

English Notes



Vistas Chapter-6

On the Face of It

Author: Susan Hill

Introduction

The play **On the Face of It** presents the sad yet meaningful world of physically disabled people. It shows that **physical disability itself is not the biggest problem**, but the **cruel attitude and behaviour of society** towards disabled people causes more pain.

The story revolves around two physically impaired characters — **Mr. Lamb**, who has a tin leg, and **Derry**, a boy with a burnt face. Through their conversation, the play conveys a powerful message about **acceptance, positivity, and the value of life**.

Characters

Derry

- A fourteen-year-old boy.
- His face is badly burnt by acid.
- Shy, withdrawn, and full of bitterness.
- Believes people are afraid of him and dislike his appearance.
- Thinks even his mother kisses him only on the unburnt side of his face.

Mr. Lamb

- An old man with a **tin leg**.
- Kind, cheerful, and optimistic.
- Lives alone in a house with a beautiful garden.
- Believes in **accepting life positively** and loving all living beings.

Detailed Summary

The play begins when **Derry**, a fourteen-year-old boy with a burnt face, enters a garden thinking that it is empty. The garden belongs to **Mr. Lamb**, an old man who lives there alone and is collecting apples.

Derry feels embarrassed when he realizes that the garden is not empty and wants to leave immediately. However, Mr. Lamb stops him and kindly tells him that **the garden gate is always open for everyone**.

Derry is very unhappy with his life because people treat him differently due to his burnt face. He believes that everyone is afraid of him and dislikes his appearance. He even feels that his mother loves him only out of sympathy.

Mr. Lamb, however, has a very positive attitude towards life. He tells Derry that he also has a disability — a **tin leg**, which he lost in a war. Despite this, he lives happily and does not allow his disability to control his life.

Mr. Lamb explains that **nothing in the world is useless**. Even weeds and insects like bees have their own importance. He advises Derry not to judge life only by appearance and not to worry about what people say.

He tells Derry that **hatred and bitterness destroy a person from within**, just like acid destroys the skin.

To explain his point, Mr. Lamb narrates the story of a man who was so afraid of danger that he locked himself inside his house all the time. Ironically, one day a picture fell from the wall and killed him. This shows that **fear cannot protect us from life**.

Slowly, Derry begins to change his attitude. He starts enjoying Mr. Lamb's conversation and feels hopeful for the first time in his life. He promises to return and help Mr. Lamb in his garden.

Derry goes home to inform his mother that he will be late. However, his mother stops him and does not want him to go back to the garden. Derry insists that he must return because **if he does not go now, he will never go again**.

When Derry finally returns to the garden, he finds **Mr. Lamb lying dead on the ground** after falling from a ladder while picking apples.

The ending is tragic and ironic. Just when Derry begins to find **hope and happiness in life**, the person who helped him discover it is gone.

Themes

1. Loneliness and Isolation

Both Derry and Mr. Lamb live lonely lives because of their physical disabilities.

2. Society's Attitude Toward Disability

The play shows how society often **judges people by their appearance**.

3. Positive Thinking

Mr. Lamb teaches that **life should be accepted with courage and optimism**.

4. Importance of Friendship

The friendship between Derry and Mr. Lamb gives Derry **confidence and hope**.

Message of the Play

The play teaches that **physical disability does not make a person inferior**. What truly hurts disabled people is **society's negative attitude and lack of understanding**.

It also shows that **life should be lived with courage, positivity, and acceptance**.

Important Symbols

The Garden

- Represents freedom, openness, and acceptance.
- The open gate symbolizes Mr. Lamb's welcoming nature.

Bees and Weeds

- Symbolize that **everything in nature has value**.

Conclusion

The play **On the Face of It** beautifully highlights the emotional struggles of physically disabled people. It shows their loneliness, alienation, and the cruel behaviour they face from society.

At the same time, through Mr. Lamb's character, the play encourages people to **live life positively and accept themselves as they are**.

Short Summary (80–100 words)

The play **On the Face of It** tells the story of a fourteen-year-old boy, Derry, whose face is badly burnt by acid. Because of his appearance, he feels lonely and believes people hate him. One day he enters the garden of Mr. Lamb, an old man with a tin leg. Mr. Lamb talks kindly to him and teaches him to look at life positively. He tells Derry that everyone and everything has value in the world. Derry becomes inspired and promises to return. However, when he comes back, he finds Mr. Lamb dead, which creates a tragic ending.

Characters

Derry

- Fourteen-year-old boy with a burnt face
- Feels lonely and insecure
- Believes people dislike him
- Gradually develops confidence after meeting Mr. Lamb

Mr. Lamb

- Old man with a tin leg
- Kind, cheerful and optimistic
- Lives alone but loves life
- Encourages Derry to think positively

Important Themes

1. Loneliness and Isolation

Both Derry and Mr. Lamb live lonely lives due to their disabilities.

2. Society's Attitude

The play shows how society judges people based on their **appearance**.

3. Positive Thinking

Mr. Lamb teaches that life should be lived with **hope and courage**.

4. Self-Acceptance

People should accept themselves instead of feeling inferior.

Important Symbols

The Garden

- Represents openness, freedom and acceptance.

Open Gate

- Symbolizes that everyone is welcome.

Bees and Weeds

- Show that everything in nature has value.

Message of the Play

The play teaches that **physical disability does not make a person weak or inferior**. What hurts disabled people the most is the **negative attitude of society**. Positive thinking and self-acceptance can change life.

Most Important Exam Questions

1. Why does Derry feel lonely and unhappy?

Derry's face is badly burnt by acid. Because of this, people stare at him and treat him differently. He believes that everyone dislikes him and feels that even his mother loves him only out of sympathy. This makes him lonely, bitter and unhappy.

2. How does Mr. Lamb change Derry's attitude toward life?

Mr. Lamb talks kindly to Derry and encourages him to think positively. He tells him that everything in nature has value and that people should not judge themselves based on appearance. His advice helps Derry overcome his fear and bitterness.

3. What lesson does Mr. Lamb teach through the story of the man who feared everything?

Mr. Lamb tells the story of a man who stayed inside his room all the time because he feared accidents. Ironically, a picture fell from the wall and killed him. The lesson is that **fear cannot protect us from life** and we should live life courageously.

4. Why is the ending of the play tragic?

The ending is tragic because when Derry finally gains hope and confidence, he returns to the garden only to find Mr. Lamb dead after falling from a ladder. The person who inspired him to live positively is no longer there.

5-Mark Question (Very Important)

How does Mr. Lamb inspire Derry to overcome his fear and loneliness?

Derry feels lonely and bitter because his face is badly burnt and people treat him differently. When he meets Mr. Lamb, he finds someone who understands his pain. Mr. Lamb tells him that physical disability should not stop a person from living happily. He explains that everything in the world has value and encourages Derry to stop worrying about what others say. Through his positive attitude and friendly behaviour, Mr. Lamb helps Derry gain confidence and hope. As a result, Derry decides to change his outlook towards life.