NCERT Solutions for Class 12

English Kaliedoscope

NON-FICTION - ON SCIENCE FICTION

Questions

Stop and Think (Page no.195)

1. What is the parallel drawn between myths and legends of the past and science fiction?

Ans: The ancient myths and legends are full of stories of human beings with supernormal powers. There are the legendary heroes who control situations, those ancient pieces of magic still fascinate us today, those crystal balls, into which one can see things those are happening many miles away, and magic shells that can allow us to hear the whisperings of humans many miles away. In science fiction we have hypothesis that are often built up on the same principle which is superstitious believes and imaginary beliefs. The goals of these ancient stories are the same as those of modern science fiction. These are the parallel drawn between myths and legends of the past and science fiction that connect each other.

2. What gives science fiction its validity?

Ans: In this story author indicates the validity of science fiction by stating that "The difference is that the ancient myths and legends fulfil those needs and meet those goals against the background of a Universe that is controlled by gods and demons that can, in turn, be controlled by magical formulas either in the form of enchantments to coerce, or prayers to cajole. Science fiction, on the other hand, fulfils those needs against the background of a Universe that is controlled by impersonal and answerable laws of nature, which can, in turn, be controlled by an understanding of their nature. In a narrow sense, only science fiction is valid for today since, as far as we can tell, the Universe *does* follow the dictates of the laws of nature and is *not* at the mercy of gods and demons. This shows that law and nature validates the science fiction.

3. Which literary works does the author have in mind when he refers to 'Open Sesame' or the concept of winged horses or flying carpets?

Ans: The author while referring to 'Open Sesame' or the concept of winged horses or flying carpets, have literary work in mind which is as follows:

The ancient myths and legends are full of stories of human beings with supernormal powers. There are the legendary heroes, for instance, who learn to control winged horses or flying carpets. Those ancient pieces of magic still fascinate us today, and I imagine a youngster could thrill to such mystical methods of aero navigation and long for the chance to partake in it, even if he were reading the Tales while on a jet plane. Consider the doors that open with 'Open sesame' rather than by the click of a remote-control device. Author considered fiction as literary works.

Understanding the Text

1. What makes for the distinction between the various genres of fiction— 'a sports story', 'a Western story', 'a jungle story' and science fiction?

Ans: Science fiction is a literary form. It is known through the back ground. It is a influence which in no case inferior to any literary form. In the present essay, the author has made a distinction between various genres of fiction which are 'a sports story', 'a Western story', 'a jungle story' and 'science fiction'. In this regards, the author says, "Science fiction is a literary and verse of no mean size because science fiction is what it is, not through its content but through its back ground."

According to the author, a 'sports story' must contain an athletic or competitive activity which becomes an integral part of the story. A western story is weaved around the life of a cowboy who wanders the American West. In 'Jungle story', the author depicts the dangers of a forested tropical wilderness. Science fiction necessarily displays different components as interplanetory travel and extraterrestrial creatures as a part of plot.

Thus, the author has presented the characteristics in each type of fiction but what really distinguishes it from other genres of fiction is its background, while other genres are differentiated on the bases of their content. He makes

it clear that if any of these genres contains a different background of society which is different from ours, it becomes science fiction. Thus, the author makes a perfect science fiction.

2. How does Asimov establish that John Campbell was wrong in his opinion that it is not possible for a science fiction mystery to be fair to a reader in the same way as a classical mystery is?

Ans: The author refers John W. Campbell who was a great science fiction editor. He was of the opinion that the domain of science fiction is limitless. But he failed in regard to science fiction mystery. Asimov claims that John Campbell was wrong in his opinion.

The author says that in Campbell's opinion, it is not possible for a science fiction mystery to present before the reader in the same way as a classical mystery. He considered it a very tough and almost impossible task.

He quotes the example of Sherlock Holmes' classical mystery. Sherlock Holmes was a detective. He was gifted with extraordinary abilities of right to keep pace with the plot yet it remained fair to the readers. He expresses his opinion that such plots were fair in classical mysteries.

And if they were suitable in classical mysteries, they are suitable for scientific mysteries also because the reader is quite unaware of these mysteries. So the writer is able to pen down a science fiction mystery. It would be quite appropriate to put such science fiction mystery before the readers.

3. What are the pitfalls that the writer of science fiction mystery must guard against?

Ans: It is the opinion of the writer that writing of science fiction mystery is difficult but not impossible. According to him, writing in any genre contains some or the other pitfalls. To attempt this form, we must have a rational idea and thought of modification.

The writer must be aware of his content in writing science fiction mystery. It is always possible to cling to the rules of this genre. The writer should

explain the boundary conditions with what can be done and what cannot be done. It is also advisable that science fiction mystery should be set in future.

Talking about the Text

Discuss in small groups

1. Imagination and fantasy help human beings to speculate upon the possible explanations for the complexity and unpredictability of the phenomena in the universe.

Ans: Isaac Asimov is of the opinion that science is based upon imagination and fantasy. So it "helps human beings to speculate upon the possible explanations for the complexity and unpredictability of the phenomena in the universe."

The author tries to establish the importance of science fiction. He claims that science is not able to find out the absolute truth. Nor it is able to support its existence. Science is not powerful enough to control everything in the universe. No doubts science is based on imagination and fantasy. Imagination forced human beings to do experiments which in turn led to discoveries of different things. These discoveries were extremely helpful to explain the phenomena of the universe which were once unexplainable. Thus, the above quoted phrase is proved to be true.

2. The difference that science and technology have made to everyday life today was visualised in science fiction fifty years ago.

Ans: There is no doubt in it that science and technology have deeply affected our everyday life. In fact, science fiction has built a bridge between science of fifty years ago and that of today. It was the time when science was considered to be extraordinary and difficult to imagine. It was considered to be superstitions and peoples used to laugh over the imaginary discoveries. But now, science and technology have taken a new shape.

Computer and Internet are the extraordinary gifts of science. Now the world has turned into a global village. ATMs provide us cash round the clock. Work from home and Online study are recent developments. But it is also true that such discoveries had been written year ago. The flying carpet or winged

horses of ancient times have incarnated into new form the form of today's aeroplanes or jet planes.

The modern day inventions like Television and Mobile phone are nothing but the modified version of crystal ball which allows us to gaze into the future or magic shells that facilitate in hearing the human whisperings from a distant place. Thus we can say that science and technology of present day were imagined and fancied and presented to the readers decades ago. And it could be possible only because of science fiction.

Appreciation

1. Discuss the author's attitude towards the pre-scientific imagination and the tone he adopts while talking about it.

Ans: The writer has put a composition of pre scientific imagination and present situation. He talks of the time when human society was completely devoid of science. In the pre scientific era, the priests, magicians, wizards etc. did the same work as are done by scientists of today. It was the time when the unexplainable phenomena were a source of wonder and superstitions and belief in mythical creatures was rampant because there was no reason or logic present.

In the begining, the author talks about magic, flying carpet and winged horses but he has a skeptical eye over them. Gradually, he talks and claims that the present scientific discoveries are the outcome of pre scientific imagination. According to him, the flying carpets and winged horses are the modern day aeroplanes and jet planes and crystal ball which showed future is the television of today. Thus, the tone of the author is in favour of the importance of the pre scientific time.

2. Observe how the paragraph, as a form, has been used in the essay. Some paragraphs consist of just one sentence. What purpose do you think the author had in putting them in this manner?

Ans: It is true that the author has put some paragraphs in only one sentence. In one of such paragraphs, the author is talking about some ancient and

modern science fiction and in another such paragraph, the author has thrown light on the background and its genres of science fiction.

The author is very cleaver to put such paragraph in one line with the purpose to distinguish them from other paragraphs. He also wants to emphasize upon the ideas that have been mentioned in the paragraph regarding science fiction. Thus, the author has opted this form suitably from point of view of readers.

3. Mark the linkers used by the author to connect the point he makes in one paragraph with that in the next. For example, Let me explain the difference that makes in the last line of para 1 of Section II. These are called discourse markers or discourse signalers.

Ans: The author has used so many linkers to connect the point he makes with that in the next paragraph. Some of them are as follow :
(i) "That form only an inconsiderable fraction of the whole." This is the last line of section II para 4.
(ii) "There must have been tales of the strange and different, of the life note we know it..... Let's, consider the respect that people have for science .... manipulate that they key." (from page 192)
(iii) "a rational notion as to how to modify or extrapolate that science. This is last line of page 198 of section II..
(iv) Science fiction is a literary universe of no mean size because science fiction is what it is, not through its content but through its background. Let me explain to difference that makes.

Language Work

A. Literary Allusions

(i) Look up a literary dictionary or encyclopedia or the internet to understand the references to the following mythical creatures

Centaur   Satyr   Sphinx   Harpy

Gryphon   Gorgon   Pegasus

Find out parallel creatures in Indian mythology.

Ans:

Centaur : Centaur is a mythological creature who has its head of a man and the lower part of body is that of a horse

Satyr : It is a mythological creature who has its head of a man and the lower part of body is that of a goat.

Sphinx : It is a mythological creature who has its head of a woman and the lower part of the body is that of a lion.

Harpy : It is a mythological creature who has its head of a woman and the rest of the lower part of body is that of a hawk.

Gryphon : It is a mythological creature who has its head of an eagle and the rest lower part of body is that of lion.

Gorgon : It is a mythological creature who has its head of a snake and the rest of the lower part of body is that of a woman.

Pegasus : In greek mythology, Pegasus is a winged divine horse, usually it is depicted as pure white.

(ii) Find out about the story of Achilles and Hector.

Ans:
Achilles was the hero of Trojan war in Greek mythology. He is the central character of Homer's Niad. His mother was Thetis and father was Paleus, king of Phthia. His body became invulnerable when his mother Thetis dipped him in the river Styx as an infant.

She held him by one of his heels. At this heel, the water of the river could not touch him thus, this part remained vulnerable. When Trojan war began, the Trojans, led by Prince Hector pushed the Greek Army back towards the beaches. His companion pushed the Trojan Army back but was killed. Achilles had extremely greased catridges.

Enraged over the death of his beloved companion, Achilles chased Hector and killed him and drags his dead body by its heels behind his chariot. The Hero was killed by Pauls who shot an arrow on the heel of Achilles where his body was vulnerable. Thus, he also died in the Trojan War.

B. Pronunciation

Languages vary greatly in the way in which they use rhythm in fluent speech. English rhythm is based not only on word stress (i.e. the stress on a certain syllable or syllables in a word) but also on sentence stress (i.e. the basic emphasis pattern of a sentence). Both of these elements are important for intelligibility.

Look at the following sentences

(i) Delhi is a big city.

(ii) He asked me how I felt in a big city like Delhi.

You will notice that the first sentence can be said in one breath, but you may like to pause while saying the second sentence. Pauses can be indicated by the mark (/). Each pause marks the end of a 'breath' or tone group. Because tone groups are said in a single breath, they are limited in length and average about two seconds, or five words.

We break up spoken language into tone groups because we need to breathe, so there is a physical reason for the structure. But there is also the need to think. Thus the pace of the tone groups, and the information they convey, matches the speakers' thoughts. Tone groups can contain only one word or as many as seven or eight, as you can see in the example given below

No,/I really can't put up with it any more/good bye./

TASK

Mark the pauses in the following dialogue.

A: Good morning, this is Ten-2-Ten supermarket. Can I help you?

B: Good morning, I'd like to speak to the person in charge of your After Sales Service, please.

A: That's Mr Patel.
B: Could you put me through to him, please?

A: Who's speaking, please?
B: My name's Karandikar.

A: Just a moment, Mr Karandikar... I am sorry, Mr Patel's line seems to be busy.
B: Well, is there someone else who could help me?

A: There's Mrs Paul. She's the assistant manager, but she's out at the moment.
B: Look, this is quite important!

A: I'll try Mr Patel's line again for you,... trying to connect you.
B: Ah! finally, ... is that Mr Patel? Good morning, this is... Hello?... oh no! I'm cut off.

Ans:
A : Good morning, this is Ten-2-Ten supermarket./ Can I help you?/
B : Good morning, I'd like to speak to the person in charge of your After Sales Service, please./
A: That's Mr Patel./
B: Could you put me through to him,/ please?/
A: Who's speaking, please?/
B: My name's Karandikar./
A: Just a moment, Mr Karandikar...d I am sorry,/ Mr Patel's line seems to be busy./
B: Well,/ is there someone else who could help me?/
A: There's Mrs Paul./ She's the assistant manager,/ but she's out at the moment./
B : Look,/ this is quite important!/
A: I'll try Mr Patel's line again for you.../ trying to connect you./
B: Ah! finally,/ ... is that Mr Patel ?/ Good morning,/ this is... Hello?.../ oh no! I'm cut off./

C. Grammar: Some More Verb Classes

The verb have is followed by a noun phrase. Find the noun phrases that follow have in the paragraph of the text that begins "A 'sports story must

have…some competitive activity…" (In this example, have is followed by the noun phrase some competitive activity.)

Sentences with have do not usually have a passive form. But in general, verbs which take a noun phrase after them are transitive, and they have a passive form. Look at the verbs in the paragraph following the paragraph you have just worked with. Find the noun phrases that follow the verbs take, place, involve, change and add.

Notice that these verbs can all be passivized, and their objects can become subjects (these have been set in bold below). So that we can say

Let the contents of any of these be taken and be placed against a background where a society significantly different from our own is involved and the nature of the story has not been changed—it has merely been added to.

TASK

1. Here are a few sentences with transitive verbs, adapted from the text. Identify the noun phrases that are the verbs' objects, and underline them. Then turn these sentences into a passive form.

• He expected a sudden change of rules.

• Nothing prevents writers from using actual science.

• He revealed that he didn't know the difference between the element and the compound.

• He demonstrated that he couldn't tell the difference between carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide and reduced the plot to a shambles.

• The writer must carefully explain to the reader all the boundary conditions of the imaginary society.

Ans:
(i) A sudden change of rules was expected by him.
(ii) Writers are not prevented from using actual science.
(iii) That he didn't know the difference between the element and the compound was revealed by him.

(iv) That he couldn't tell the difference between carbon monoxide and carbondioxide and reduced the plot to a shambles was demonstrated by him.
(v) All boundary conditions of the imaginary society must be carefully explained to the reader by the writer.

2. Some verbs take a that-clause after them. Find the verb ask in the last paragraph of the first part of this text (which begins 'I don't even ask that…') and note how it is followed by thatclauses. Look for other verbs, in this text as well as in the earlier ones, that are followed by a that-clause (verbs such as believe, know, realise, promise…).

Ans:
(i) They did not know of the rules that were unbreakable.
(ii) He maintained that it was impossible to write a science fiction story.
(iii) He believed that their joint ventures were very fruitful for the country.