

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.