

VISTAS

Lesson-1

THE THIRD LEVEL - JACK FINNEY

The Third Level by Jack Finney is an interesting story that is set after the world wars . Consequently, the life was full of fear, insecurity , war& worry . This story talks about the figments of imaginations that can be used to escape from reality . It takes readers back in the time of joy and peace . Charley, the protagonist wants to escape from the harsh realities of modern world and imagines the world of 19th century where the people were living peaceful life and they had ample time for themselves. The story weaves together psychological journey of the narrator into the past , present and progresses towards future.

First level for the trains of 20 century	Second level for suburban trains
Mushrooming with subways, staircases and corridors like a tree	

Charley 's description of the Third Level (imaginary)

Smaller rooms, fewer ticket windows, wooden old styled information booths

Derby hat and gold pocket watches

Men with beards ,sideburns and moustaches

Women with skirts, high buttoned shoes and legs of buttoned sleeves

Brass spittoons on the floor, open flamed gas lights

Old styled locomotives with funnel shaped stack ,

Newspaper 'The World', 11th June 1894

Charley wishes to buy two tickets to Galesburg

Presidents of Newyork swear on the existence of two level

Clerk stares at him since the currency is different

Moves from past to present (in reality) runs from there

Charley shares his experience

Psychiatrist friend Sam refuses to believe

Considers waking dream wish fulfillment

Wife Louisa gets worried, disbelieves too

Sam disappears

Charley gets note from Sam of dated 18July 1894

Sam suggests to keep on searching for the Third Level

Reaches Third Level (Galesburg) world of peace

Starts new business of hay ,grain and cattle

Enjoys happy and peaceful life

First Day Cover

Stamp collectors buy stamps on the day of release

Mail the envelopes , blank paper in it with the postmark of the date to themselves

Covers remain unopened, Charley inherited stamp collection from his grandfather

About Charley- 31 years old ordinary person Takes temporary refuge from reality Wife Louisa worries
Imagines himself at Galesburg in 1894 to stay back at the Third level “ Wants security and peace.

Hobby stamp collection.

Extract Based Questions :

1.I talked to a psychiatrist friend of mine. I told him about the Third Level at Grand Central. He said, it was a waking dream wish fulfilment.

- a. Who is 'I' in the given extract?
- b. Why did he meet a psychiatrist friend?
- c. What was the response of the psychiatrist friend?
- d. How many levels were there at Grand Central Station according to the narrator?

2.My stamp collecting, was a temporary refuge from reality. Well, may be but my grandfather did not need any refuge from reality.

- a. What was stamp collecting to the narrator?
- b. Why did grandfather not need any refuge?
- c. Was it necessary for the narrator to do stamp collecting?
- d. Does stamp collecting really provide refuge to anyone? Give reasons

3.The lights were dim and sort of flickering. Then I saw why, they were open flame gaslights. There were brass spittoons on the floor and across the station a glint of light caught my eye.

- a. How were the lights at the Third level of the Grand Central Station?
- b. Give the meaning of 'flickering'.
- c. Why were there open flame gaslights?
- d. What things were observed by the narrator?

4.To make sure, I walked over to a newsboy and glanced at the stack of papers at his feet. It was 'The World' and 'The World' hasn't been published for years.

- a.Where was the narrator?
- b.How did the narrator make sure that he was in the past?
- c.What was the lead story on 'The World'?
- d.What do you mean by 'stack'?

5.For just a moment I thought I was back on the Second Level, but I saw the room was smaller, with fewer ticket windows and train gates, and the information booth was wood and old looking.

- a. What was the difference between the third level and the other level of Grand Central Station?
- b. How did the information booth look like?
- c. Why was Charley confused that he was on the Second Level?
- d. How many ticket windows and train gates were there on the Third Level?

6. Have you ever been there? It's a wonderful town still, with big old frame houses, huge lawns and tremendous trees whose branches meet overhead and roof the streets.

- a. Which place is the narrator talking about?
- b. How were the houses in that place?
- c. Explain 'roof the streets'.
- d. Why was the place mentioned called a 'wonderful town still' by the narrator?

7. "That ain't money mister"..... and if you are trying to skin me, you won't get very far.

- a. Who spoke these lines?
- b. Why did the booking clerk speak like that?
- c. Explain '...if you are trying to skin me'.
- d. What will be the consequences if Charley tried to 'skin' the booking clerk?

8. Louisa was pretty worried when I told her all this, and did not want me to look for the Third Level any more, and after a while I stopped.

- a. Why was Louisa worried?
- b. Why did Louisa not want Charley to look for the Third Level?
- c. Why did Charley stop looking for the Third level?
- d. What could be the reason of reaching the Third Level by Charley?

9. I went back to my stamps. But now we're both looking, every weekend, because now we have proof that the Third Level is there.

- a. What proof does the narrator talk about?
- b. Why did the narrator go back to stamp collection?
- c. Where did Charley and Louisa go every weekend?
- d. What is the Third Level here?

10. But there it was. It was there because someone had mailed it to my grandfather at his home in Galesburg.

- a. What does it refer to?

- b. Who mailed the envelope?
- c. Why did he mail the envelope?
- d. What was the letter about?

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS:

How do Charley's wife Louisa and his friend Sam react to the narrator's observation?

Ans - Charley the narrator states that there are three levels at Grand Central Station. His assertion is based on his personal observation. But his friend Sam said that Charley was unhappy and wanted to escape. His wife Louisa was shocked and worried. They both disbelieved him.

What do you learn about Galesburg, Illinois during 1894?

Ans - Galesburg has been described a peaceful place that was not ravaged by the two world wars. It has old framed houses, huge lawns and splendid trees with expanded branches. The men would smoke cigars talk quietly. The women would be waving palm leaves fans. They have ample time for themselves.

What do you know about the 'First Day Cover'?

Ans - When a new stamp is issued in any country, stamp collectors buy some and use them to mail envelopes at their own address on the very first day of release. They put a blank paper in the envelopes. The postmark proves the date of issue. The envelope is called a first day cover. It remains unopened.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE:

What strange experience did Charley have on the day when he went to the Grand Central Station?

How the narrator was convinced that he had come to the Third level?

Why did the clerk refuse to accept the money? Why did the narrator get out so fast?

Who was Sam? What had happened to him?

What role does Sam's letter play in the story?

Where did Charley go after reading Sam's letter?

What information did you gather about Sam?

Why do you think that Charley moved into the Third Level?

Long Answer Questions:

The story reveals refuge from reality to illusion. Do you think it is obvious to escape from reality of life?

Ans. Jack Finney portrays Charley's transition from reality to imaginary world through the story the Third Level .It seems probable as the author employs authenticity to the experience. Charley worked late night at the office and was in hurry to reach his apartment to be with his wife Louisa. He thinks of taking the subway since it seems faster than bus. Grand Central Station has been described mysterious and mushrooming with subways, staircases and corridors that leads to many ways and places. Moving through the tunnel Charley recounts his past experience that appears safe and quite normal. Modern world is full of insecurity, fear, war, worry and tension. He wants to escape from the harsh realities of modern world. His friend Sam also agrees with the escape theory. They claim that our hobbies also lead us to a temporary escape from reality. Finally his Psychiatrist friend reaches the Third Level and suggests Charley and his wife Louisa to keep on searching till they get it. The story weaves psychological phenomenal yarn to make it obvious.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE:

1. Give a brief description of the Third Level.
2. Charley wanted to buy two tickets to Galesburg, Illinois. Do you think his efforts succeed?
3. Modern world is full of insecurity, fear, worry and stress. What are the ways to overcome of these challenges in your opinion?
4. Comment on the ending of the story. or What is the irony in the end of the story?