

English



Flamingo Chapter-7 The Interview – Christopher Silvester

1. About the Author – Christopher Silvester

- **Christopher Silvester** (1959–) was a British **journalist, editor, and historian**.
- He studied at **Peterhouse, Cambridge**.
- Worked as a reporter for **Private Eye** magazine for about 10 years.
- He edited the famous book **The Penguin Book of Interviews**.
- The chapter **“The Interview”** is an **excerpt from the introduction** of this book.
- In this piece, he discusses the **origin, importance, controversy, and power of interviews in journalism**.

2. Introduction to the Chapter

The chapter **“The Interview”** explores the **history, purpose, and criticism of interviews**. Interviews have existed for **over 130 years** and have become one of the most common forms of journalism.

Through interviews, people learn about **famous personalities, leaders, artists, and thinkers**. However, many writers and celebrities feel that interviews **invade privacy and misrepresent their thoughts**.

The chapter is divided into **two parts**:

Part I

Discussion about the **history and nature of interviews**.

Part II

An interview with Italian writer and professor **Umberto Eco**.

3. Detailed Summary

Part I – Interview as a Medium

Origin and Importance

The interview became popular **about 130 years ago** and soon turned into a **major tool of journalism**. Through interviews, readers get direct information about **famous personalities and their ideas**.

Many people consider interviews:

- a **source of truth**
- a **form of art**
- a **powerful medium of communication**

According to **Denis Brian**, most of our impressions about public figures are formed through interviews. Therefore, the **interviewer holds great power** in shaping public opinion.

Negative Views on Interviews

Despite their importance, many writers and celebrities **strongly dislike interviews**.

1. Interview as Intrusion

Many people believe interviews are an **invasion of privacy**. They feel that personal thoughts are exposed unnecessarily.

2. Primitive Belief

Some writers compare interviews to a **primitive belief** where people think that taking a photograph steals a part of their soul. Similarly, they feel interviews take away a **part of their identity**.

Writers Who Hated Interviews

Several famous writers openly criticized interviews.

V. S. Naipaul

- Believed interviews can **hurt people emotionally**.
- According to him, people may **lose a part of themselves** during interviews.

Lewis Carroll

- The author of **Alice's Adventures in Wonderland**.
- He had a **“horror of interviews.”**
- He refused to give interviews because he disliked public attention.

Rudyard Kipling

- Called interviews **immoral and a crime**.
- Compared them to **assault on privacy**.
- Interestingly, he himself once interviewed **Mark Twain**, which shows the **contradiction in his views**.

H. G. Wells

- Described interviews as an **ordeal** (a painful experience).
- Yet he also participated in interviews.

Saul Bellow

- Said interviews felt like **“thumbprints on his windpipe.”**
- This metaphor suggests **pressure, suffocation, and discomfort**.

Positive Views on Interviews

Despite criticism, interviews continue to play a **crucial role in modern media**.

Supporters believe interviews:

- reveal the **true personality of famous people**
- allow the public to **understand important ideas**
- create a **direct connection between public figures and society**

Thus, interviews have become an **essential tool of journalism and communication**.

Part II – Interview with Umberto Eco

The second part of the chapter presents an interview with **Umberto Eco**.

About Umberto Eco

- Italian **novelist, philosopher, and professor**.
- Taught at the **University of Bologna**.
- Expert in **Semiotics** (study of signs and symbols).
- Wrote **over 40 scholarly books**.
- Famous novel: **The Name of the Rose**, which sold **millions of copies worldwide**.

Eco's Personality and Working Style

“I am a Professor Who Writes Novels on Sundays”

Eco humorously described himself as:

“A professor who writes novels on Sundays.”

This shows that he considered his **academic work more important** than his novels.

Secret of His Productivity – Interstices

Eco explained that he uses “**interstices**” to write.

Interstices means small empty spaces in time, such as:

- waiting for someone
- travelling
- free moments between work

He uses these moments to **read, write, and think**.

This shows his **excellent time management skills**.

Style of Academic Writing

Eco did not follow the **traditional dry academic style**.

Instead, he:

- wrote **research in narrative form**
- included **stories and personal ideas**
- made academic writing **interesting and engaging**

Why He Started Writing Novels Late

Eco began writing novels **around the age of 50**.

He said it happened **accidentally**.

One day he had the idea of writing a story and started experimenting.

Success of *The Name of the Rose*

The novel **The Name of the Rose** combines:

- **detective fiction**
- **philosophy**
- **theology**
- **history**

Publishers initially believed the book would **not sell much**, but it became a **global bestseller**.

Eco himself said the success of a book is often a **mystery**.

4. Themes

1. Ethics of Journalism

The chapter raises the question of **whether interviews respect or violate personal privacy**.

2. Power of Media

Interviews influence **public opinion and perception of famous personalities**.

3. Privacy vs Public Curiosity

Celebrities struggle to balance **personal privacy and public interest**.

4. Intellectual Identity

The interview with Umberto Eco highlights the life of an **intellectual who balances academic work and creative writing**.

5. Communication and Culture

Interviews have become a **significant cultural practice in modern society**.

5. Literary Devices

Device	Example	Effect
Allusion	References to Carroll, Kipling, Naipaul	Adds credibility
Irony	Kipling criticizing interviews but giving one	Highlights contradiction
Analogy	“Thumbprints on the windpipe”	Shows suffocation
Contrast	Positive vs negative views	Shows different perspectives
Historical Reference	“130 years ago”	Shows evolution

6. Title Justification

The title “**The Interview**” is appropriate because the chapter completely revolves around the **concept, significance, and controversies of interviews**.

It explains:

- the **history of interviews**
- the **different opinions about them**
- their **role in modern journalism**
- and provides a **real example through the interview with Umberto Eco**.

Thus, the title perfectly reflects the **central focus of the chapter**.

7. Central Idea

The chapter explains that the **interview is a powerful yet controversial form of journalism**.

While some people believe interviews are **important for communication and understanding public figures**, others consider them **intrusive and uncomfortable**.

Through the example of **Umberto Eco**, the chapter also highlights how interviews help readers understand the **personality, thoughts, and creative process of intellectual figures**.

Important Word Meanings

Word	Meaning
Intrusion	Unwanted interference
Ordeal	Difficult or painful experience
Interstices	Small empty spaces in time
Lionized	Treated like a celebrity

Word	Meaning
Supremely serviceable	Extremely useful

Important 1 Mark Questions

Q1. Who is the author of “The Interview”?

Christopher Silvester.

Q2. What does Umberto Eco mean by “interstices”?

Small empty spaces of time used productively.

Q3. Who described interviews as “thumbprints on the windpipe”?

Saul Bellow.

Q4. Which famous novel was written by Umberto Eco?

The Name of the Rose.

Q5. Which author had a “horror of interviews”?

Lewis Carroll.

Important 3 Mark Questions

Q1. Why do some writers dislike interviews?

Some writers believe interviews invade their privacy.

Lewis Carroll disliked publicity and avoided interviews.

Rudyard Kipling called interviews immoral.

Others like Saul Bellow felt they created pressure and discomfort.

Q2. What does Denis Brian say about interviews?

According to Denis Brian, interviews are a **major source of information about famous people**.

They help shape public perception and therefore the interviewer has **great influence and power**.

Q3. How does Umberto Eco manage to write so much?

Eco uses **interstices**, which are small free moments during the day.

He writes while waiting, travelling, or during short breaks.

This efficient use of time helps him produce a large amount of work.

Important 5 Mark Questions

Q1. Discuss the significance of interviews as presented in the chapter.

Interviews are an important form of journalism that help people learn about public figures and their ideas. According to Christopher Silvester, interviews have existed for over 130 years and have become a powerful communication tool.

However, many writers criticize interviews. Rudyard Kipling considered them immoral, while Lewis Carroll avoided them due to dislike of publicity. Despite criticism, interviews remain influential because they shape public perception and allow readers to understand famous personalities better.

Q2. Describe Umberto Eco's personality and working style.

Umberto Eco was a scholar, professor, and novelist. He worked at the **University of Bologna** and was an expert in **semiotics**.

Eco described himself as “**a professor who writes novels on Sundays.**”

He believed in using **interstices**, meaning small free moments of time, to write and work.

His academic writing style was different because he mixed research with storytelling. His novel **The Name of the Rose** became a worldwide success.

Extract-Based Questions (Very Important for Boards)

Extract 1

“Some might consider the interview as a source of truth, and others as an art.”

Questions

1. Who wrote this chapter?
Christopher Silvester.
2. What are two views about interviews?
Some see them as a source of truth while others see them as an art form.
3. Why are interviews important?
They provide insights into famous personalities and their thoughts.

Extract 2

“I am a professor who writes novels on Sundays.”

Questions

1. Who said this?
Umberto Eco.
2. What does this statement mean?
Eco considered himself primarily an academic scholar rather than a novelist.
3. Name Eco's famous novel.
The Name of the Rose.

Title Justification

The title “**The Interview**” is appropriate because the chapter focuses on the **origin, significance, and controversy of interviews**. It discusses both positive and negative opinions about interviews and also

presents a real example through the interview with **Umberto Eco**. Therefore, the title accurately reflects the theme of the chapter.

One-Page Quick Revision Notes

About the Author

- Christopher Silvester is a British journalist and historian.
- Editor of the book **The Penguin Book of Interviews**.
- This chapter is taken from the introduction of that book.

Main Idea of the Chapter

The chapter discusses the **history, significance, and controversy of interviews**.

Some people consider interviews a **valuable journalistic tool**, while others see them as **intrusive and disrespectful to privacy**.

Part I – Interview as a Medium

- Interviews became popular about **130 years ago**.
- They are now a **common form of journalism**.
- Through interviews, the public learns about **celebrities, leaders, and intellectuals**.

Positive View

- Interviews help people understand famous personalities.
- According to Denis Brian, most of our impressions of people come from interviews.

Negative View

Many writers disliked interviews because they felt they invade privacy.

Examples:

- V. S. Naipaul
Interviews emotionally hurt people.
- Lewis Carroll
Refused interviews because he disliked publicity.
- Rudyard Kipling
Called interviews immoral and compared them to crime.
- H. G. Wells
Said interviews were an ordeal.
- Saul Bellow
Described interviews as **“thumbprints on his windpipe.”**

Despite criticism, interviews remain **an important medium of communication**.

Part II – Interview with Umberto Eco

About Eco:

- Italian novelist and professor.
- Taught at **University of Bologna**.
- Expert in **Semiotics** (study of signs).
- Famous novel: **The Name of the Rose**.

Key Points from the Interview:

1. Eco's Identity

- He calls himself **“a professor who writes novels on Sundays.”**

2. Secret of His Productivity

- Uses **interstices** (small free moments) to work.

3. Writing Style

- Combines research with storytelling.

4. Late Start as a Novelist

- Started writing novels at **age 50**.

5. Success of The Name of the Rose

- Detective story mixed with philosophy and history.
- Became a **global bestseller**.

Important Themes

1. Ethics of Journalism

The chapter raises questions about whether interviews **respect or violate privacy**.

2. Power of Media

Interviews influence **public opinion and perception**.

3. Privacy vs Public Interest

Celebrities often struggle between **personal life and public curiosity**.

4. Intellectual Life

The interview with Eco shows the **balance between academic research and creativity**.