughs)* I am a creature of impulse, I fear.....

(Aide looks in.)

AIDE: Chief of Staff on the telephone, General.

POWERS: *(Picks up phone)*. Hello! Yes, sir. Powers speaking. I'm talking to him now. No, sir. No, sir. No, we can't determine what method of power was used. He won't talk. Yes, sir. I'll hold him here. I've put the house under martial law ... belongs to a friend of mine, Roger Spelding, the TV commentator. Roger Spelding, the TV ... What? Oh, no, I'm sure he won't say anything. Who ... oh, yes, sir. Yes, I realize the importance of it. Yes, I will. Good-bye. *(Hangs up)* The President of the United States wants to know all about you.

KRETON: How nice of him! And I want to know all about him. But I do wish you'd let me rest a bit first. Your language is still not familiar to me. I had to learn them all, quite exhausting.

- POWERS:** You speak all our languages?
- KRETON:** Yes, all of them. But then it's easier than you might think since I can see what's inside.
- POWERS:** Speaking of what's inside, we're going to take your ship apart.
- KRETON:** Oh, I wish you wouldn't.
- POWERS:** Security demands it.
- KRETON:** In that case my security demands you leave it alone.
- POWERS:** You plan to stop us?
- KRETON:** I already have ... Listen.
(Far-off shouting. Aide rushes into the study.)
- AIDE:** Something's happened to the ship, General. The door's shut and there's some kind of wall all around it, an invisible wall. We can't get near it.
- KRETON:** I hope there was no one inside.
- POWERS:** *(To Kreton)* How did you do that?
- KRETON:** I couldn't begin to explain. Now if you don't mind, I think we should go in and see our hosts.
(He rises, goes into living room. Powers and Aide look at each other.)
- POWERS:** Don't let him out of your sight.
(Powers picks up phone.)

SCENE III

(Same living room as in Scene I. Kreton is with John and Ellen.)

KRETON: I don't mind curiosity but I really can't permit them to wreck my poor ship.

ELLEN: What do you plan to do, now you're here?

KRETON: Oh, keep busy. I have a project or two ... *(Sighs)* I can't believe you're real.

JOHN: Then, we're all in the same boat.

KRETON: Boat? Oh, yes! Well, I should have come ages ago but I ... I couldn't get away until yesterday.

JOHN: Yesterday? It only took you a day to get here?

KRETON: One of my days, not yours. But then you don't know about time yet.

JOHN: Oh, you mean relativity.

KRETON: No, it's much more involved than that. You won't know about time until ... now let me see if I remember ... no, I don't, but it's about two thousand years.

JOHN: What do we do between now and then?

KRETON: You simply go on the way you are, living your exciting primitive lives ... you have no idea how much fun you're having now.

ELLEN: I hope you'll stay with us while you're here.

KRETON: That's very nice of you. Perhaps I will. Though I'm sure you'll get tired of having a visitor under foot all the time.

ELLEN: Certainly not. And Daddy will be deliriously happy. He can interview you by the hour.

JOHN: What's it like in outer space?

KRETON: Dull.

ELLEN: I should think it would be divine!

(Powers enters.)

KRETON: No, General, it won't work.

POWERS: What won't work?

- KRETON:** Trying to blow up my little force field. You'll just plough up Mrs. Spelding's garden.
(Powers snarls and goes into study)
- ELLEN:** Can you tell what we're all thinking?
- KRETON:** Yes. As a matter of fact, it makes me a bit giddy. Your minds are not at all like ours. You see we control our thoughts while you ... well, it's extraordinary the things you think about!
- ELLEN:** Oh, how awful you can tell everything we think?
- KRETON:** Everything! It's one of the reasons I'm here, to intoxicate myself with your primitive minds ... with the wonderful rawness of your emotions! You have no idea how it excites me! You simply seethe with unlikely emotions.
- ELLEN:** I've never felt so sordid.
- JOHN:** From now on I'm going to think about agriculture.
- SPELDING:** *(Entering)* You would.
- ELLEN:** Daddy!
- KRETON:** No, no. You must go right on thinking about Ellen. Such wonderfully purple thoughts!
- SPELDING:** Now see here, Powers, you're carrying this martial law thing too far...
- POWERS:** Unfortunately, until I have received word from Washington as to the final disposition of this problem, you must obey my orders: no telephone calls, no communication with the outside.
- SPELDING:** This is unsupportable.
- KRETON:** Poor Mr. Spelding! If you like, I shall go. That would solve everything, wouldn't it?
- POWERS:** You're not going anywhere, Mr. Kreton, until I've had my instructions.
- KRETON:** I sincerely doubt if you could stop me. However, I put it up to Mr. Spelding. Shall I go?
- SPELDING:** Yes! *(Powers gestures a warning)* Do stay, I mean, we want you to get a good impression of us ...
- KRETON:** And of course you still want to be the first journalist to interview me. Fair enough. All right, I'll stay on for a while.

- POWERS:** Thank you.
- KRETON:** Don't mention it.
- SPELDING:** General, may I ask our guest a few questions?
- POWERS:** Go right ahead, Roger. I hope you'll do better than I did.
- SPELDING:** Since you read our minds, you probably already know what our fears are.
- KRETON:** I do, yes.
- SPELDING:** We are afraid that you represent a hostile race.
- KRETON:** And I have assured General Powers that my people are not remotely hostile. Except for me, no one is interested in this planet's present stage.
- SPELDING:** Does this mean you might be interested in a later stage?
- KRETON:** I'm not permitted to discuss your future. Of course my friends think me perverse to be interested in a primitive society but there's no accounting for tastes, is there? You are my hobby. I love you. And that's all there is to it.
- POWERS:** So you're just here to look around ... sort of going native.
- KRETON:** What a nice expression! That's it exactly. I am going native.
- POWERS:** (*Grimly*) Well, it is my view that you have been sent here by another civilization for the express purpose of reconnoitring prior to invasion.
- KRETON:** That would be your view! The wonderfully primitive assumption that all strangers are hostile. You're almost too good to be true, General.
- POWERS:** You deny your people intend to make trouble for us?
- KRETON:** I deny it.
- POWERS:** Then, are they interested in establishing communication with us? Trade? That kind of thing?
- KRETON:** We have always had communication with you. As for trade, well, we do not trade ... that is something peculiar only to your social level. (*Quickly*) Which I'm not criticizing! As you know, I approve of everything you do.

- POWERS:** I give up.
- SPELDING:** You have no interest then in ... Well, trying to dominate the earth.
- KRETON:** Oh, yes!
- POWERS:** I thought you just said your people weren't interested in us.
- KRETON:** They're not, but I am.
- POWERS:** You!
- KRETON:** Me ... I mean I. You see I've come here to take charge.
- POWERS:** Of the United States?
- KRETON:** No, of the whole world. I'm sure you'll be much happier and it will be great fun for me. You'll get used to it in no time.
- POWERS:** This is ridiculous. How can one man take over the world?
- KRETON:** *(Gaily)* Wait and see!
- POWERS:** *(To Aide)* Grab him!
- (Powers and Aide rush Kreton but within a foot of him, they stop, stunned.)*
- KRETON:** You can't touch me. That's part of the game. *(He yawns)* Now, if you don't mind, I shall go up to my room for a little lie-down.
- SPELDING:** I'll show you the way.
- KRETON:** That's all right. I know the way. *(Touches his brow)* Such savage thoughts! My head is vibrating like a drum. I feel quite giddy, all of you thinking away. *(He starts to the door; he pauses beside Mrs. Spelding)* No, it's not a dream, dear lady. I shall be here in the morning when you wake up. And now good night, dear, wicked children.... *(He goes out)*

CURTAIN

Exercise 1

Work in pairs and scan the text to write the synonym of the following words contextually. Use them in sentences. After completing, share your work with your partner.

No	Word	Contextual meaning	Sentence
1.	impromptu		
2.	lunatic		
3.	blazing		
4.	giddy		
5.	reconnoitring		
6.	disposition		
7.	primitive		
8.	seethe		
9.	unctuous		
10.	fidgets		
11.	sordid		
12.	resonant		

Exercise 2

Read the statements and encircle the correct option.

- The play takes place in a small suburb in _____.
a. Maryland b. Washington
c. Virginia d. Indiana
- Spelding _____ flying object in space.
a. accepts b. denies
c. doubts d. confirms
- Spelding criticizes John for growing _____.
a. cabbage b. walnuts
c. corn d. peanuts
- Kreton appears to be in his _____.
a. twenties b. thirties
c. forties d. fifties

Note for teacher: When students complete Exercise 1, make pairs and ask them to compare their answers with their partner. Next, elicit answers from the whole class and ask the students to check their work.

5. The impression of Kreton on seeing the inside of the house was _____.
a. disgusted b. delighted
c. callous d. sorrowful
6. The spaceship landed in Mrs. Spelding's _____.
a. rose garden b. petunia bed
c. greenhouse d. vegetable garden
7. Kreton said that the earthmen were his _____.
a. hobby b. ruination
c. hope d. models
8. Kreton mistakenly thought that he had come to earth in the _____.
a. 18th century b. 19th century
c. 20th century d. 21st century
9. The first person who arrived to investigate the spaceship was
a. Powers b. Laurent
c. President of the United States d. neighbour
10. Kreton said people on his planet did not _____.
a. did not fight b. did not speak
c. did not die d. did not love
11. Kreton's space ship was of _____ shape.
a. elliptical b. oval
c. circular d. triangular
12. John could not use the telephone because _____.
a. Kreton had cut communication
b. Speldings did not have any
c. Powers declared martial law
d. Spelding wouldn't give him permission
13. General Powers was thinking about _____.
a. his promotion b. security of the country
c. arrest of Kreton d. murder of the visitor

14. According to Kareton, civilization is just_____.
a. at the ending b. at the beginning
c. full bloom d. creeping
15. The elements of science fiction in this passage are most pronounced in_____.
a. Kreton's supernatural abilities
b. reactions to Kreton
c. Kreton belongs to another breed of human
d. hobbies of Kreton
16. Kreton placed an invisible wall around his spaceship because_____.
a. the army told him to.
b. the army was going to take it apart.
c. the earth's atmosphere was damaging it.
d. his own people had suggested it.
17. Powers accused Kreton of coming to earth_____.
a. 100 years too soon
b. to spread a mysterious disease
c. to discover some natural resources
d. to reconnoitre before an invasion
18. Kreton said John's thoughts about Ellen were_____.
a. black b. red
c. purple d. yellow
19. Kreton considers human civilization_____.
a. modern b. primitive
c. conservative d. rational
20. Kreton intends to take charge of_____.
a. rose garden b. Spelding's house
c. USA d. world

Exercise 3

Work in pairs. Skim through the text. First, write the name of respective character who said the following dialogues in Column B, and write the context of the dialogues in which character had said that particular dialogue in Column C. First one has been done as an example. After completing, share your work with your partner.

Column A (Dialogue)	Column B (character)	Column C In the Context of
Fair enough. All right, I'll stay on for a while.	Kreton	This statement or dialogue is said to Spelding when Spelding instructed him to stay because of General Power's interview.
He has no get-up-and-go.		
I am a hobbyist. I love to gad about.		
But I prefer the ones made of metal, the ones you used to wear, you know: with the feathers on top.		
Poor fragile butterflies, such brief little moments in the sun ...		
I like his whiskers. They're so very ... comforting.		

Exercise 4

Work individually and make a list of the elements of science fiction you find in the play. After you have done, compare your list with your class fellows.

Exercise 5

Work in pairs and arrange the scrambled events in the order of their occurrence in the play by giving the number. After you have completed, share your work with your partner.

No	Events	Order
1.	Kreton arrives on the earth.	
2.	General Powers comes with his Aide.	
3.	Kreton reads the mind of General Powers.	
4.	General Powers orders to grab Kreton.	
5.	John spots a spaceship.	
6.	Kreton announces to take over the world.	
7.	Spelding makes a broadcast and denies any spaceship landing on earth.	
8.	Aide stops Spelding from making a call.	
9.	Kreton reads the minds of John and Ellen.	
10.	General Powers and Kreton have a conversation in the study.	

Exercise 6

Read the text and answer the following questions.

1. What is ironic about Spelding's broadcast at the beginning of the play?
2. Why is Spelding unhappy about the relationship between Ellen and John?
3. Why did Kreton want to visit earth?
4. How is Kreton able to communicate with the people on earth?
5. Describe the reaction of different characters to Kreton's visit?
6. Why is General Powers paranoid about Kreton's visit?
7. What restrictions are imposed on Spelding's family?
8. What extraordinary powers does Kreton possess, and how does he exhibit these powers?
9. Why does Spelding want Kreton to stay?
10. Why did Kreton's friends consider him pervasive?
11. How does Kreton reveal that he does not have any favourable view of earthlings?
12. How does Kreton foil General Power's attempts to confine him?

13. Who is Aide? What is his role in the play?
14. How did Aide describe Kreton's spaceship?
15. Describe the main comic incidents of the play?
16. How is media depicted in the play?
17. The play is a satire on American society. Discuss.
18. How does the playwright expose the inferiority of the present race to that of the future?
19. Describe the arrival of the flying saucer in your own words.
20. How much advanced is the civilization of Kreton than of the Earth?
21. Why can the people of earth not compete with people of Kreton?
22. What type of life do you foresee in the year 5000?
23. What are the literary elements used in "Visit to a Small Planet," and how they enhance the story?
24. Who is your favourite character in this play and why?

Exercise 7

Suppose an alien visits the Earth from another planet. Work in pairs and prepare a list of your questions that you would ask the alien. Next, prepare the alien's answers. After you have completed, share your work with your class fellows.

Exercise 8

Work individually and sketch the following characters with the help of below given mind map. Once you have completed, share your work with your class fellows.

a. Mr. Spelding

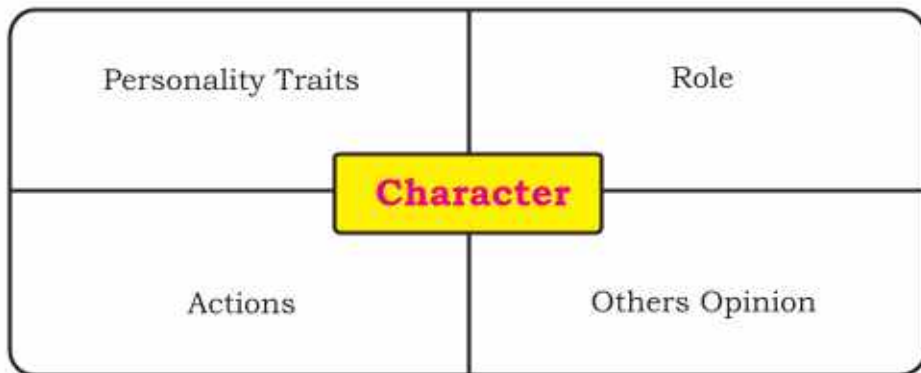
b. Mrs. Spelding

c. Ellen

d. John

e. General Powers

f. Kreton



Exercise 9

Work in pairs and compare and contrast between 'life on earth and on Kreton's planet'. After you have done, share your work with your partner.

Exercise 10

Work in pairs and summarise the play in your words. After you have summarised, exchange the work with each other.

Exercise 11

Work in pairs. Read the play again and identify the elements (i.e. plot, character, dialogue, and setting). After you have identified, write their examples from the text in the table given below.

Plot	
Character	
Dialogue	
Setting	

BIOGRAPHIES

**Sir Henry Wotton**

Sir Henry Wotton (1568–1639) was an English author, poet, diplomat and politician. He studied at Oxford where he met John Donne who later became a close friend. In 1595, Wotton became secretary to the Earl of Essex, collecting foreign intelligence. He became the ambassador to the court of Venice, and in later years, provost of Eton College. Whilst on a visit to Augsburg in 1604, he wrote a definition of an Ambassador which is now one of his most famous phrases; "An Ambassador is an honest man, sent to lie abroad for the good of his country." Although his works are small in number, they are known for having great poise and polish and his enthusiasm for classical architecture and proportion can be seen to have a large influence on his poetry.

**Edgar Albert Guest**

Edgar Albert Guest (1881 –1959) was born in Birmingham, England but was educated in United States as his family moved there. Owing to his themes and language used in his works, he became known as the People's Poet. His poems often had an inspirational and optimistic view of everyday life. His poetry was read the most during the first half of the 20th century. His first book, 'A Heap O' Livin' became a best-seller. It was followed by similar collections of his optimistic rhymes, Just Folks (1918), Rhythms of Childhood (1924), Life's Highway (1933), and Living the Years (1949).

**Percy Bysshe Shelley**

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was born in Sussex and educated at Eton and University College, Oxford. He was a close friend of Byron and a generous admirer of Keats, whose death moved him to write the great elegy, *Adonais*. His notable works include *Prometheus Unbound*, the *Cenci*, *Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills*, *Ode to the West Wind*, *The Cloud* and many others. His greatest passages have a pure and intense lyrical quality that demands his recognition as a major poet. Like so many English poets, he loved the sea, a love which cost his life for he was drowned when sailing a small boat of Spezzia.

**Douglas Malloch**

Douglas Malloch (1877 -1938) was an American poet, short-story writer and an associate editor of *American Lumberman*, a trade paper in Chicago. He was born in Muskegon, Michigan which was surrounded by forests, logging camps, and lumber yards. This rural setting became the inspiration for his poetry and made him famous as a "Lumberman's poet." He is remembered for writing his master pieces, i.e. "Round River Drive" and "Be the Best of Whatever You Are". He was commissioned to write the Michigan State Song.



The Abbot of Canterbury

The poem "The Abbot of Canterbury" is a ballad of unknown poet telling an ancient story. The ballad is a poem or a song narrating a story in short stanzas. Traditional ballads are typically of unknown authorship, having been passed on orally from one generation to other.

King John of England had a reputation of confiscating property from the clergy. This poem tells how King John, covetous of the

Abbot of Canterbury's hospitality and popularity, compels him on pain of death to answer three impossible questions. Fortunately, the Abbot's shepherd appears in disguise to substitute in his place, and answers the questions cleverly in riddle fashion. After which, the greedy king rewards the shepherd and spares the Abbot's life.



Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai

Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai (1689-1752) was born at a village near Halla Haveli of present District Matiari, Sindh. His father Syed Habib was one of the prominent figures in the area. Shah Abdul Latif was a pious person and had nothing to do with worldly luxuries. He spent his whole life in worship and austerities. His poetry's collection

"Shah Jo Risalo" is the poetry of love, kindness, brotherhood, peace and love of motherland. Shah Jo Risalo consists of 30 chapters and each chapter is called 'Surr'. The poetry of Shah Latif portrays nature and its signs in a generally clear and enthusiastic way. The impact of his great work on Sindhi literature is so incredible which intoxicated all the writers after his time.



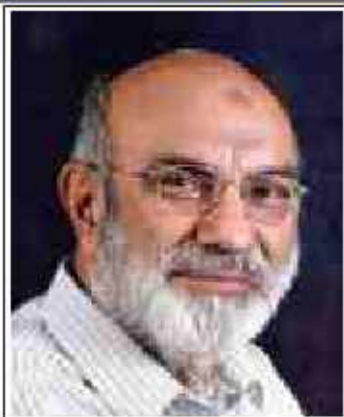
William Wordsworth

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was born in the Lake District England, and educated at Hawkshead Grammar School and St. John's College, Cambridge. After leaving Cambridge, he spent a year in France and was passionately in sympathy with the revolutionaries. In 1793, he published 'Descriptive Sketches' and 'An Evening Walk'. These works show his life-long love of natural beauty. He published Lyrical Ballads in 1798, which contained some of the poems of his friend Coleridge, but was made up otherwise, of poems by Wordsworth. The volume forms one of the great landmarks in the history of English poetry. Wordsworth, as a poet and critic, introduced a new conception of poetic style, insisting that the plain language of common speech was a fit medium for the poet. Again, he insisted that the ordinary events in humble lives were fit subject matter, when viewed by the poetic imagination. A new poetic vision which found a revelation of God in the beauties of nature came into English poetry.



Amina Khamisani

Amina Khamisani (1919-2007) was a renowned educationist and writer. She did her M.A English from University of Sindh and Diploma in English Literature from Oxford University, UK. She served as a faculty member of English Department, University of Sindh. Her remarkable work is the translation of Shah Jo Risalo in English.



Altaf Shaikh

Altaf Shaikh is a travelogue writer. He was born on 14th November, 1944 at New Hala, Matiari District Sindh. After completing his early education at Cadet College, Petaro, he acquired a degree in Marine Engineering. Then, he did M.Sc. in Maritime Safety Administration and joined Pakistan National Shipping corporation. He has a unique writing style and has no match in writing travelogues in Sindhi. His more than forty travelogues have been published

among which *'Around The World and A Journey to Thailand'* is very famous.



Maupassant

Henri René Albert Guy de Maupassant (1850 – 1893) was a 19th-century French author. He is remembered as a master of the short story. His stories are characterized by economy of style and efficient structure. Many are set during the Franco-Prussian War of the 1870s, describing the futility of. He wrote 300 short stories, six novels, three travel books, and one

volume of verse. His first published story, "Boule de Suif" is often considered his masterpiece. His stories are second only to Shakespeare in their inspiration of movie adaptations. Several of Maupassant's short stories, including "La Peur" and "The Necklace", were adapted as episodes of the television series.



Saadi

Abu-Muhammad Muslih al-Din bin Abdullah Shirazi (1210- 1292), better known by his pen name *Saadi* was a major Persian poet and prose writer of the medieval period. He is famous for the quality of his writings and for the depth of his social and moral thoughts. Saadi is widely recognized as one of the greatest poets of the classical literary tradition, earning him the nickname "The

Master of Speech" among Persian scholars. He has been quoted in the Western traditions as well. His books, *Gulistan* and *Bustan*, are equally recognized around the world. *Bostan* has been ranked as one of the 100 greatest books of all times by *The Guardian*.



E. B. White

Elwyn Brooks White (1899 – 1985) was an American writer. He was the author of several highly popular books for children, including *Stuart Little* (1945), *Charlotte's Web* (1952), and *The Trumpet of the Swan* (1970). In addition, he was a writer and contributing editor to *The New Yorker* magazine, and also a co-author of the English language style guide, *The Elements of Style*. E. B. White published his first

article in *The New Yorker* in 1925. Then, he joined the staff in 1927 and continued to contribute for almost six decades. In the late 1930s, White turned his hand to children's fiction. His first children's book, *Stuart Little*, was published in 1945, and *Charlotte's Web* followed in 1952.



Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) was an American essayist, lecturer, poet and philosopher. Emerson wrote most of his important essays as lectures first and then revised them for the printing. His first two collections of essays, *Essays: First Series* (1841) and *Essays: Second Series* (1844), represent the core of his thinking. They include the well-known essays "Self-Reliance", "The Over-Soul", "Circles", "The

Poet", and "Experience." His philosophy is everlasting because it arose from a desire to make things new, to seize life freshly, experience it first hand and use it to build beyond the old. His work has greatly influenced thinkers, writers and poets that followed him.