



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR

Class: XII	Department: ENGLISH	2026 – 2027
Question Bank	Topic: THE THIRD LEVEL – JACK FINNY	Note:

The Third Level - JACK FINNY

SUMMARY-

Grand Central Station of New York has two levels. But Charley, a thirty-one year old dweller of the city, talks about there being three. Not only does he believe in the existence of this hypothetical third level but also claims to have been there.

A visit to his psychiatrist friend

Charley visits a psychiatrist friend to talk about this problem. The psychiatrist calls it a “waking-dream wish fulfilment” and rationalises Charley's psychology by saying that the “modern world is full of insecurity, fear, worry, and war...” and everybody wants to escape to some “temporary refuge from reality.” According to him, even hobbies like stamp collection is a manifestation of this escape.

Charley loses his way at Grand Central

The fast growing Grand Central station at times seems to be a maze to Charley. He had lost his way a couple of times earlier too while taking the subway. Once, he entered the lobby of the Roosevelt Hotel while the other time he emerged at an office building that was three blocks away. But this time when he loses his way, something unique happens. He visits the third level!

The Third Level

Charley keeps walking in the quiet corridor, angling left and slanting downward, till he reaches an architecturally old station that is completely different from the two familiar levels. The antiquated small room with fewer ticket counters and train gates, a wooden information booth, flickering open flame gas lights and brass spittoons reminds him of the architecture of the 1800s. He also finds that people are dressed in outmoded outfits. He notices that the date on the newspaper The World is printed June 11, 1894. As he tenders money to the clerk at the counter to buy two tickets, he realises that he need to have old currency bills to do so.

Charley's plan for a journey not realised

He had always wanted to travel to Galesburg with his wife, Louisa. In his mind, it is “a wonderful town still, with big old frame houses, huge lawns, and tremendous trees...” It is a place with long and pleasant summer evenings and where people have ample of time. So, the

next day during lunch, he exchanges three hundred dollars for old style bills amounting to some two hundred only. The loss doesn't bother him much as he believes that in Galesburg everything will be cheaper and that he can manage even with a small amount. But, he could never again find the corridor leading to the third level.

Sam goes missing!

His wife Louisa is worried after knowing all this and asks him not to look for the third level any further. Suddenly Charley realises that his friend, Sam Weiner, is nowhere to be found, so he and his wife keep looking for him in the weekends. Sam was the one with whom Charley used to share his ideas about Galesburg.

Philately & the first day covers

Philately is not just stamp collection but a broad term including the study of stamps, postal history and other related items. When a new stamp is issued, on the first day, people mail a blank paper to themselves and then retain that unopened letter with the date on the postmark. Charley has inherited the hobby and the collection from his grandfather.

A letter from Sam

One day while fidgeting with his stamp collection, Charley comes across a letter that was not there earlier. It bears the postmark on a faded six-cent stamp with a picture of the President Garfield. The envelope was sent on July 18, 1894 to Charley's grandfather in Galesburg and is addressed to Charley. The letter reads that Sam has reached Galesburg and is having whale of a time there. He also invites Charley and Louisa to Galesburg. When Charley goes to the stamp and coin store, he is apprised of Sam's exchanging eight hundred dollars for the old currency bills to establish his business of hay feed and grain in Galesburg. The letter was written by Sam Weiner, who was Charley's psychiatrist!

COMPETENCY BASED QS/ TRC

1. Read the given extract and answer the questions given.

Yes, I've taken the obvious step: I talked to a psychiatrist friend of mine, among others. I told him about the third level at Grand Central Station, and he said it was a waking-dream wish fulfilment. He said I was unhappy. That made my wife kind of mad, but he explained that he meant the modern world is full of insecurity, fear, war, worry and all the rest of it, and that I just want to escape. Well, who doesn't? Everybody I know wants to escape, but they don't wander down into any third level at Grand Central Station.

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i Complete the given sentence appropriately. Unlike the two levels that have 'a stack of timetables' to prove their existence, the third level has _____.

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.....
ii *Yes, I've taken the obvious step.*

What is the narrator assuming that the reader is thinking when he says the above line?

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iii Which of these is an example of 'a waking-dream wish fulfilment' as described in the extract?

- A. Meenal loses her book and swears that it is her enemy who stole it.
- B. Milind claims that he was petting his beloved dog whom he lost a few years ago.
- C. Malini tells everyone that she saw a Cheetah though she herself knows it is a lie.
- D. Mrinal thinks that he saw a spaceship in the sky which later turned out to be a normal aircraft.

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iv Based on the extract, what does the narrator think about the psychiatrist's opinion?

2. Assertion- Charlie wandered to the third level of the Grand Central Station..

Reason - He wanted to see a new level.

- a. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A
- b. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A
- c. A is true but R is false
- d. A is false but R is true

3. Assertion- The psychiatrist said Charlie was unhappy

Reason- His wife was mad when she heard this.

- a. Both A and R are true and R is the correct explanation of A
- b. Both A and R are true but R is not the correct explanation of A
- c. A is true but R is false
- d. A is false but R is true

Question and Answers

1. What does the third level refer to?

A. Third level refers to an additional floor at the Grand Central Station which originally only had two levels. Charley was hallucinating one night while going home when he reached the third level.

2. Why would Charley ever go back to the ticket-counter on the third level to buy tickets to Galesburg for himself and his wife?

A. Charley went looking back for the third level that could take him and his wife to Galesburg because he wanted to go back to his past. He wanted to go back to the world that has not seen two of its deadliest wars that changed everything.

Read with insight

1. Do you think that the third level was a medium of escape for Charley? Why?

A. Yes, the third level of the Grand Central Station was a medium of escape for Charley. Modern world offers a lot of challenges and in order to take refuge from reality, one might resort to day-dreaming or hallucination. We all understand the miseries of the modern world which is full of worry and pressure, thus, in order to take the burden away from his shoulders and heave a sigh of relief, Charley resorted to escaping reality, although unintentionally.

2. What do you infer from Sam's letter to Charley?

A. The way Charley discovered Sam's letter was rather peculiar. It was one of those first-day covers people used to mail to themselves back in time with a blank page inside. So to begin with, the cover had a letter in it and not a blank page in it. Secondly, the letter dates back to 18 July, 1894 when Sam (the writer of the letter) didn't exist because both Sam and Charley exist in the present times. Thus, it is sound to conclude that it was just a product of Charley's imagination.

Answer each of the following questions in about 30-40 words:

Question 1.

What does the third level refer to? What is the significance of the third level? The third level is a medium of escape through which man yearns to be away from life's harsh realities. Modern life is devoid of peace and tranquillity so man in his quest to seek solace escapes to a place where his aim is to seek the realization of his dreams and unfulfilled wishes of his subconscious mind.

Question 2.

What convinced Charley that he had reached the third level at Grand Central Station and not the second level?

Answer:

The general layout of the third level was different from that of the second level. It had comparatively smaller rooms, fewer ticket windows and lesser train gates. The information

booth in the centre was made of wood and looked old. The place with its brass spittoons did not look very bright. So Charley was convinced it was not the second level.

Question 3.

How does Charley, the narrator describe the third level at Grand Central Station?

Answer:

Charley says that the rooms on the third level were smaller than that of the second level. There were fewer ticket windows and train gates and the information booth in the centre was wood and old looking. There were open- flame gaslights and brass spittoons on the floor. Everyone at the station was dressed in nineteenth century dresses.

Question 4.

How did Charley make sure that he was not in the present time?

Answer:

To make sure that he was not in the present time, Charley did a reality check. He looked at the newspapers which were on sale at a kiosk and found a copy of the newspaper 'The World', which carried the main story on President Cleveland. Then he confirmed from the Public Library files that the newspaper he had seen was dated 11th June, 1894.

Question 5.

How did Charley often get lost on the Grand Central Station? (2021 Delhi)

Answer:

The Grand Central Station was growing like a tree pushing out endless corridors, doorways and stairs like roots. It had intricate and tangled pathways. The network of passages was so complicated that instead of reaching his destination, one did tend to move up and down to look for entries and exits. So, Charley often got lost on this station.

Question 6.

Why did Charley suspect that Sam had gone to Galesburg? (2021 Outside Delhi)

Answer:

When Sam disappeared all of a sudden and no one knew about his whereabouts, Charley suspected he had gone to Galesburg as Sam was a city boy and liked Galesburg very much. Then Charley found an envelope mailed to Sam by his grandfather from his home in Galesburg and so it confirmed that Sam was indeed in Galesburg.

Question 7.

How does Charley describe Galesburg as it used to be in 1894? (2023 Comptt. Outside Delhi)

Answer:

Charley describes Galesburg as a quiet, simple and peaceful place with big old frame houses, huge lawns and tremendous trees. The summer evenings were rather long and people sat out on their lawns in a peaceful world, men smoking cigars and women waving palm-leaf fans.

Question 8.

What did Charley learn about Sam from the stamp and coin store? (2022 Outside Delhi)

Answer:

From the stamp and coin store Charley gets to know that Sam had bought old style currency

worth eight hundred dollars. This money was sufficient to set him up in a little hay, feed and grain business in Galesburg.

Question 9.

How did Sam reach Galesburg? What did he advise Charley to do?

Answer:

Sam was fascinated by Charley's description of Galesburg. He was so burdened by the tensions and stress of modern life that he thought of escaping to the peaceful world of Galesburg. His advice to Charley is that, he (Charley) and his wife, Louisa should come over to Galesburg through the medium of the 'third level'.

Question 10.

Why did the booking clerk refuse to accept the money?

Answer:

The booking clerk refuses to accept the money because the notes Charley had given him were of old style. He did not pay in the currency notes that were in circulation in 1894. So the clerk stared at him and told him, "That ain't money, Mister". He thought Charley was trying to cheat him and even threatened to get him arrested.

Question 11.

Why did Charley rush back from the third level?

Answer:

When Charley took out the modern currency to pay for the two tickets to Galesburg, the ticket clerk accused him of trying to cheat him. He threatened to hand Charley over to the police. Charley was frightened and he decided to rush back from the third level, lest he was arrested and put into prison.

2. Answer each of the following questions in about 125-150 words. (5 marks)

Question 12.

How did Charley reach the third level of Grand Central? How was it different from the other levels?

Answer:

One night Charley worked till late at the office. Then he was in a hurry to get back to his apartment. So he decided to take the subway from Grand Central. He went down the steps and came to the first level. Then he walked down to the second level from where the suburban trains left. He ducked into an arched doorway that headed to the subway. Then he got lost. Knowing that he was going wrong he continued to walk downward. The tunnel turned a sharp left and then taking a short flight of stairs he came out on the third level at the Grand Central Station. Here he saw many unusual things. There were very few ticket windows and train gates that were old-looking and made of wood. Dim gaslights flickered and men wore derby hats and four-button suits. It was a rather strange world of sideburns, beards and fancy moustaches.

Question 13.

Do you think that the third level was a medium of escape for Charley? Why?

Answer:

The fears, anxieties and insecurities of the modern world are taking a toll on man's mind. He feels helpless and frustrated and seeks temporary respite from life's harsh realities. Charley too was unable to cope up with his fast-paced and stressful life so his flight to the third level was undoubtedly a medium of escape for him. It is nothing but a creation of Charley's own mind. He wants to escape from the modern world's insecurity, fear, worries and stress and so seeks an exit, a medium to get away into the world of dreams and fancies.

Question 14.

What kind of people did Charley 'See' at the third level?

Answer:

Having worked late at the office Charley decided to take a train back home. So he came to Grand Central Station and from the second level he got lost while ducking into an arched doorway and found himself inside a tunnel. This tunnel took him to another light of stairs and he found himself on the third level of the station. As compared to the second level, the third level had smaller rooms, fewer ticket windows and train gates. Everyone there was dressed in 'eighteen-ninety-something'. Charley came across men and women wearing 19th century dresses. Men sported fancy moustaches, beards and sideburns. Tiny lapels, four-button suits, derby hats and pocket gold watches seemed to be in vogue. Women were wearing fancy cut sleeves, long skirts and high-buttoned shoes. Charley was confused to see people sporting old-fashioned clothes and hair styles at the third level.

Question 15.

How does Charley make his description of the third level very realistic?

Answer:

To make his description of the third level very realistic, Charley describes its minute details, vividly comparing it to the second level of the Grand Central station. He says the rooms here were smaller. There were fewer ticket windows and train gates, and the information booth was wooden and old-looking. He also gives a detailed description about the people he saw at the third level and their dresses. He says the people wore nineteenth century dresses; many men had beards, sideburns and fancy moustaches. He also buys tickets to Galesburg, Illinois thus making the reader believe that he was actually at the third level.

16. ~The modern world is full of insecurity, fear, war, worry and stress. What are the ways in which we attempt to overcome them?

A. One cannot count on fingers the negative aspects the modern lifestyle has to offer. There is stress, pressure, fear, insecurity and worry. In order to relieve yourself of all these miseries, one can indulge in creative activities from time to time. Making time for yourself and what you love without worrying about a productive outcome is a crucial thing many people tend to ignore in the hustle and bustle of daily lives. Secondly, one can read a good book or even

meditate. Long walks in the lap of nature are not to be underestimated because nature has its own healing power. Apart from these, a short weekend getaway, movie night with friends or even alone at home can be done in order to dissociate oneself from the routine.

17. Do you see an intersection of time and space in the story?

A. Yes, there are a lot of instances that tell us about the intersection of time and space in the story. First intersection being the one between the first two levels of the Grand Central Station and its third level which is based somewhere in the 1890s whereas the former exists in the present times. Also when Charley went to buy tickets for Galesburg which existed in 1894 while he and his wife exist in the present times. Not to ignore the old- fashioned architecture of the third level in contradiction to the modern interiors of the first two levels. Lastly, the letter dated 18th July, 1982 that Charley found also throws light upon the intersection of time and space as both the sender (Sam) and the receiver (Charley) exist in the present times.

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