

LAST-HOUR CRAM SHEET · English Core

CBSE Class 12 English Core (301) · Theory 80 +
Internal 20 · Read this in the 60 minutes before you
walk in

A. The Paper at a Glance

Section	Name	Marks	What it is
A	Reading Skills	22	Unseen passage (12) + case-based passage with chart (10)
B	Creative Writing Skills	18	Notice (4) + Invitation (4) + Letter (5) + Article/Report (5)
C	Literature	40	Flamingo + Vistas — extracts, short and long answers
Internal Assessment		20	Listening 5 + Speaking 5 + Project 10

STRATEGY — the time plan Section A: 35 min

· Section B: 45 min · Section C: 90 min ·

Revision: 10 min

Section B is the most *predictable* — roughly 9 of its 18 marks are format, organisation and accuracy, which you can secure before knowing the topic. Do it confidently and quickly to protect time for Section C.

B. Section C — the exact question breakdown

Q	Question	Marks	Choice
7	Poetry extract — Flamingo	6 (6×1)	1 of 2
8	Prose extract — Vistas	4 (4×1)	1 of 2
9	Prose extract — Flamingo	6 (6×1)	1 of 2
10	Short answers — Flamingo prose & poetry, 40–50 words	10 (5×2)	5 of 6
11	Short answers — Vistas , 40–50 words	4 (2×2)	2 of 3
12	Long answer — Flamingo , 120–150 words	5	1 of 2
13	Long answer — Vistas , 120–150 words	5	1 of 2

C. Section B — the mark splits, memorised

EXACTLY WHAT THE EXAMINER TICKS

Question	Total	Format	Organisation	Content	Accuracy
Notice (≤50 words)	4	1	—	2	1
Invitation & Reply (≤50)	4	1	—	2	1
Letter (120–150)	5	1	1	2	1
Article / Report (120–150)	5	1	1	2	1

THE FOUR SKELETONS **NOTICE — BOXED.**

School name → **NOTICE** (centred, caps) →
Date → Heading → body with the *five W's*
→ Signature + Name + **Designation**. *Third person.*

FORMAL INVITATION — THIRD PERSON,
centred, no salutation, no signature. Ends
with RSVP.

FORMAL REPLY — third person; if
declining, give a reason.

LETTER — Sender's address → Date → Receiver's address → **Subject (underlined)** → Sir/Madam → 3 paragraphs → Yours faithfully + Name. Job application adds a **BIO-DATA** block.

ARTICLE — Title → by Name → intro / body / conclusion. **Subjective, present tense.**

REPORT — Title → by Name, designation, place, date → what/where/when, details, conclusion. **Objective, past tense, often passive.**

D. Literature — the whole syllabus in one table

FLAMINGO — PROSE (8)

Chapter	Author	Theme & key detail
The Last Lesson	Alphonse Daudet	Linguistic chauvinism ; Franz, M. Hamel, "Vive La France!"
Lost Spring	Anees Jung	Child labour ; Saheb (Seemapuri), Mukesh (Firozabad bangles)
Deep Water	William Douglas	Overcoming fear ; YMCA pool, instructor, Warm Lake
The Rattrap	Selma Lagerlöf	World as a rattrap ; Edla's kindness redeems the peddler

Indigo	Louis Fischer	Champaran 1917 ; Rajkumar Shukla, 15% land, 25% refund
Poets and Pancakes	Asokamitran	Gemini Studios satire ; make-up dept, Subbu, Stephen Spender
The Interview	Christopher Silvester	Interview as intrusion vs art ; Umberto Eco
Going Places	A. R. Barton	Fantasy vs reality ; Sophie, Jansie, Danny Casey

FLAMINGO — POETRY (5)

Poem	Poet	Theme & key device
My Mother at Sixty-Six	Kamala Das	Ageing, filial fear ; simile "ashen like a corpse"; one sentence, no full stop
Keeping Quiet	Pablo Neruda	Introspection, peace ; "count to twelve"; NOT inactivity
A Thing of Beauty	John Keats	Beauty is permanent ; from <i>Endymion</i> ; "endless fountain of immortal drink"
A Roadside Stand	Robert Frost	Rural poverty ; oxymorons "greedy good-doers", "beneficent beasts of prey"
Aunt Jennifer's Tigers	Adrienne Rich	Patriarchy, art outlives artist ; "massive weight of Uncle's wedding band"

VISTAS (6)

Chapter	Author	Theme & key detail
The Third Level	Jack Finney	Escapism ; Galesburg 1894, first-day cover, Sam

The Tiger King	Kalki	Satire on power ; 100th tiger, the wooden tiger kills him
Journey to the End of the Earth	Tishani Doshi	Climate change ; Gondwana, phytoplankton, Students on Ice
The Enemy	Pearl S. Buck	Humanity above nationalism ; Dr Sadao, Hana, the General
On the Face of It	Susan Hill	Disability & acceptance ; Derry (acid burn), Mr Lamb (tin leg)
Memories of Childhood	Zitkala-Sa & Bama	Racial + caste oppression ; shingled hair; vadai carried by string

E. Poetic Devices — with an example from the syllabus

Device	Definition	Example
Simile	Comparison with like / as	"ashen like that of a corpse"
Metaphor	Direct comparison, no like/as	"endless fountain of immortal drink"
Personification	Human qualities to non-human	"young trees sprinting "
Alliteration	Repeated initial consonant	" f ingers f luttering"
Oxymoron	Two contradictory words joined	" greedy good-doers "
Symbolism	Object standing for an idea	Tigers = freedom; wedding band = oppression
Repetition	Deliberate repeating	"smile and smile and smile"

Irony	Opposite of what is expected	"beneficent beasts of prey"
Imagery	Appeals to the senses	"merry children spilling out of their homes"
Free verse	No regular rhyme or metre	<i>Keeping Quiet</i>

F. Rules You Must Not Get Wrong

MEMORISE EXACTLY

- **Section A: the answer is always IN the passage.** Outside knowledge earns nothing.
- **Never leave an MCQ blank** — there is no negative marking.
- **Formal invitation and reply are THIRD PERSON** — no “Dear”, no “Yours sincerely”, no signature.
- **Declining an invitation requires a REASON.**
- **Notice must be BOXED**, with name + designation in the signature, and the five W's in the body.
- **Sir/Madam pairs with Yours faithfully.** Only the Y is capital.
- **Letter subject line is compulsory and underlined.** Three paragraphs.
- **Article = subjective, present tense.**
Report = objective, past tense, passive, byline with designation.
- **Keeping Quiet is NOT about inactivity** — Neruda says so explicitly.

- Aunt Jennifer's tigers survive her — art outlives the artist. That contrast is the poem.
- The Tiger King is killed by a **WOODEN** tiger — a sliver of wood.
- Dr Sadao disliked Americans and saved one anyway — that is the story's strength.
- Derry's handicap is psychological; Mr Lamb's is physical.
- Long answers (5 marks) need extrapolation, not plot summary.

G. How to Write for Marks

Question	Structure
MCQ / 1 mark	Option or one line. No explanation.
40–50 words (2 marks)	Direct answer → textual detail → one line of explanation. Stay within the limit.
120–150 words (5 marks)	One-line context → three developed points, each with a textual detail → closing line on the theme or value.
Extract (6 or 4)	Answer from the extract given , not from memory. Expect one poetic device question.
Section B	Lay out the skeleton first — that secures Format and Organisation before you write any content.

THE THREE HABITS THAT SAVE MARKS — **1.** In Section A, **underline the answer in the passage** and write the question number beside it as you read. **2.** In Section B, **draw the format first**, fill content second, proofread third. **3.** In Section C, for every chapter know **author + theme + one quotable detail** — those three answer almost everything.

Section A · Reading Skills

CBSE Class 12 English Core (301) · 22 marks · the most scorable section in the paper · Ultimate Revision Sheet

60-SECOND RECALL

Two passages	Q1 Unseen passage — 12 marks · Q2 Case-based factual passage — 10 marks
Combined length	700–750 words for both passages together
Question types	MCQ · Objective type · Short answer in 40–50 words
Passage 1 type	Factual, descriptive or literary
Passage 2 type	Case-based with verbal / visual input — charts, statistics, tables
Golden rule	The answer is always IN the passage. Never bring outside knowledge.

1. What This Section Tests

THE SIX SKILLS **Comprehension** — did you understand what it says?

Interpretation — what does it mean?

Analysis — how are the parts related?

Inference — what does it imply without stating?

Evaluation — how good is the argument or evidence?

Vocabulary — assessed through inference from context, not from a dictionary.

THE RULE THAT DECIDES THIS SECTION **Every**

answer must come from the passage. This section is **not** testing what you know about the topic — it tests whether you can find, understand and rephrase what the writer said. Outside knowledge, however correct, earns **nothing**.

2. The Method — how to attempt

THE SIX STEPS — follow in this order **1. Read the**

QUESTIONS first (2 minutes). You now know what to look for.

2. Read the passage once quickly for the

overall sense.

3. Read again slowly, **UNDERLINING** the parts that answer each question. Mark the question number beside the line.

4. Answer in order. For MCQs, eliminate the obviously wrong options first.

5. For short answers, write **40–50** words — a complete sentence, in your own words where possible.

6. Check the vocabulary questions last, using the sentence around the word.

Time budget: about **35 minutes** for the whole of Section A — roughly 20 for the 12-mark passage and 15 for the 10-mark one.

3. Question Types and How to Answer Each

THE TYPES YOU WILL MEET

Type	What it asks	How to answer
Factual / literal	"According to the passage, what ..."	Locate and quote or rephrase directly. Fastest marks in the paper.

Inference	"What can be inferred ..." "The writer implies ..."	The answer is not stated . Find the evidence, then state the conclusion it points to.
Vocabulary	"The word X in para 3 means ..."	Read the whole sentence , substitute each option, pick the one that keeps the meaning.
Attitude / tone	"The tone of the writer is ..."	Look at adjectives and adverbs the writer chooses. See the tone list below.
Title / theme	"Suggest a suitable title"	Must cover the main idea , be short , and not focus on one paragraph only.
Data / visual	"According to the graph ..."	Read axis labels and units first. Compare exactly what is asked — highest, lowest, trend.
Evaluation	"Which statement best supports ..."	Test each option against the passage , not against your opinion.

4. Tone and Attitude Words — keep this list

If the writer is...	The tone is
Praising, approving	Appreciative , laudatory, admiring

Finding fault	Critical , disapproving, condemnatory
Making light of something serious	Sarcastic , ironic, mocking, satirical
Simply informing, no opinion	Objective , factual, neutral, informative
Showing feeling for suffering	Sympathetic , compassionate, empathetic
Expecting good outcomes	Optimistic , hopeful
Expecting bad outcomes	Pessimistic , cynical
Urging the reader to act	Persuasive , argumentative, exhortative
Thinking back / inward	Reflective , contemplative, nostalgic
Warning about danger	Cautionary , alarmed, concerned

5. The Case-Based Passage (10 marks)

WHAT IS DIFFERENT

This passage comes with **verbal or visual input** — a table, bar chart, pie chart, line graph or statistical data. It tests whether you can read **data** as well as prose, and connect the two.

HOW TO READ A CHART IN 30 SECONDS

1. Read the **title** — what is being measured?
2. Read **both axis labels and the units** — percentage? rupees? crores? per year?
3. Note the **highest** and **lowest** values.
4. Note the **overall trend** — rising, falling, fluctuating, steady.
5. Look for anything that **contradicts** the prose — that is often the question.

THE DATA TRAPS

- **Percentage vs absolute number.** A smaller percentage of a bigger total can be a larger number. Read which one is asked.
- **Increase vs rate of increase.** A falling rate of growth is still growth.
- **Read the units.** “In crores” and “in lakhs” change every answer.
- **Do not estimate** when exact figures are given.

6. Writing the 40-50 Word Answer

THE THREE-PART STRUCTURE

1. **Direct answer** in the first line — answer the actual question asked.

2. Evidence from the passage — the fact or phrase that supports it.

3. Brief explanation or consequence, if the word limit allows.

Example question: “Why does the writer call the practice harmful?”

Answer: The writer calls it harmful because it damages long-term health. He points out that continuous exposure weakens immunity and raises the risk of chronic illness. This makes the short-term convenience far costlier than it appears.
(43 words)

WHAT LOSES MARKS HERE

- **Copying whole sentences** from the passage without rephrasing — acceptable for factual questions, penalised for inference ones.
- **Writing far beyond 50 words** — wastes time and adds nothing.
- **Answering a different question** — read the question word: *why, how, what, which*.
- **Leaving MCQs blank**. There is **no negative marking** — always attempt every one.

7. Format and Mark Split

what the examiner ticks

Question	Marks	Where the marks are
MCQ / objective	1 each	Correct option only. No explanation needed, no partial marks.
Short answer (40–50 words)	1–2 each	Content is everything. Correct idea, drawn from the passage.
Vocabulary in context	1 each	The meaning as used in that sentence , not the general dictionary meaning.
Title	1	Covers the whole passage, short, relevant.

Data interpretation

1 each

Reading the chart correctly,
with the right unit.

8. Question Triggers

wording → what to do

If the question says...	Do this
"According to the passage..."	Factual — locate and rephrase directly
"What can be inferred..." / "implies"	Inference — not stated; find the evidence and draw the conclusion
"The word 'X' means..."	Substitute each option into the original sentence
"The tone of the writer is..."	Look at the adjectives he chose; use the tone list
"Suggest a suitable title"	Short, covers the whole passage, not one paragraph
"According to the graph / table..."	Check axis labels and units first
"Which of the following best supports..."	Test each option against the passage
"The writer is most likely to agree that..."	Inference about the writer's position , not yours
"Complete the sentence appropriately"	Match the grammar and the sense of the original line
"State whether TRUE or FALSE"	Find the exact line; a single changed word makes it false
"Justify in about 40 words"	Claim + evidence from the passage + one line of explanation

WHAT ALWAYS APPEARS

1. [12M] Unseen passage — MCQ and short answer, mixed factual and inferential.
2. [10M] Case-based passage with a chart, table or statistical input.
3. [1M each] Vocabulary in context — always two or three of these.
4. [1M] Tone / attitude of the writer.
5. [1M] Suitable title for the passage.

THE HABIT THAT SCORES — Underline the answer in the passage and write the question number beside it as you read. This single habit turns Section A into the fastest 22 marks in the paper — you are then copying from your own marked text rather than searching again. Finish Section A in 35 minutes to protect time for Section C.

Section B · Creative Writing Skills

CBSE Class 12 English Core (301) · 18 marks ·

pure format marks — the most predictable section ·

Ultimate Revision Sheet

60-SECOND RECALL — the four questions and their mark splits

Q3 Notice	4 marks — up to 50 words — Format 1 / Content 2 / Accuracy 1
Q4 Invitation & Reply	4 marks — up to 50 words — Format 1 / Content 2 / Accuracy 1
Q5 Letter	5 marks — 120–150 words — Format 1 / Organisation 1 / Content 2 / Accuracy 1
Q6 Article or Report	5 marks — 120–150 words — Format 1 / Organisation 1 / Content 2 / Accuracy 1
Every question	One out of two — internal choice in all four
The insight	Half the marks are format and accuracy , which you can guarantee before you know the topic

WHY THIS SECTION IS THE EASIEST 18 MARKS In

Section B, content is only 2 of every 4 or 5 marks. The rest is format, organisation and grammar — all of which are fixed and learnable *before* you see the paper. Learn the four skeletons below perfectly and you have secured roughly 9 marks regardless of the topic.

1. Notice — 4 marks, up to 50 words

FORMAT — REPRODUCE EXACTLY

NAME OF SCHOOL / ORGANISATION

NOTICE

Date: 11 September 2026

HEADING / SUBJECT

Body — the five W's in 40–50 words.

Signature

NAME

Designation (Head Boy / Secretary / Principal)

THE FIVE W's — the content marks **WHAT** is

happening · **WHEN** (date and time) ·

WHERE (venue) · **WHO** may attend ·

WHOM to contact / any other detail

Miss any one of these and you lose content marks.

NOTICE RULES • Write the word **NOTICE** in capitals, centred.

- Always include the **name of the institution** at the top.
- **Box the notice** — draw a rectangle around the whole thing.
- Word limit applies to the **body only**, not the heading and signature.
- Write in the **third person**. No “I”, no emotional language.
- Sign with **name AND designation** — both are needed.

2. Invitation and Reply — 4 marks, up to 50 words

FORMAL INVITATION — third person, no salutation

Mr and Mrs Rajesh Sharma
request the pleasure of your company
at the wedding reception of their daughter

Anjali

with

Vikram

on Sunday, the 20th of December 2026

at 7:00 p.m.

at Hotel Grand Palace, Sector 14, Gurugram

RSVP

98765 43210

*Third person throughout. No “Dear”, no
“Yours sincerely”, no signature. Numbers
and dates written in words where natural.*

FORMAL REPLY — also third person **ACCEPTING**

*Mr and Mrs Arun Mehra thank Mr and
Mrs Rajesh Sharma for their kind
invitation to the wedding reception of
their daughter Anjali and have great
pleasure in accepting it.*

DECLINING — you must give a **reason**

*Mr and Mrs Arun Mehra thank Mr and
Mrs Rajesh Sharma for their kind
invitation but regret their inability to
attend owing to a prior engagement on
that date.*

INFORMAL INVITATION — letter style, first person

Written as a short **personal letter**: sender's address, date, salutation (*Dear Rohit*), body in the **first person**, and *Yours affectionately* / *Warm regards* with your name.

THE ONE THAT TRIPS EVERYONE Formal

invitation and reply are in the **THIRD PERSON** — “Mr and Mrs X request...”, “Mr and Mrs Y thank...”. There is **no salutation** and **no subscription**. Writing “Dear Sir” or “Yours sincerely” in a formal invitation **costs the whole format mark**.

When **declining**, you must state a **reason** — a bare refusal loses a content mark.

3. Letter — 5 marks, 120-150 words

FORMAT — the seven fixed parts

1. Sender's Address
2. Date
3. Receiver's Address — *The Editor, The Times of India, New Delhi*
4. Subject — one line, underlined
5. Salutation — **Sir / Madam**
6. Body — **three paragraphs**
 - Para 1:* who you are and why you are writing
 - Para 2:* the details, the problem, the evidence
 - Para 3:* what you want done; a courteous close
7. Subscription — **Yours faithfully** + Name

Letter type	What it needs
Letter to the Editor	Address to <i>The Editor</i> of a named paper. State the issue, its effects on the public, and request that it be highlighted so authorities act. Written in the public interest .
Job Application	Address to the employer. State the post and where you saw it advertised, your suitability in brief, and attach a BIO-DATA / RESUME as a separate block after the signature.

BIO-DATA BLOCK — attach after the signature

BIO-DATA

Name · Father's Name · Date of Birth · Address · Contact
 Educational Qualifications (*most recent first*)
 Work Experience · Skills · Languages Known
 References

LETTER RULES

- **Sir / Madam** goes with **Yours faithfully**. (Dear Mr Sharma would take *Yours sincerely*, but formal letters in this paper use Sir/Madam.)
- **Subject line is compulsory** and must be **underlined**.
- Only the **Y** of "Yours" is capital — **Yours faithfully**, never "Yours Faithfully".
- **Three paragraphs** — that is where the **organisation** mark lives.
- Use the details given in the question (name, city, school) — inventing your own real name is discouraged; use the one supplied.

4. Article and Report — 5 marks, 120-150 words

ARTICLE FORMAT**TITLE**

by **Name**

Para 1 — Introduction: open with a question, a statistic or a striking statement. State the issue.

Para 2 — Body: causes, effects, examples, evidence. This is where content marks live.

Para 3 — Conclusion: suggestions and a call to action.

An article is **subjective** — you may express opinion and address the reader.

REPORT FORMAT

TITLE

by **Name**, *designation* · Place, Date

Para 1: WHAT happened, WHERE, WHEN — the opening facts.

Para 2: details in **chronological order** — who attended, what took place, chief guest, highlights.

Para 3: how it concluded — vote of thanks, outcome.

A report is **objective** — factual, impersonal, usually **past tense** and often **passive voice**.

ARTICLE vs REPORT — the distinction that carries the format mark

Basis	ARTICLE	REPORT
Purpose	Discuss an issue, persuade	Record an event that happened
Tone	Subjective — opinion allowed	Objective — facts only
Tense	Mostly present	Mostly past
Voice	Active	Often passive
Byline	by Name	by Name, designation , place and date

5. Format and Mark Split

exactly what the examiner ticks

Question	Marks	Format	Organisation	Content	Accuracy
Notice	4	1	—	2	1
Invitation & Reply	4	1	—	2	1
Letter	5	1	1	2	1
Article / Report	5	1	1	2	1

Accuracy means spelling and grammar. Organisation means clear paragraphing and logical flow. Both are free marks if you are disciplined.

6. Question Triggers

wording → which format?

If the question says...	Write a
"inform students about..." / "draft a notice"	Notice — boxed, third person, five W's
"invite for a wedding / inauguration"	Formal invitation — third person, no salutation
"accept / decline the invitation"	Formal reply — third person; give a reason if declining
"invite your friend"	Informal invitation — letter style, first person
"draw the attention of authorities" / "write to the editor"	Letter to the Editor — Sir/Madam, Yours faithfully

"apply for the post of..."	Job application + bio-data block
"express your views on..." / "discuss the issue"	Article — title, byline, three paras, opinion allowed
"an event was held... write for the school magazine"	Report — past tense, objective, byline with designation
"you are the Head Boy / Secretary"	Use that designation in the signature block
"in about 120–150 words"	Letter / Article / Report — the 5-mark questions
"in not more than 50 words"	Notice / Invitation — the 4-mark questions

WHAT ALWAYS APPEARS

1. **[4M]** Notice — lost article, school event, competition, holiday, meeting.
2. **[4M]** Formal invitation or reply — wedding, inauguration, annual day.
3. **[5M]** Letter to the Editor — civic problem, pollution, traffic, price rise, exam stress.
4. **[5M]** Job application with bio-data.
5. **[5M]** Article — social issue, environment, education, technology, health.

6. [5M] Report — school function, sports day, seminar, field trip.

THE HABIT THAT SCORES — Before writing a single word of content, **lay out the skeleton** — boxes, headings, subject line, salutation, subscription. That secures **Format and Organisation** immediately. Then fill in content, then reread once for spelling to secure **Accuracy**. Done this way, you can score **3 of 5** on any topic in the world, even one you know nothing about.

Section C · Flamingo — Prose

CBSE Class 12 English Core (301) · Section C = 40 marks · 8 prose chapters · Ultimate Revision Sheet

60-SECOND RECALL — the eight chapters

The Last Lesson	Alphonse Daudet · Linguistic chauvinism ; Franz, M. Hamel
Lost Spring	Anees Jung · Child labour, poverty ; Saheb, Mukesh
Deep Water	William Douglas · Overcoming fear ; drowning at YMCA pool
The Rattrap	Selma Lagerlöf · World as a rattrap ; peddler, Edla
Indigo	Louis Fischer · Champaran, 1917 ; Gandhi, Rajkumar Shukla
Poets and Pancakes	Asokamitran · Gemini Studios , satire, make-up department
The Interview	Christopher Silvester · Umberto Eco ; interviews as intrusion vs art
Going Places	A. R. Barton · Adolescent fantasy ; Sophie, Danny Casey

1. The Last Lesson — Alphonse Daudet

THE ESSENTIALS

Setting: Alsace-Lorraine, France, after the Franco-Prussian War.

Prussia has ordered that only German be taught.

Characters: Franz (the narrator, a lazy schoolboy), M. Hamel (the French teacher of 40 years), village elders including **old Hauser**.

Plot: Franz arrives late, fearing punishment, and finds the class unusually silent and villagers seated at the back. M. Hamel announces it is the **last French lesson**. Franz suddenly values what he has ignored. M. Hamel blames himself and the parents as much as the children. At the end, unable to speak, he writes "**Vive La France!**" on the blackboard.

Themes: linguistic chauvinism · the pain of losing one's language and identity · **procrastination** — "we always have plenty of time, we shall learn tomorrow" · patriotism.

THE LINE EXAMINERS WANT

"When a people are enslaved, as long as they hold fast to their language it is as if they had the key to their prison."

Language is identity; losing it is a deeper defeat than losing territory.

2. Lost Spring — Anees Jung

THE ESSENTIALS

Subtitle: “Stories of Stolen Childhood”. Two parts.

Part 1 — Saheb-e-Alam (“lord of the universe”, an ironic name): a ragpicker from Dhaka, now in **Seemapuri**, Delhi. Garbage is **gold** to the children but a means of survival to adults. He later takes a job at a tea stall — he earns 800 rupees and meals, **but loses his freedom**; the steel canister is heavier than his bag.

Part 2 — Mukesh: born into a family of **bangle-makers in Firozabad**. 20,000 children work in glass furnaces in dangerous conditions, losing their eyesight. Trapped by the **vicious circle** of sahuikars, middlemen, policemen, bureaucrats and politicians. Mukesh alone dares to dream — he wants to be a **motor mechanic**.

Themes: **child labour** · poverty and exploitation · the **stolen childhood** of the title · the power of daring to dream.

THE CONTRAST TO WRITE

Saheb has **freedom** but no **security**; once employed, he has **security** but no **freedom**. Mukesh is the only child who **dares to break the tradition** — and even his dream is modest (a mechanic, not a doctor), which is the real measure of how low their horizon has been set.

3. Deep Water — William Douglas

THE ESSENTIALS

Two incidents caused the fear: (1) at **three or four** years old, knocked over by a wave at a California beach; (2) at **ten or eleven**, thrown into the deep end of the **YMCA pool** in Yakima by a big bully of a boy.

The drowning: he went down **three times**; describes rising “slowly like an oversized bubble”, the terror, the paralysis, and finally blackness and peace.

The cure: years later he hired an **instructor** who taught him piece by piece over months — breathing, kicking, arm movement — “built a swimmer” of him. Even then fear returned, so he tested

himself alone at **Lake Wentworth** and finally **Warm Lake**, and knew the terror had gone.

Themes: overcoming fear through **willpower** · determination and perseverance · fear of death is worse than death.

THE LINE EXAMINERS WANT “All we have to fear is fear itself.” (Roosevelt, quoted by Douglas.) The essay is an argument that fear is defeated not by avoidance but by **deliberate, graded confrontation**.

4. The Rattrap — Selma Lagerlöf

THE ESSENTIALS **Characters:** the **peddler** of rattraps (a vagabond and petty thief), the **old crofter** (who shares food and shows him his 30 kronor), the **ironmaster** (mistakes him for an old regimental comrade, Captain von Stahle), and **Edla Willmansson**, the ironmaster's daughter. **The metaphor:** the whole world is a **giant rattrap** — riches, joys, shelter and food are the **bait**; once tempted, a person is trapped.

Plot: the peddler steals the crofter's 30 kronor and is caught in his own trap. Edla treats him with **kindness and respect** even after learning he is not a captain. He leaves behind the money and a note signed "**Captain von Stahle**", having been redeemed.

Themes: the **essential goodness** in every human being · **kindness and understanding** can transform a person · loneliness and the need for human fellowship · materialism as a trap.

WHY EDLA MATTERS The crofter gave him **hospitality**; the ironmaster gave him **hospitality based on a mistake**. Only Edla treated him well **knowing** he was a tramp. That unconditional kindness is what redeems him — the chapter's whole argument.

5. Indigo — Louis Fischer

THE ESSENTIALS Year and place: 1917, Champaran, Bihar. From Fischer's biography of Gandhi.

The trigger: Rajkumar Shukla, a poor

illiterate sharecropper, followed Gandhi persistently until he agreed to come.

The problem: under the long-term contract, tenants had to plant 15% of their land with indigo and surrender the entire harvest as rent. When Germany developed synthetic indigo, landlords wanted to release them — for compensation.

The struggle: Gandhi was ordered to leave; he refused and was summoned to court. Thousands of peasants demonstrated spontaneously — the first sign of civil disobedience in India. The case was dropped. Gandhi eventually agreed to a 25% refund — the amount mattered less than the fact that the landlords had surrendered part of their money and prestige.

Beyond politics: Gandhi also worked on education, health and sanitation; Kasturba taught ashram discipline.

Themes: self-reliance · Indian independence begins with ordinary people · leadership by example · satyagraha in practice.

THE ARGUMENT TO MAKE

Gandhi accepted only 25% because the **principle** mattered, not the sum: for the first time the landlords had been **forced to yield**, which broke the aura of their invincibility. "The battle of Champaran is won" because the peasants learnt they had **rights and defenders**.

6. Poets and Pancakes — Asokamitran

THE ESSENTIALS

Setting: Gemini Studios, Madras — one of India's biggest film studios. The title refers to **Pancake**, the brand of make-up the studio bought in truckloads.

The make-up department: housed in a building said to have been **Robert Clive's stable**; a fine example of **national integration** — a Bengali headed it, then a Maharashtrian, a Dharwar Kannadiga, an Andhra, a Madras Indian Christian, an Anglo-Burmese and local Tamils. Their work turned decent-looking people into "monsters" under the lights.

The narrator's job: cutting out newspaper

clippings — which everyone thought was doing nothing.

Subba Rao / Kothamangalam Subbu: No. 2 at Gemini, endlessly loyal and resourceful, a genuinely **cheerful and charitable** man, though the office boy resented him.

The legal adviser who was in effect the **opposite** — he ended an actress's career with a single recording.

The visitors: a confusing lecture by an English poet (**Stephen Spender**) nobody understood, and the **Moral Re-Armament Army** (MRA) whose plays the studio copied for years.

Themes: gentle **satire** of studio life · hierarchy and office politics · the gap between appearance and reality · humour and irony.

7. The Interview — Christopher Silvester

THE ESSENTIALS — note the two parts **Part 1 —**

an essay on the interview as a form.

Invented just over **130 years** ago.

Opinions are sharply divided:

Against: V. S. Naipaul — “some people

are wounded by interviews and lose a part of themselves'. **Lewis Carroll** had a "horror of the interviewer". **Rudyard Kipling** called it "immoral... a crime... an assault". **Saul Bellow** likened it to "thumbprints on my windpipe". Some primitive cultures believed a photograph stole the soul.

For: it is a **supremely serviceable medium of communication**; "we are the beneficiaries of its vivid, immediate impression of our contemporaries".

Part 2 — an actual interview with **Umberto Eco** by Mukund Padmanabhan of *The Hindu*. Eco explains his "**empty spaces**" theory of using time, his **narrative style of academic writing**, and why *The Name of the Rose* — a difficult novel about medieval monks — sold **10–15 million** copies. Eco insists he is a **university professor who writes novels on Sundays**, not a novelist who teaches.

Themes: the interview as **intrusion vs art** · celebrity and privacy · the unpredictability of public taste.

8. Going Places — A.R. Barton

THE ESSENTIALS

Characters: *Sophie* (a working-class schoolgirl and daydreamer), *Jansie* (her realistic, “down-to-earth” friend, “earmarked for the biscuit factory”), *Geoff* (Sophie’s older brother, an apprentice mechanic who says little and whom she hero-worships), her *father* (a heavy, sceptical, sometimes violent man), and *Danny Casey* (a real young Irish footballer for United).

Plot: Sophie dreams of owning a boutique, of being an actress or a fashion designer. She claims to have *met Danny Casey* and to have a date with him. Geoff half-believes her; Jansie does not; her father is scornful. She waits alone by the canal for a date that never happens, and returns knowing, underneath, that it was never real.

Themes: *adolescent fantasy vs reality* · the pull of *escapism* in a constrained working-class life · hero worship · the tension between dreams and socio-economic limits.

THE CENTRAL POINT

Sophie's dreams are not a character flaw but a **response to her circumstances**: a cramped house, a dead-end future at the biscuit factory, a father who mocks her. Jansie represents **acceptance**; Sophie represents **escape**. The story judges neither — it shows the cost of both.

9. How Section C Questions Work

THE THREE QUESTION SIZES

Type	Marks	What to do
Extract-based (prose, Flamingo)	6 — 6 × 1	MCQ and one-line answers from the given passage . Read the extract, not your memory.
Short answer (40–50 words)	2 each — 5 of 6	One clear point + one textual detail + one line of explanation.
Long answer (120–150 words)	5 — 1 of 2	Intro (1 line) + 3 developed points with textual evidence + conclusion linking to the theme.

WHAT SEPARATES A 5 FROM A 3

The 5-mark question asks for *extrapolation beyond the text* — the values, the relevance today, what it implies. An answer that only *retells the story* caps at about half. Always close with what the incident *shows* about human nature or society.

10. Theme → Chapter Lookup

for value-based questions

If the question is about...	Use
Language, identity, patriotism	The Last Lesson
Child labour, poverty, stolen childhood	Lost Spring
Overcoming fear, willpower, determination	Deep Water
Kindness transforming a person, materialism	The Rattrap
Leadership, self-reliance, standing up to injustice	Indigo
Satire, hierarchy, appearance vs reality	Poets and Pancakes
Privacy, celebrity, the ethics of journalism	The Interview
Dreams vs reality, adolescence, class	Going Places
Procrastination / "we shall learn tomorrow"	The Last Lesson

Daring to break tradition	Lost Spring (Mukesh)
Compassion and human goodness	The Rattrap (Edla)
Grassroots movement, satyagraha	Indigo

MOST-ASKED QUESTIONS

1. [5M] "The Rattrap" — how does Edla's kindness change the peddler?
2. [5M] "Indigo" — why is the Champaran episode called a turning point in Gandhi's life?
3. [5M] "Lost Spring" — what forces keep the bangle-makers trapped?
4. [5M] "Deep Water" — how did Douglas overcome his fear, and what does it teach?
5. [2M] Why was Franz surprised on reaching school that day?
6. [2M] Why does the author call Saheb "a servant" at the tea stall?
7. [2M] What does the rattrap symbolise?

THE HABIT THAT SCORES — For every chapter, be able to give **three things in ten seconds**: the author, the central

theme, and **one quotable line or incident**. Those three carry almost every short-answer question, and the quotable detail is what lifts a long answer above a plot summary.

Section C · Flamingo — Poetry

CBSE Class 12 English Core (301) · Poetry extract =

6 marks · 5 poems · Ultimate Revision Sheet

60-SECOND RECALL — the five poems

My Mother at Sixty-Six	Kamala Das · Ageing and filial anxiety · one long sentence, no full stop
Keeping Quiet	Pablo Neruda · Introspection and peace · "count to twelve"
A Thing of Beauty	John Keats · Beauty is a joy for ever · from <i>Endymion</i>
A Roadside Stand	Robert Frost · Rural poverty and false promises
Aunt Jennifer's Tigers	Adrienne Rich · Patriarchal oppression · art outlives the artist

1. My Mother at Sixty-Six — Kamala Das

THE ESSENTIALS

Situation: the poet drives from her parents' home in Cochin to the airport with her mother beside her, dozing.

Central images: the mother's face is "ashen like that of a corpse" — the shock of realising her mother is old and close to death. Outside, "young trees sprinting"

and “merry children spilling out of their homes” — deliberate contrasts of **youth and vitality** against age and decay.

At the airport, after the security check, the mother stands “**wan, pale as a late winter’s moon**”.

The ending: the poet hides her pain behind a smile — “**smile and smile and smile...**”

Themes: the **pain of ageing** · a daughter’s **fear of separation and loss** · **concealing emotion** · the **generation gap**.

POETIC DEVICES — the 6-marker asks for these by name

Device	Where it appears
Simile	“her face ashen like that of a corpse ” · “ pale as a late winter’s moon ”
Personification	“young trees sprinting ”
Imagery	Visual — the dozing mother, the merry children
Repetition	“smile and smile and smile” — forced cheerfulness masking grief
Contrast / Juxtaposition	Ageing mother inside the car vs youthful world outside
Structure	Written as one single sentence with no full stop — suggesting a continuous, unbroken flow of thought and the endlessness of the fear

2. Keeping Quiet — Pablo Neruda

THE ESSENTIALS

The proposal: “count to twelve and we will all keep still” — a brief, universal moment of **silence and stillness**.

Why twelve: twelve hours on a clock, twelve months of the year — it suggests **completeness** and a measured pause.

What would stop: fishermen would not harm whales; the man gathering salt would look at his hurt hands; “**wars with gas, wars with fire**” would cease; soldiers would put on clean clothes and “**walk about with their brothers**”.

Crucial clarification: “what I want should not be confused with total inactivity” — he wants **introspection**, not death or idleness. “**Life is what it is about.**”

The image of the Earth: just as the Earth seems dead in winter and later proves everything alive, this silence would be **regenerative**.

Themes: **introspection and self-examination** · **universal brotherhood and peace** · **anti-war** · **harmony with nature** ·

the danger of rushing, single-minded activity.

POETIC DEVICES Symbolism — the number

twelve; the Earth in winter as renewal.

Anaphora / Repetition — “let’s not...”

Metaphor — “wars with gas, wars with fire” for all human destruction.

Alliteration — “we would all be together in a sudden strangeness”

Free verse — no fixed rhyme scheme, matching the meditative tone.

THE MISREADING TO AVOID Neruda is **not**

asking for inaction or death. He explicitly says so. He is asking for a **pause from destructive, unexamined activity** so that humanity can reflect. If a question asks whether he preaches idleness, the answer is **no**, and you must quote that line.

3. A Thing of Beauty — John Keats

THE ESSENTIALS Source: the opening lines of

Keats’s long poem *Endymion: A Poetic Romance*.

The famous opening: “A thing of beauty is

a joy for ever: / Its loveliness increases; it will never / Pass into nothingness..."

What beauty does: it gives us a "bower quiet", sleep full of sweet dreams, health and quiet breathing. It removes the "pall from our dark spirits".

What causes suffering: "despondence", "inhuman dearth of noble natures", "gloomy days", "unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways".

Things of beauty listed: the sun, the moon, old and young trees that give shade to sheep, daffodils, clear rills (streams) that make a cooling covert, the musk-rose blooms in mid-forest, and "the grandeur of the dooms we have imagined for the mighty dead" (the noble stories of great people who have died).

The conclusion: beauty is an "endless fountain of immortal drink, pouring unto us from the heaven's brink".

Themes: beauty is permanent and life-sustaining · nature as a source of joy · art and beauty as an antidote to suffering.

POETIC DEVICES

Metaphor — “endless fountain of immortal drink”; “wreathing a flowery band”.

Imagery — sun, moon, trees, daffodils, rills, musk-rose.

Alliteration — “cooling covert”, “band to bind us”.

Inversion and rich **sensory** description throughout.

4. A Roadside Stand — Robert Frost

THE ESSENTIALS

Situation: a small shed — a roadside stand — put up by poor country people at the edge of the highway, selling wild berries and squash.

What they really want: not pity but “some city money” — a share in the prosperity that passes them by.

The city people's response: they either drive past without stopping, or complain that the artless signs “spoil the landscape”, or stop only to turn around, ask the price of a gallon of gas, and complain — and drive off.

The false promises: the “greedy good-

doers” and “beneficent beasts of prey” who promise to relocate and improve the villagers’ lives, but really **exploit them** and rob them of their independence — “enforcing benefits”.

The poet’s own feeling: he confesses to a wish to “**put these people out of their pain**” all at once, then immediately checks himself.

Themes: rural poverty and urban indifference · the **hollowness of political promises** · exploitation by so-called reformers · the widening rural-urban divide.

POETIC DEVICES

Oxymoron — “greedy good-doers”, “beneficent beasts of prey” (the two most-asked examples).

Metaphor — “the flower of cities”.

Irony — those who come to “help” are the ones who exploit.

Alliteration, imagery of the shed and the passing traffic.

5. Aunt Jennifer's Tigers — Adrienne Rich

THE ESSENTIALS

Situation: Aunt Jennifer embroiders tigers on a panel.

The tigers: “prance across a screen”, are “bright topaz denizens of a world of green”, they “do not fear the men beneath the tree”, and they pace in “sleek chivalric certainty”. They are fearless, confident and free — everything Aunt Jennifer is not.

Aunt Jennifer herself: her “fingers fluttering through her wool” find even the ivory needle hard to pull. “The massive weight of Uncle’s wedding band / Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer’s hand.”

The ending: when she dies, her “terrified hands” will still be “ringed with ordeals she was mastered by” — but the tigers will go on prancing, proud and unafraid.

Themes: patriarchal oppression within marriage · the constraints on women · art as an escape and a form of protest · art outlives the artist.

THE CENTRAL IRONY — always write this

The wedding band, a symbol of love, is described as a “massive weight” that oppresses. Aunt Jennifer remains trapped even in death — “ringed with ordeals” — yet the tigers she created are free and immortal. Her art achieves the freedom her life never could. That contrast is the poem.

POETIC DEVICES Symbolism — tigers =

strength and freedom; wedding band = the burden of marriage.

Metaphor — “massive weight of Uncle’s wedding band”.

Alliteration — “fingers fluttering”, “prancing, proud”.

Contrast — fearless tigers vs terrified aunt.

Structure — three neat quatrains with an aabb rhyme scheme; the orderly form contrasts with the disorder of her life.

6. Poetic Devices — the quick reference

Device	Definition	Example from these poems
--------	------------	--------------------------

Simile	Comparison using like or as	"ashen like that of a corpse"
Metaphor	Direct comparison, without like/as	"endless fountain of immortal drink"
Personification	Giving human qualities to non-human things	"young trees sprinting "
Alliteration	Same consonant sound repeated at word beginnings	" fingers fluttering "
Oxymoron	Two contradictory words together	" greedy good-doers "
Imagery	Language appealing to the senses	"merry children spilling out of their homes"
Symbolism	An object standing for a larger idea	Tigers = freedom; wedding band = oppression
Repetition	Deliberate repeating for effect	"smile and smile and smile"
Irony	The opposite of what is expected or meant	"beneficent beasts of prey"
Enjambment	A sentence running past the line break	Throughout <i>A Thing of Beauty</i>
Free verse	No regular rhyme or metre	<i>Keeping Quiet, My Mother at Sixty-Six</i>

7. Theme → Poem Lookup

for extract and value questions

If the question is about...	Use
Ageing, fear of losing a parent, hiding pain	My Mother at Sixty-Six

Peace, introspection, anti-war, brotherhood	Keeping Quiet
Nature, permanence of beauty, joy amid suffering	A Thing of Beauty
Rural poverty, urban indifference, false promises	A Roadside Stand
Women's oppression, marriage as burden, art immortal	Aunt Jennifer's Tigers
"Count to twelve"	Keeping Quiet
"Greedy good-doers" / oxymoron	A Roadside Stand
"Massive weight of Uncle's wedding band"	Aunt Jennifer's Tigers
"Pale as a late winter's moon"	My Mother at Sixty-Six
"A joy for ever" / "pall from our dark spirits"	A Thing of Beauty

MOST-ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **[6M]** Poetry extract — identify the poem and poet, explain the lines, name the poetic device, state the theme.
2. **[2M]** Why does the poet say "smile and smile and smile"?
3. **[2M]** What does Neruda mean by "count to twelve"?

4. [2M] What are the things of beauty mentioned by Keats?
5. [2M] Who are the “greedy good-doers”?
6. [5M] How do Aunt Jennifer’s tigers contrast with her own life?

THE HABIT THAT SCORES — The poetry extract is **6** marks of **1** each, and at least one will ask you to **name a poetic device**. Learn the eleven devices in Section 6 with **one example each from these five poems** — that single table answers most of the extract question without needing the poem in front of you.

Section C · Vistas — Supplementary Reader

CBSE Class 12 English Core (301) · Extract 4 +

Short answer 4 + Long answer 5 = 13 marks

· Ultimate Revision Sheet

60-SECOND RECALL — the six chapters

The Third Level	Jack Finney · Escapism · Charley, Grand Central Station, Galesburg 1894
The Tiger King	Kalki · Satire on power · Maharaja of Pratibandapuram, 100th tiger
Journey to the End of the Earth	Tishani Doshi · Climate change · Antarctica, Gondwana, Students on Ice
The Enemy	Pearl S. Buck · Humanity above nationalism · Dr Sadao, the American POW
On the Face of It	Susan Hill · Disability and acceptance · Derry, Mr Lamb
Memories of Childhood	Two autobiographies · Racial and caste oppression · Zitkala-Sa, Bama

1. The Third Level — Jack Finney

THE ESSENTIALS

Character: Charley, a 31-year-old New Yorker.

The premise: Grand Central Station has two levels, but Charley insists he found a third level — a doorway to Galesburg, Illinois, in 1894, a peaceful world with

“lawns and big old frame houses” where people had “time to sit and talk”.

The evidence: he tried to buy tickets with modern currency and was refused. He later withdrew **\$300** in old-style currency but could never find the third level again. His friend **Sam Weiner**, a psychiatrist, disappears — and Charley finds a **first-day cover** letter from Sam, postmarked **Galesburg, July 18, 1894**, urging him to keep looking.

The psychiatrist's explanation: it is a “waking-dream wish fulfilment” — Charley is unhappy, insecure and frightened by the modern world of “war and fear and worry”, so his mind invents an escape.

Themes: **escapism** · the appeal of a simpler past · the stress and insecurity of modern life · the blurred line between reality and imagination.

THE POINT TO MAKE

The third level is best read as a **metaphor for escapism**, not literal time travel. Charley's wife thinks he is imagining it; the psychiatrist calls it wish fulfilment. Sam's letter leaves it deliberately **ambiguous** — and that ambiguity is the story's point: everyone needs some refuge from modern anxiety.

2. The Tiger King — Kalki

THE ESSENTIALS

Character: the Maharaja of Pratibandapuram, called the **Tiger King**.

The prophecy: at ten days old, astrologers foretold that he would die — and the infant asked, “**Let the tigers beware!**” The chief astrologer said his death would come **from a tiger**, and specifically from the **hundredth** tiger.

His response: he bans tiger hunting by anyone else, kills tigers obsessively, **marries** into a royal family with a large tiger population to find more, and doubles the land tax on a village when a British officer is refused a hunt.

The irony of the ending: the hundredth

tiger is old and feeble; the Maharaja's shot **misses**, and a hunter kills it secretly so the king will not be displeased. Later, the king buys a **wooden tiger** for his son's birthday; a **sliver of wood** from it pierces his hand, the wound becomes infected, and **he dies** — killed, in effect, by the hundredth tiger after all.

Themes: satire on the arrogance of power · the futility of trying to escape destiny · the whims of autocratic rulers · **cruelty to animals** and thoughtless hunting.

THE SATIRE TO NAME Kalki mocks the **vanity and absurdity of autocratic rule**: a king who taxes a village out of spite, marries for hunting grounds, and whose courtiers lie to protect his ego. The **wooden tiger** is the final joke — all his power could not prevent the one death he feared, and it came from a toy.

3. Journey to the End of the Earth — Tishani Doshi

THE ESSENTIALS **The journey:** the author travels to **Antarctica** aboard the Russian

research vessel **Akademik Shokalskiy** — 100 hours of travel across **nine time zones, six checkpoints, three bodies of water and at least three ecosystems.**

Gondwana: 650 million years ago, Antarctica was part of the giant southern supercontinent **Gondwana**, which was warm and richly vegetated. It broke up after the dinosaurs died out and the mammals emerged, shaping the world we know.

Why Antarctica matters: it holds **90% of the world's ice** and half a million-year-old **carbon records trapped in its ice cores.** It has no human history and a **simple ecosystem**, which makes the effects of change visible quickly.

The warning: small changes in the ecosystem have **big consequences** — if **phytoplankton**, the microscopic grasses of the sea, decline from a depleted ozone layer, the entire **marine food chain** is affected.

Students on Ice: a programme led by **Geoff Green** taking high-school students to the poles, because they are the **future**

policymakers and are given a chance to understand and respect the planet at a formative age.

Themes: climate change and global warming · human impact on the environment · the interconnectedness of ecosystems · the value of experiential education.

THE LINE TO QUOTE “Take care of the small things and the big things will fall into place.” The phytoplankton example is the concrete proof of it — the smallest organism supports the entire southern ocean food web.

4. The Enemy — Pearl S. Buck

THE ESSENTIALS **Setting:** Japan during the Second World War.

Characters: Dr Sadao Hoki, a renowned Japanese surgeon trained in America; his wife Hana; the wounded **American prisoner of war**, Tom; the servants; and the **General**.

The dilemma: a wounded American soldier washes up on the shore outside their

house. As a Japanese in wartime, Sadao should hand him over; as a **doctor**, he cannot let a man die. The servants leave in protest. He operates and saves him.

Why Sadao was not arrested: he was **indispensable** — he was perfecting a discovery that would make wounds entirely clean, and the **General needed him** for his own operation.

The resolution: the General promises to send **private assassins**, who never come (the General simply forgets, being ill).

Sadao finally helps the prisoner **escape** to a nearby island with food, clothing and a flashlight signal arrangement.

The closing reflection: Sadao wonders why he could not kill the man, and remembers the white faces he has disliked — yet he saved this one.

Themes: **humanity above nationalism** · the conflict between **professional duty and patriotism** · racial prejudice · compassion transcending enmity.

THE ARGUMENT TO MAKE Sadao's decision is

driven by his **ethics as a doctor**, not by love for the enemy — he admits he dislikes Americans. That makes the story stronger: it argues that **professional and human duty can override national hatred** even in someone who is not free of prejudice.

5. On the Face of It — Susan Hill

THE ESSENTIALS — note: this is a PLAY

Characters: Derry, a 14-year-old boy whose face is **burned by acid** on one side; **Mr Lamb**, an old man with a **tin leg** lost in the war, whom local children call “Lamey-Lamb”.

The meeting: Derry climbs into Mr Lamb's garden believing it is empty. Mr Lamb keeps his **gate always open** and welcomes everyone.

The contrast: Derry is **bitter, withdrawn and self-pitying** — he has absorbed others' stares and cruel remarks. Mr Lamb has the **same kind of affliction** but is **cheerful, sociable and life-affirming**: “It's

all relative. Beauty and the beast.” He grows weeds because “a flower is a flower”.

The change: Mr Lamb makes Derry see that what matters is **what he thinks and feels and does**, not his face. Derry runs home, defies his mother, and returns — only to find **Mr Lamb has fallen from a ladder and died**.

Themes: **physical disability and social prejudice** · the difference between a physical and a **psychological** handicap · loneliness · the healing power of **acceptance and friendship**.

THE CENTRAL COMPARISON Both have a disability; only **Derry** is handicapped by it. Mr Lamb's wound is **physical**; Derry's is **psychological**, created by other people's reactions. The tragedy of the ending is that Derry gains the courage to live just as the man who gave it to him dies — but the change in Derry is real and survives Mr Lamb.

6. Memories of Childhood — two autobiographical accounts

PART 1 — The Cutting of My Long Hair · Zitkala-Sa

Author: Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin), a Native American writer and activist.

The account: her first day at the **Carlisle Indian School**. Everything is alien — the “loud metallic” bell, the “annoying clatter”, the shingled hair and closely clinging dresses of the girls, being marched in a line, eating to the sound of a bell.

The hair: among her people, **shingled hair was worn by cowards and mourners**; unskilled warriors had their hair shingled by the enemy. She hides under a bed and resists, but is **dragged out, tied to a chair, and her long hair is cut**. “I lost my spirit.”

Theme: the forced erasure of cultural identity — racial and cultural oppression through institutional assimilation.

PART 2 — We Too are Human Beings · Bama

Author: Bama, a Tamil Dalit writer, from her autobiography *Karukku*.

The account: as a child of about eight,

walking home from school, she sees an elder of her community carrying a packet of **vadai** by its **string**, holding it out so as not to touch it, and handing it to the landlord. She finds it **funny** at first.

The explanation: her elder brother **Annan** explains it is not funny but **humiliating** — people of their caste are considered **untouchable**, so the food must not be contaminated by their touch.

The advice: “Because we are born into this community, we are never given any honour or dignity or respect. **We are stripped of all that. But if we study and make progress, we can throw away these indignities.**”

The result: Bama studied hard and **stood first** in her class, and made friends.

Theme: caste discrimination and untouchability · education as the path to dignity and social change.

WHAT LINKS THE TWO ACCOUNTS

Both are *first-person childhood memories of oppression* — one racial and cultural (Native American), one *caste-based* (Dalit). Both children are *humiliated* by a system they do not yet fully understand, and both grew up to become *writers who fought it*. The comparison question asks for exactly this parallel.

7. Theme → Chapter Lookup

for value-based and long answers

If the question is about...	Use
Escapism, modern stress, longing for a simpler past	The Third Level
Abuse of power, vanity of rulers, fate, cruelty to animals	The Tiger King
Climate change, environment, ecosystems, education	Journey to the End of the Earth
Humanity vs nationalism, professional ethics, prejudice	The Enemy
Disability, prejudice, loneliness, friendship, acceptance	On the Face of It
Caste, untouchability, education as liberation	Memories — Bama

Racial oppression, loss of cultural identity	Memories — Zitkala-Sa
Compassion overcoming hatred	The Enemy
"It's all relative. Beauty and the beast."	On the Face of It (Mr Lamb)
Phytoplankton / Gondwana / Students on Ice	Journey to the End of the Earth
The wooden tiger / the hundredth tiger	The Tiger King
Galesburg 1894 / first-day cover	The Third Level

MOST-ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **[5M]** "The Enemy" — did Dr Sadao do the right thing? Justify with reference to the text.
2. **[5M]** "On the Face of It" — how does Mr Lamb change Derry's outlook?
3. **[5M]** "The Tiger King" — how does the story satirise those in power?
4. **[5M]** Compare the experiences of Zitkala-Sa and Bama as children.
5. **[2M]** What is the third level, and why does Charley seek it?
6. **[2M]** Why is Antarctica the place to go to understand the earth's past and

future?

7. [2M] Why did the servants leave Dr Sadao's house?

THE HABIT THAT SCORES — Vistas long answers ask for **extrapolation** — the value or message, not the plot.

Structure every 5-marker as: **one-line context** → **three points with a textual detail each** → **a closing line on what it shows about people or society**. A retelling of the story, however accurate, will not reach full marks.