

4.2 To Sir, with Love -E. R. Braithwaite

BRAINSTORMING

CHARACTER:

(A1) (i) Which one among the following is a teacher in the extract? Select the correct one. Also cite a couple of lines from the extract in support of your answer.

(a) Denham (c) Sapiano

(b) Miss Joseph (d) Dale-Evans

Ans. 4. Dale-Evans

Mrs. Dale-Evans is a teacher in the extract.

The line, "Denham called two children at random from the audience and asked them to write the name of each teacher, including the Head on a slip of paper" tells us that the slips of paper contained the names of teachers.

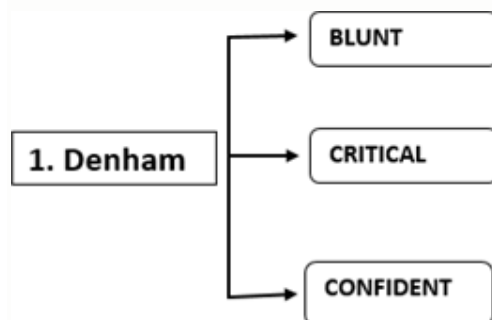
The line, "The names were called: Mr. Weston, Mrs. Dale-Evans, Miss Phillips" refers to the names read out from the chosen slips of paper and thus identifies the names of the teachers.

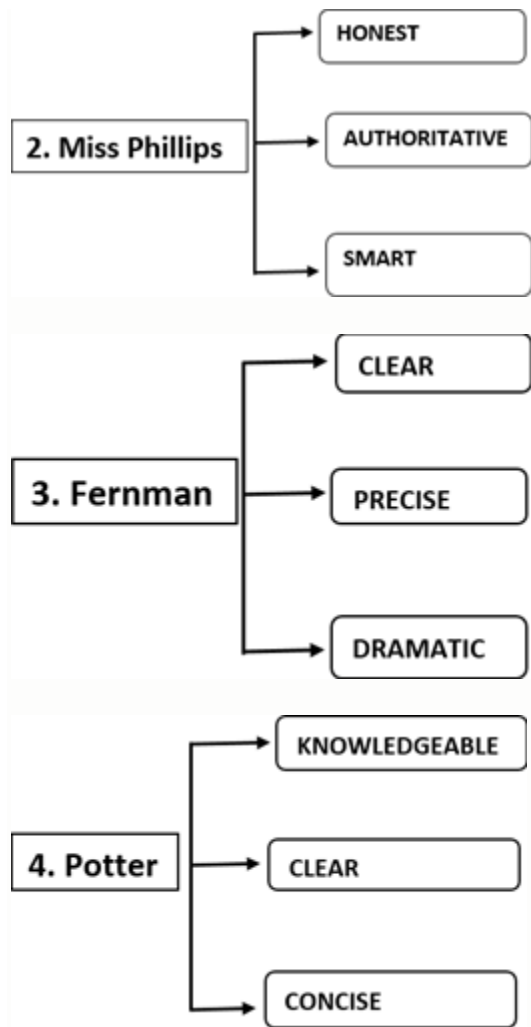
The line, "Miss Joseph and Denham, the two most senior students," confirms that Miss Joseph and Denham are not teachers, but are in fact, students.

The line, "Sapiano spoke of the study the class had made," states that Sapiano presented a report and since all reports were presented by the students, it can be concluded that Sapiano was not a teacher.

(ii) Complete the table highlighting the various traits of the major characters in the extract.

(The answers are given directly and underlined.)





(iii) The narrator played a crucial role in bringing a significant change in the students. Discuss the statement by citing some references from the extract.

Ans. The narrator initially had a very difficult time with the students who were disrespectful, ill-mannered and mischievous. They considered him to be an arrogant outsider, unfamiliar with the social environment in which they have grown up. They harass him from day one; however, they come around after only a few weeks, completely changing both their hygiene and their attitudes towards one another. This marks the success of the narrator in handling the students in a very amicable way. This is proved on the day of the half-yearly report of the Students' Council. The narrator's students allocate tasks in a business-like way. They present their reports confidently and clearly. They are cool and efficient in their work. They are courteous towards each other and the teachers, and they accept the verdict of the teachers. This shows the significant and crucial change brought about by the narrator in his students.

(iv) Fernman brought a comic relief in the Students Council programme. Explain with an incident.

Ans. In order to explain a point, Fernman made a signal to someone off-stage. Two students, Welsh and Alison, appeared bearing a skeleton between them, with a sort of gallows. When this arrangement had been set up there was the skeleton hanging from a hook screwed into the top of its skull, gently revolving at the end of a cord. This brought some comic relief to the proceedings, and the students laughed uproariously.

(v) Give a brief character-sketch of –

(a) Denham.

Ans. Denham is business-like and confident while allocating tasks and fitting in the programme. He is an important official for the function and sits confidently beside the Head. He courteously addresses the girls as 'Miss'. While discussing P.T. and Games, he shocks the audience with his views. He is a trained boxer and does not want to do P.T. exercises which he feels are unnecessary for him. His tone is initially blunt, critical and argumentative. However, when Miss Phillips gently replies to his arguments and outwits him, he graciously and politely accepts his defeat.

(b) Miss Joseph.

Ans. Miss Joseph is one of the senior girls in Braithwaite's class. A natural leader, Miss Joseph, along with Denham, is in charge of hosting the half-yearly report of the Students' Council. Besides helping in the organization of the event, Miss Joseph also ensures its smooth functioning, by supervising the other students as they perform their assigned tasks, thus displaying her leadership skills. She also delivers a short address outlining the purpose of the Students' Council activities. When it is the turn of Braithwaite's class to present its report, it is Miss Joseph who introduces the class' theme of the brotherhood and interdependency of mankind to the audience. She is confident by nature and delivers her report on Domestic Science with the utmost ease.

(c) The Narrator.

Ans. Ricky Braithwaite, the narrator, is a very sensitive person. He is very upset at the racism that he has to face after serving in the army. He gets a job in a school, and initially has a very difficult time with the students who are disrespectful, ill-mannered and mischievous. They harass him from day one. However, his novel and creative ideas, innovative techniques and understanding of the students'

psychology, ultimately wins their hearts. Though he was bullied, harassed, mentally and physically tortured many times, he didn't lose his patience and continued implementing his novel ideas and techniques that helped him to bring a significant change in his students' lives. On the day of the half-yearly report of the Students' Council, he is very anxious to see how they behave. When they are business like, confident, cool and courteous, he feels proud of them.

(d) Miss Dare.

Ans. Miss Pamela Dare is one of the senior girls in Braithwaite's class. On the day of the half-yearly report, she is chosen to be present on the subject of Physiology along with her classmate, Fernman. While Fernman displays a sense of the dramatic and is humorous in his presentation, Miss Dare's presentation is straightforward but insightful. Because of his over-the-top performance, Fernman manages to steal the show with his presentation. With Miss Dare's report lacking any such dramatic elements, she is aware that as she delivers her report after Fernman, she may not receive the same amount of attention from the audience, but nevertheless proceeds to present her report with confidence. She outlines the problems that all humanity has to face in terms of sickness and disease and states the benefits of exchanging knowledge, advice, and assistance among countries. Thus, she speaks knowledgeably about her coursework.

(e) Miss Phillips.

Ans. Miss Phillips, whom everyone had thought to be frilly and brainless, proves while answering Denham's questions that she is the best-informed of the three teachers on the stage. She intervenes skillfully when the other two teachers are at a loss, without embarrassing them. She speaks coolly, honestly and with authority. She is very slightly built but she controls her class very well. She tells Denham that the whole timetable in the school was meant to help the students in the world after they left school, and doing what one was told in spite of not liking it, is part of the training. She confidently asserts that she was sure that Denham saw the importance of what she had said, and why he had to do P.T. Thus, she put Denham in his place very coolly.

(vi) Compare the following characters:

Miss Joseph and Denham

Ans.

Miss Joseph	Denham
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1. In-charge of the Students' Council programme and delivers a short address highlighting the Council's purpose and its activities	1. In-charge of the Students' Council programme and assigned the task of calling out the names of the student representatives of the senior class and displays genuine courtesy while addressing them
2. Representative of the subject of 'Domestic Science'	2. Representative of the subject of 'P.T. and games'
3. Speaks about the theme of the interdependence of mankind, which was at the root of all their lessons	3. Criticises the pattern of P.T. and games, citing the limitations of obtaining space, the monotony of the routine, and the scarcity of time allocated to it
4. Qualities Highlighted: leadership skills, calm, insightful	4. Qualities highlighted: leadership skills, courteous, assertive, blunt

Fernman and Miss Dare

Ans.

Fernman	Miss Dare
1. Representative of the subject of 'Physiology' who brings comic relief by displaying a skeleton, hanging from a hook screwed to its skull and gently revolving at the end of a cord, on the stage and whose report is highly appreciated for its dramatic style	1. Representative of the subject of 'Physiology' who presents after Fernman and whose report is plain, straightforward and lacking in dramatic elements, thus making it anticlimactic (in comparison with Fernman's report)
2. Speaks in a clear and precise manner and concludes, with the help of the skeleton, that essentially all people were the same	2. Speaks about the problems of sickness and disease faced by humanity and the benefits of exchanging knowledge, advice, and assistance
3. Qualities highlighted: captivating, persuasive, confident, innovative, charming, clever	3. Qualities highlighted: empathetic, smart, unenergetic, passive

Miss Phillips and Denham

Ans.

Miss Phillips	Denham
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1. Bluntly criticizes the pattern of P.T. and games, citing the limitations of obtaining space and the monotony of the routine	1. Tactfully answers all the questions posed by the students and even assists other panelists
2. Exhibits impulsiveness, bluntness, and aggression in his debate with Miss Phillips but feels sorry when he has lost the argument	2. Tackles the students' questions with honesty, authority, skill and a calm and composed attitude and eventually outwits Denham with logic and presence of mind, impressing the students and the narrator
3. Represents a student's perspective and demonstrates that students should be active participants in their academic progress by fearlessly questioning an authoritative figure	3. Represents a teacher's perspective and demonstrates that teachers must respect the perspectives of all students and tackle their doubts with patience and logic
4. Qualities highlighted: aggressive, blunt, assertive, logical, determined, smart	4. Qualities highlighted: calm, skillful, persuasive, authoritative, well-informed, tough, logical, witty

Narrator and the Head of the school

Ans.

Narrator	Head of the school
1. Seated in the audience, a passive participant in the event	1. Seated on the stage (at the beginning), an active participant in the event
2. Silently observes as the event unfolds	2. Reiterates the aims and policies of the school, the contribution that could be made by each student in fulfilling those aims, and praises the students while insisting that there was yet a great deal to be done
3. Was an outsider who eventually built a place for himself in the school and in the minds of the students	3. Has never been an outsider as he identifies himself with the school and everyone in it
4. Feels proud to see the transformation that his students have undergone	4. Feels proud of all the students and expresses his appreciation of the efforts put in by them
5. Qualities highlighted: observant, insightful, pleased, surprised	5. Qualities highlighted: genuine, appreciative, understanding

PLOT:

(A2) (i) Arrange the incidents in correct sequence as per their occurrence in the extract.

- (a) Denham was outwitted by Miss Phillips.
- (b) The head of the school closed the proceedings.
- (c) Denham asserted that P.T. periods were a waste of time.
- (d) The slips were folded and placed in a hat.
- (e) Fernman was as usual a trump card.
- (f) Denham called out the names of the representatives.
- (g) Students' Council was held every year on November 15th.

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- (a) Denham was outwitted by Miss Phillips.
- (b) The head of the school closed the proceedings.

(ii) Describe in brief the purpose of organising the half-yearly report programme of Students' Council.

Ans. The half-yearly report programme was an important event for the Students' Council. In this report, the students would present what they had studied, to the teachers and other students. The main purpose of the event was to analyze and discuss the academic progress of the students. Through their presentations, the

students would outline what they had learnt in their classes and the teachers would thus obtain a clear picture of the depth of their understanding. The report was thus crucial in deciding the structure of the remaining academic year. Another significant aspect of the report was the panel discussion. A panel of teachers would be selected by the students, to whom questions about the reports would be asked. Not only did the students have complete freedom in choosing the names and number of the teachers on the panel, but the teachers would not be told about their selection beforehand. This served the purpose of assuring the students that they too had the power to shape their academic progress. In addition to these primary objectives, the programme also provided the students with the perfect platform to showcase their organization skills, become more involved in the activities of the school, voice their opinions as well as raise their concerns. Denham's blunt criticism of the P.T. class is a perfect example of how such programmes can help the students voice their views.

(iii) Write in your words the entire half-yearly report programme of Students Council

Ans. In the half-yearly report of the Students' Council, the students report to the faculty and other students on what they have been studying thus far. The representatives of the narrator's class spoke knowledgeably about their coursework and placed a considerable amount of emphasis on how much they had learnt about different people, cultures, customs, and the importance of international and interracial cooperation. Miss Joseph and Denham, both students of the narrator's class, presided over the meeting. Mr. Florian, the headmaster, addressed the meeting with a lengthy presentation. After this, one after another, each class gave a brief report of their progress, through their chosen representatives, on what they had been studying in each subject so far. A panel of teachers was then chosen to answer any questions put by the students.

The lowest class began first: the narrator's class, being the oldest, was the last to present their report. Miss Joseph began the highest class's proceedings by clarifying that the common theme underlying all their studies that term was the interdependency of mankind. Potter spoke in the field of math, focusing on how greater understanding in the world is fostered by the use of common weights and measures. Miss Pegg and Jackson spoke on geography, and Miss Dare and Fernman discussed the subject of physiology, with Fernman stealing the show by exhibiting a model of a human skeleton and stressing the class conclusion that "basically all people are the same." Miss Dodd reported on history, and Miss Joseph on domestic science. Denham created a stir by speaking on the subject of P.T. and games, complaining that the class 'was ill conceived and pointless.'

Mr. Weston, Mrs. Dale-Evans, and Miss Phillips were chosen at random to answer students' questions. When Denham pursued his inquiry on the necessity of requiring all students to take P.T., Mr. Weston responded quite ridiculously, trying

to bluster his way out of the subject, and offering no sensible argument. Unexpectedly, the quiet and hesitant Miss Phillips stepped in and gave a strong defence of the practice. Finally, Denham, knowing that he had been outwitted, had no choice but to respectfully accept his defeat. The narrator was immensely satisfied with the progress of the students of his class.

(iv) Describe the question-answer session that took place at the end of the extract.

Ans. The questions were mostly from the two top classes. The teachers had no briefing, and were often caught out stammering in their indecision. One of the teachers, Miss Euphemia Phillips proved to be the coolest and best informed of the three teachers on the stage. She dealt with questions put to her with honesty and with authority, and would often intervene skillfully to assist one of the others without causing embarrassment. While Fernman was skillful in his questioning, Denham was blunt in his criticism. He severely criticised the general pattern of P.T. and games. Denham was a trained boxer, and insisted that such exercises were only advantageous if practiced daily and for more sustained periods; P.T. twice weekly for twenty minutes was a waste of time, he asserted.

Miss Phillips reminded the school that every subject, including P.T. and games, had been carefully considered and fitted into the teaching timetable so that each student received maximum benefit from it. The school considered it in terms of the greatest good for the greatest number. She added, hinting at Denham, that while some were fortunate in their own fine physical development and did not really need the few meagre helpings of P.T. and games which the school could offer, there were others for whom the programme was ideally suited. It would be beyond anyone's powers to please everybody. She suggested that some of the older boys might even be able to help in that respect. Denham, not put off by these sugary remarks, replied that only the kids who needed it could take it, while the others could have a game of football or something, instead of doing something useless. This was a difficult question to answer, but Miss Phillips replied pleasantly that it should be considered as much an exercise of the mind as it is of the body. The whole timetable in the school was meant to help them in the world after they left the school, and doing what one was told in spite of not liking it, was part of the training. That answer defeated Denham and he accepted his defeat gracefully.

(v) Describe the discussion that took place between Miss Joseph and Denham.

Ans. Following the class presentations, a panel of teachers was randomly selected to answer questions that the students might have regarding the reports. This panel included Mrs. Dale-Evans, Miss Euphemia Phillips and Mr. Weston. Denham's class report was a criticism of the P.T. class and as a follow-up to his report, he asked the panel of teachers to justify the need for such a class, as he believed it offered no

physical advantages. Being a trained boxer, Denham was of the opinion that exercises could only benefit the students if they were performed daily and for longer periods of time, thereby implying that as the P.T. class was only for twenty minutes twice a week, it was a waste of time. While Mr. Weston could not offer any satisfactory explanation, Miss Phillips stepped in and responded by reminding the students that because the school had limited resources, the goal was to have a timetable that ensured maximum benefit for maximum number of students. She argued that while Denham and other physically fit students like him might not see the benefit of the P.T. class because of their participation in other sports, but the school has many more students that could benefit from it. In addition, she even called upon senior students like Denham to help out in this respect. Denham, though impressed by Miss Phillips' clever response, was not ready to give up his questioning and further argued that if what Miss Phillips was saying was true, then only those students who need P.T. should be made to take it and boys like Denham, who don't depend on it for the exercise, should be allowed to use the time as they see fit. This question, as the narrator observes, was tricky, but Miss Phillips was as calm as ever and responded by saying that the school prepares the students for the real world, it was therefore important for them to get used to doing things they have been told to do, even if they don't like it. Miss Phillips argued that participating in the P.T. class was an example of such a thing and that the boys could think of it as an exercise of the mind as well as of the body. Knowing he had been outwitted, Denham accepted defeat and gave up his line of questioning. Thus, Denham's aggressive and blunt probing proved to be no match for Miss Phillips' patience and composure.

SETTING:

(A3) (i) Identify the event that took place in the extract. Choose the correct one. Give reason/s to support your answer:

- (a) Annual Sports Day on November 15th
- (b) Annual Social and Cultural Gathering on November 15th
- (c) Half-yearly report of Students' Council on November 15th
- (d) Farewell Programme on November 15th

Ans. (c) Half-yearly report of Students' Council on November 15th

The following lines support this:

The half-yearly report of the Students' Council was on November 15th, and was one of the important days in the calendar of Greenslade School.

(ii) The event in the extract was held at the _____.

Choose the correct alternative. Give reason/s to support your answer.

- (a) author's house
- (b) auditorium of the school
- (c) market
- (d) garden

Ans. (b) Auditorium of the school

The following lines support this:

A bell was rung at 10.00 a.m. and everyone trooped into the auditorium to sit together in classes.

(iii) The incidents in the extract occurred at a particular place. Explain the significance of that place in your own words.

Ans. The incidents in the extract took place in the auditorium of Greenslade School. Since the major theme of the extract is student-teacher relationship, the school serves as the perfect setting. The students prepare and present their half-yearly reports to the teachers and voice their concerns by questioning the panel of teachers. Throughout the extract, Mr. Braithwaite, is merely an audience member. As his students take the stage, it becomes very clear that they have made considerable progress as not only students but also individuals. Even if Braithwaite had been aware of how his students had changed, the setting of the auditorium, with him as an audience member, allows him to observe from afar, the rewards of his efforts. Through his narration, he conveys to the reader his feelings of pride. Another aspect of the setting that is symbolic to the students' progress is the stage. The stage is symbolic of the students' lives. By presenting their reports, the students' are not just taking active participation in their school, but also coming forward to take control of their lives. Finally, the stage also represents the perfect platform for the students to showcase their skills, and thus can also be compared to the stage of the drama, with the students being given the chance to charm the audience. Thus, Braithwaite, as an audience member, is like the director of a play, watching his work unfold on stage and beaming with pride.

(iv) Explain how the setting of the extract contributes to the theme of the novel.

Ans. One of the themes of the novel is the teacher student relationship, and the change in the behaviour of the students after the narrator's patient dealing. The narrator initially had a very difficult time with the students who were disrespectful, ill-mannered and mischievous. He finds that the students belong to a background that is not suitable for learning and for their overall development and progress. They are in no mood to change their attitude and behaviour. The narrator, with his novel and creative ideas, innovative techniques and understanding of the students' psychology, ultimately wins their hearts. The narrator is now anxious to see how far

his teaching has been effective. He can judge it from the behaviour and attitude of his students on the important day of the half-yearly report of the Students' Council. This report takes place in the presence of the Head of the school, the teachers and the students. It is a serious and formal programme, and the setting of the auditorium, a stage and a formal atmosphere, is just right. The discussion and the question and answer session also contributes to the theme.

THEME:

(A4) (i) 'When the turn of my class came I sat up anxiously'.

Why was the narrator anxious?

Explain the reasons of the narrator's anxiety by citing suitable references from the extract.

Ans. The narrator initially had a very difficult time with the students who were disrespectful, ill-mannered and mischievous. They were in no mood to change their attitude and behaviour. The narrator with his novel and creative ideas, innovative techniques and understanding of the students' psychology, ultimately wins their hearts. The narrator later grew very fond of his students and wanted them to do well in their lives. He wanted them to shine. He is now anxious to see how far his teaching has been effective. He can judge it from their behaviour, conduct and attitude on the important day of the half-yearly report of the Students' Council. He also wanted to see how they would express themselves and how much they had understood during the given period. The programme takes place in the presence of the Head of the school, the teachers and the students. It is a serious and formal one. Hence he sat up anxiously when the turn of his class came.

(ii) Select two statements that describe the theme of the extract:

- (a) Half-yearly report of the Students' Council was not an important event for the students and teachers of school.
- (b) The writer was immensely pleased to notice the progress of his students.
- (c) The students showed a remarkable change in their behaviour and were progressing in all the subjects.
- (d) The head of the institution was against conducting such activities in the school.

Ans. The statements that describe the theme of the extract are:

- (b) The writer was immensely pleased to notice the progress of his students.
- (c) The students showed a remarkable change in their behaviour and were progressing in all the subjects.

(iii) The relationship between the teacher and the students is highlighted in the extract. Illustrate with suitable examples from the extract.

Ans. Braithwaite, who is the teacher of the senior class, is pleased to note the progress his students have made. When the students had first met him, they exhibited poor behaviour and showed little interest in their coursework. However, with innovative teaching methods and an abundance of patience, Braithwaite manages to develop a strong student-teacher relationship based on mutual respect. Eventually, he helps the students develop a sincere interest in their courses. His hard work is tested at the half-yearly report of the Students' Council as the students are expected to present what they have learned, to the entire school. As the day of the half-yearly report approaches, Braithwaite is "as excited as the children" and observes, from a distance, how they prepare for the day. He is impressed by their ability to take responsibility and this can be inferred from the line, "I observed the activities of my class as they prepared for it, nothing with pride the business-like way in which tasks were allocated and fitted into a neat programme." From the above line, it is also clear that seeing this transformation of his students, from mischievous children to young adults, is a particularly proud moment for Braithwaite and is proof of his hard work. On the day of the event, Braithwaite is obviously nervous about the performance of his students. Not only is he worried about the way they handle themselves, but he is also hoping that his efforts have paid off and the students have actually learnt something in the past half-year. His nervousness is revealed in the line, "When the turn of my class came, I sat up anxiously." Like the director of a play, watching the drama unfold, Braithwaite observes his students from the audience. One by one his students take the stage and speak knowledgeably about their courses. Miss Joseph and Denham impress Braithwaite with their leadership skills. The line "I felt terribly pleased and proud to see the confident courtesy with which Denham used the term 'Miss' in addressing each of the senior girls; I felt sure that this would in itself be something for the younger ones to aim at, a sort of badge of young adulthood" shows how Braithwaite beamed with pride upon seeing that his lesson of mutual respect had taken effect and held the ability to inspire the younger students. Potter, Sapiano, Jackson, Miss Dodd and Miss Dare offer intelligent insights into their respective subjects. Braithwaite's appreciation for Feynman's "dramatic" presentation is made clear as he notes "Feynman was wonderful; he had them eating out of his hand." Lastly, Denham's criticism of P.T. class was a sign of intelligent questioning, which is the mark of every responsible student. Denham's consequent argument with Miss Phillips, though blunt, was ultimately respectful as he gives up on the matter when defeated by Miss Phillips. This, too, is a proud moment for Braithwaite as Denham's transformation from an aggressive, rude boy to an intelligent, questioning, young mind is an important achievement. The extract draws attention to the emotions experienced by Braithwaite as he watches with pride the progress his students have

made in the half-year, thus highlighting the relationship between the teacher and the students.

(iv) Explain in brief the theme of the extract.

Ans. The primary theme of the novel is the student-teacher relationship. When Braithwaite first accepts his job as a teacher at Greenslade School, he is met with a bunch of arrogant, disrespectful and ill-mannered students who were well-known for their bad behaviour. Though angry and frustrated at first, Braithwaite eventually learns to be patient and tolerant towards their antics and develops a strong bond with each of them. Braithwaite is not only concerned with their academic progress but also takes a keen interest in their development as individuals. He even takes the time to find out more about their backgrounds and tries to understand the reasons for their behaviour. More importantly, he builds a relationship with the students, which is based on mutual respect. Braithwaite addresses the girls as 'Miss' and the boys by their last name and in turn asks the students to refer to him as 'Sir', relaying the message that a healthy student-teacher relationship is one which involves both, give and take. Though this method is initially resisted by the students, they eventually warm up to it. This can be clearly seen when Braithwaite expresses his appreciation of Denham addressing the senior girls as 'Miss'. The extract highlights the importance of a teacher's role in the lives of his/her students. Braithwaite's influence extends far beyond his academic role. By choosing not to give up on his students, Braithwaite sets an example for how a teacher should be someone who is tolerant and understanding. Through Braithwaite's role in shaping the personalities of his students, the extract demonstrates that a teacher's work is not merely limited to the classroom. An important aspect of the student-teacher relationship is also the freedom to be honest. Braithwaite encourages his students to be honest and fearless, which is clearly demonstrated in Denham's respectful but blunt criticism of the P.T. class, thus conveying the idea that students must be active participants in their own progress. His method of developing a relationship based on mutual respect is effective and results in the transformation of his students from mischievous children to young adults. Braithwaite witnesses this transformation with pride as he watches his students present the class report and admires them for the progress that they have made.

(v) Describe the atmosphere of the school described in the extract.

Ans. The half-yearly report by the Students' Council of Greenslade School was scheduled to be on November 15. It was one of the most important days of the year for the school. The programme was entirely arranged, presented and controlled by the students. They were expected to deliver a report describing what they had learnt in the half-year, which began after Easter. Thus, the report was extremely

crucial for the students and the teachers because it offered the perfect opportunity of determining the academic progress of the students. In addition, it was a test of the organizational abilities of the students. The students of Braithwaite's class were excited about the event and as the day of the event approached, Braithwaite found himself sharing their excitement. In order to prepare for the event, the students divided the responsibilities among themselves and drew up an official programme for the event. They took their roles as organizers very seriously and performed their duties like expert professionals. Watching his students take responsibility and behave like young, mature adults, Braithwaite was filled with a sense of pride. On the day of the event, the children made sure that they were dressed smartly and looked presentable, indicating, once again, that they were aware of the importance of the event. Miss Joseph and Denham, two senior students from Braithwaite's class were chosen as the student representatives who would host the event and they made sure that every student was ready to play their part, thus displaying their leadership skills. Thus, the half-yearly report had charged the atmosphere of the school with excitement and anticipation and had provided the students with a platform to showcase their organizational skills.

LANGUAGE:

(A5) (i) Explain the following statements that enrich the language and create a powerful impact.

(a) Miss Phillips is transformed into a very convincing personality.

Ans. When the three teachers- Mrs. Dale-Evans, Miss Euphemia Phillips and Mr. Weston are called on stage for the question-answer session, the narrator describes Miss Phillips as "frilly" and "seemingly brainless". However, he is taken by surprise when he finds her to be the "coolest" and the "best-informed" among the three. This transformation of Miss Phillips into a very convincing personality began when the students of the top two classes questioned the three teachers on stage. Despite being unprepared, Miss Phillips answered the questions posed to her with "candour" and "authority". In fact, she even came to the rescue of the other two teachers by "intervening skillfully" without making them feel embarrassed. When Denham asserted that scheduling P.T. only twice a week for twenty minutes was a waste of time, it was Miss Phillips who "took the reins" and "her stock shot up a hundredfold"; meaning that she took it upon herself to respond to Denham, which greatly increased her worth as a panelist. She sweetly conveyed that the creation of P.T. and games schedule was in the best interest of all the students and the schools limited resources. When Denham continued the debate by questioning the need for all the students to attend P.T., Miss Phillips was quick to tackle it by saying that P.T. was "as much an exercise of the mind as it is of the body" and that the whole

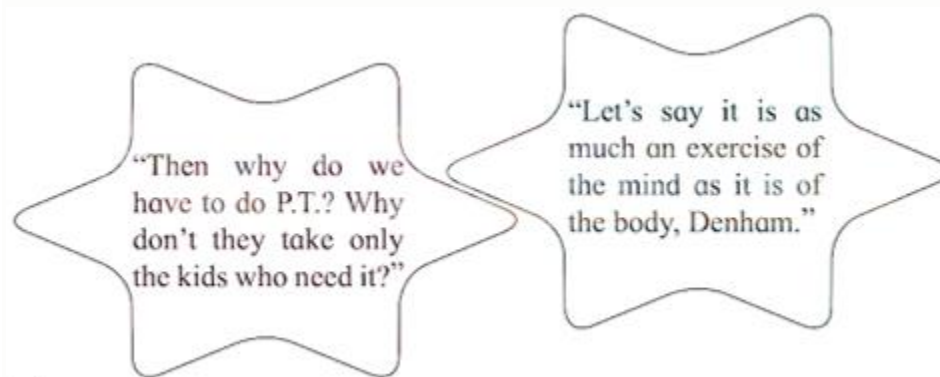
timetable had been created to help the students in the real world, which meant that the need for doing something in spite of not liking it was a part of that training. Denham was outwitted by this final argument made by Miss Phillips and she broadly smiled "this frilly, innocent-looking puss had gobbled her canary without leaving the tiniest feather". The authority and skill exhibited by Miss Phillips while responding to the questions helped the narrator understand "how it was that so slight a creature could cope so effectively with her class". Thus, the language used to describe Miss Phillips transformation enriched the narrative and created a powerful impact.

(b) There are many features of language that contribute to the smooth sailing of the plot.

Ans. Braithwaite's detailed description of the school's atmosphere, before the event, paints a vivid picture for the readers. The use of long and complex sentences, suggestive of the narrator's rich educational background, intricately describes the scenes on the day of the event. The narrator's realization that Mr. Florian associated himself with the school and everyone in it, his use of the words like "condemnable gravity", when the students take their seats on the stage in all seriousness, and his observation about the lowest class students being shy and frightened to stand before the entire school, give the readers an insight into the minds of the characters and the emotions felt by them. The narrator has employed a number of literary and stylistic devices to make the plot elaborate. He uses a lot of negatives to emphasize a positive point "in no way remote from his school", "it was an experience which I shall not easily forget", and "Denham was not to be put off by these sugary remarks". Transferred Epithet like "blunt criticisms", "adroit questioning", "innocent eyes" and "sugary remarks" has also been used to beautify the narration. The narrator even makes use of Simile in the line "I had heard quite a deal about these occasions and became as excited as the children as the day approached." Antithesis has been used by the narrator to describe Denham's character. On the one hand, he is proud to see Denham's leadership qualities, organization skills, and confidence, but on the other hand, he presents Denham as blunt, aggressive and rebellious when Denham presents his report on P.T. The narrator's antithetical view of Miss Phillips highlights his objectivity in describing her character; because the narrator, who initially refers to Miss Phillips as showy and apparently foolish, changes his perception about her as the event proceeds, and describes her as well-informed, calm, tactful and authoritative. The literary technique of Metaphor has also been employed when the narrator describes the discussion between Miss Phillips and Denham as 'crossing of staves', thereby indirectly comparing it to physical combat with wooden-sticks. The use of Metaphor is also evident when he indirectly compares Miss Phillips to 'a cat' and Denham to 'a canary' at the end of the question-

answer session. The literary device of Symbolism has also been used to drive the plot. The narrator and his students are symbolic of the outcasts, who have no place in civilized society, and have now come to create their own community by bringing about improvements in each other. The school is symbolic of mid-1940s East End London, which was not an ideal environment for growing children. Thus, the various features of the language, employed in this extract, contribute to the smooth sailing of the plot.

(ii) Following are some dialogues of the major characters in the extract. Find out who the speaker is, his/her tone, the style, significance etc. of the dialogues.



(1) "Then why do we have to do P.T.? Why don't they take only the kids who need it?"

Ans. The speaker is Denham. His tone is initially blunt, critical and argumentative. He is a trained boxer and does not want to do P.T exercises which he feels are unnecessary for him. However, when Miss Phillips gently replies to his arguments and outwits him, he has the grace to accept his defeat. The blunt and critical Denham turns into a gracious loser.

(2) "Let's say it is as much an exercise of the mind as it is of the body, Denham."

Ans. The speaker is Miss Phillips. She answers Denham's questions coolly, honestly and with authority. She tells him that the whole timetable in the school was meant to help the students in the world after they left school, and doing what one was told in spite of not liking it, is part of the training. She confidently asserted that she was sure that Denham saw the importance of what she had said, and why he had to do P.T. This piece of advice was not meant only for Denham but for the whole school and the reader as well.