

## UNIT TEN: HUMOR AND SATIRE

### King John and the Abbot of Canterbury

*Anonymous, England (before 1695)*

“King John and the Abbot of Canterbury” is a poetic prose written by an English poet but unfortunately the poet is anonymous. The poem is about the importance of using knowledge practically. “Practical knowledge is better than the bookish knowledge” is the central idea of the poem. For example, the Abbot, an educated person, visited Oxford and Cambridge Universities but couldn’t find the answer but a simple shepherd answered the questions of the king using his practical knowledge.

King John, who had led over England, did great wrong and maintained little right. But the Abbot of the Canterbury was able to maintain his high renowned (popularity). So, King was jealous to the Abbot of the Canterbury. Abbot had kept hundreds of housekeepers in his house and his popularity was increasing day by day. King wanted to kill the priest to increase his own popularity. So, the King called the Abbot in the palace and asked three nonsense questions, “What is the King’s value?”, “How fast can he travel the whole world?” and “What is he thinking now?” The King warned the Abbot that if he was unable to answer the questions in the given time, he would be beheaded. To find the answers of the questions, the Abbot visited the Oxford and Cambridge Universities and met the learned men but no one could answer the questions, which made him hopeless. When he was returning back to home, he met a shepherd who asked him about the cause of sadness whom the Abbot told the reality. Then the shepherd assured the Abbot that he would answer the questions going in the disguise form of the Abbot. The shepherd went to the palace and answered the questions: “His value was 29 pence because Christ was measured 30.”, “If he travelled with the rise of the sun to the setting sun, he could travel the whole world within 24 hours.” and “The king was thinking that he was the real Abbot of Canterbury but was actually a poor shepherd.” respectively. The King was satisfied with the answers of the shepherd and proposed him to be the real Abbot of the Canterbury but the shepherd rejected the proposal of the King that he was an uneducated person and couldn’t handle the responsibility.

Hence, the poem is about the importance of practical knowledge to overcome from the problems in the life.



### **Third Thoughts**

*E. V. Lucas, England (1868-1938)*

The story “Third Thoughts” is written by an English writer, E.V. Lucas. This story is trying to state that business is a kind of gambling having both possibilities of winning and losing. The story shows that “The relationship between customer and seller is never good though they try to maintain harmonious relationship laughing each other because the seller tries to sell the things as expensive as s/he can and the customer tries to buy the things as cheap as s/he can” is the main idea of the story. This story was told to the writer by his friend who was always failure in his business. In order to be popular in the locality, the writer’s friend used to buy the thing in expensive price and sell in cheaper price than he bought. So, he wasn’t able to sustain his business. According to the writer’s friend, he visited a curiosity shop once and bought a painting thinking that it was painted by a well-known English painter, Turner. If it was the original one, it would cost much more price than he bought. Fortunately, it was the original that he sold to one of his customer and got forty-nine pounds and ten shillings profit. Then, he became happy with the profit.

After the profit, he came to his house and slept. But suddenly awoke at 3:30 and started thinking about profit sharing. But later, he thought he shouldn’t be idealist. He changed his ideas of sharing half profit and came to ten, later five pounds. At last in the morning, he thought that five pounds were also enough and he thought that if he spent that money, the Goddess of the wealth would be angry. Ultimately, he decided to share only one pound and kept into an envelope. Then, he went to the club for breakfast where he joined a group who were playing a kind of game called ‘Bridge’. He lost the entire money even one pound that was separated to give to the shopkeeper. At last, he concluded that “Business is a straight forward matter between dealer and customer and there’s no sense of profit sharing.”

## **The Clock Tower**

*Bhupi Sherchan (1936-1989)*

The poem “The Clock Tower” is written by a Nepalese poet, Bhupi Sherchan. In the poem, the poet captures the image of a retired pensioner who passes his days without worry and anxiety. The description of the clock tower and characterization of senior pensioner seems to merge into the fabric of the poem. The poem realistically shows the images of an old veteran.

The pensioner is not happy with the present state of life and is compelled to pass his long sad days of old age. His military clothes have been gone, some are torn and some are eaten by rats, and some distributed to the relatives. By using simile, the poet compares the life of an aged retired person with the clock tower. The words like gnawed by rats, old, gone, hanging, sad days of old age etc. express the poet’s sympathy and these words denote the slow arrival of death. Both clock tower and senior veteran is the victim of time. They are degrading due to the pace of the time.

Hence, the poem is about the change that can be seen with the change in time.

Four levels of the poem The Clock Tower:

### **1. Literal Comprehension**

The poem “The Clock Tower” is written by a Nepalese poet, Bhupi Sherchan. The pensioner is not happy with the present state of life and is compelled to pass his long sad days of old age. His military clothes have been gone, some are torn and some are eaten by rats, and some distributed to the relatives. By using simile, the poet compares the life of an aged retired person with the clock tower. The words like gnawed by rats, old, gone, hanging, sad days of old age etc. express the poet’s sympathy and these words denote the slow arrival of death. Both clock tower and senior veteran is the victim of time. They are degrading due to the pace of the time.

### **2. Interpretation**

In the poem, the poet captures the image of a retired pensioner who passes his days without worry and anxiety. The description of the clock tower and characterization

of senior pensioner seems to merge into the fabric of the poem. The poem realistically shows the images of an old veteran.

### **3. Critical Thinking**

The poem is about the importance of time that changes everything. Time is ever powerful and no one can defeat it but some of the ideas in the poem don't seem convincing. In the poem, it is said that the clothes of the veteran are eaten by rats. Can't a retired person manage his belongings? Doesn't the poem overvalue the time as we all know that time doesn't wait? Anyway, the poem is a symbolic poem that tries to justify the power of time.

### **4. Assimilation**

After reading this poem, I really understood the power of time that wait for no one. What I equally understood is after birth, time leads us to death. I believe that our life is considered by time. So, "*everything should be done in time wisely*" is my perceived idea from the poem.