

SUPPLEMENTARY READER

Chap : The Third Level by Jack Finney

About the Author :

Jack Finney was born on the 2nd of October, 1911, in the state of Wisconsin, United States.

He was a prominent American author renowned for his contributions to the genres of fiction and thrillers. His literary prowess was particularly celebrated for his adeptness in crafting vivid narratives. In the year 1954, he marked his literary debut with the publication of his inaugural work, titled "Against The House." However, it was his novel "Time and Again" that truly catapulted him to the zenith of literary recognition. This particular work delved into the theme of time travel and has earned the esteemed distinction of being labeled the "greatest time-travel story," an accolade ascribed to it by none other than Stephen King himself. It is worth noting that Jack Finney's literary repertoire has seen several of his works adapted into cinematic productions, although his primary claim to fame remains as a writer of short stories.

Among his noteworthy creations are included titles such as "Body Snatchers," "Breakfast in Bed," and "Assault on a Queen."

Introduction :

Jack Finney's "The Third Level," a literary contribution which graced the pages of The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction in the year 1952, is a work that delves into profound thematic dimensions, most notably those of escapism and the relentless yearning for tranquility.

The central protagonist, ensnared within the intricate labyrinth of his own psyche, becomes entrapped in a self-constructed delusion. This self-deception is characterized by an unwavering conviction that he has stumbled upon a clandestine avenue to journey backward in temporal epochs, with the earnest aspiration of translocating to the year 1894. There, he envisions an existence replete with the virtues of security and serenity, an idyllic sanctuary away from the tumultuous vicissitudes of contemporary existence.

As the narrative unfolds, the main character's enthrallment with his hallucinatory refuge becomes increasingly apparent. His perceptions become so inextricably interwoven with this fabricated realm that disentanglement from this artifice proves an insurmountable challenge, rendering him captive to a counterfeit reality that remains impervious to escape. In this context, the work poignantly explores the boundaries of the human mind, the power of illusion, and the elusive pursuit of temporal sanctuary.

Summary :

Charley, the main character, believes he discovered a secret level in Grand Central Station. Even though it sounds strange, he's convinced he's been to a third level in the station, even though in reality, there are only two levels. His doctor calls this a "waking dream wish fulfillment," which worries and upsets his wife. His friends also agree with this diagnosis, and they think that Charley's interest in stamp collecting is just a way to escape from reality.

But Charley disagrees. He says his stamp collection was started by his grandfather when there was no need to escape from anything. He believes it's not an escape. Many people collect stamps, including President Roosevelt.

One summer night, Charley decided to take the subway instead of the bus to save time. He knew Grand Central Station well and often discovered new doors and tunnels. That night, he wasn't interested in exploring; he just wanted to get home to his wife. However, he stumbled upon a strange tunnel and decided to follow it. This is how he found the third level of Grand Central Station, which seemed to be from the year 1894. People were dressed in old-fashioned clothes, there were spittoons on the floor, and he saw a small old-fashioned locomotive.

To confirm his suspicions, he checked a newspaper and realized he was in the past. He wanted to buy train tickets to move with his wife to Galesburg, Illinois, a place without worries, stress, or wars in the near future. But he couldn't buy the tickets because he didn't have the old-style currency. He left in a hurry. The next day, he withdrew most of his savings, converted them to the right currency, and tried to find the third level again. He searched but couldn't find the passage, so he gave up.

Now, he and his wife look for that tunnel every day. He discovers an old stamp in his collection that wasn't there before. The stamp is on a letter from Sam, who tells Charley to keep looking for the third level. Charley keeps searching and is happy that his friend Sam found a way to a new life. In the end, Charley reveals that Sam, who moved to the year 1894, is actually his psychiatrist.

Reference to Context :

Question : Read the given extracts and answer the questions .

I. There were brass spittoons on the floor, and across the station a glint of light caught my eye; a man was pulling a gold watch from his vest pocket. He snapped open the cover, glanced at his watch and frowned. He wore a derby hat, a black four-button suit with tiny lapels, and he had a big, black, handlebar mustache. Then I looked around and saw that everyone in the station was dressed like eighteen-ninety-something; I never saw so many beards, sideburns and fancy mustaches in my life. A woman walked in through the train gate; she wore a dress with leg-of-mutton sleeves and skirts to the top of her high-buttoned shoes. Back of her, out on the tracks, I caught a glimpse of a locomotive, a very small Currier & Ives locomotive with a funnel-shaped stack. And then I knew.

Questions :

a. What caught the protagonist's eye across the station?

- A) A gold watch B) Brass spittoons
C) A man with a derby hat D) A locomotive

Answer: A) A gold watch

b. What style of clothing did the people in the station appear to be wearing?

Answer: The people in the station appeared to be dressed in clothing from the 1890s.

c. Why does the protagonist feel a sense of recognition and understanding at the end of the passage?

Answer: The protagonist sees the clothing, the locomotive, and other details that strongly suggest he has traveled back in time to the year 1890, which is why he feels a sense of recognition and understanding.

d. What does the phrase "leg-of-mutton sleeves" refer to in the passage?

Answer: "Leg-of-mutton sleeves" refers to a style of puffed, wide sleeves often seen in clothing from the late 19th century.

II. But I've never again found the corridor that leads to the third level at Grand Central Station, although I've tried often enough. Louisa was pretty worried when I told her all this, and didn't want me to look for the third level any more, and after a while I stopped; I went back to my stamps. But now we're both looking, every weekend, because now we have proof that the third level is still there.

My friend Sam Weiner disappeared! Nobody knew where, but I sort of suspected because Sam's a city boy, and I used to tell him about Galesburg "I went to school there" and he always said he liked the sound of the place. And that's where he is, all right. In 1894.

Questions :

a. What is the protagonist searching for at Grand Central Station?

A) A lost friend B) The third level

C) His stamp collection D) Proof of time travel

Answer: B) The third level

b. Why is the protagonist and his wife now searching for the third level at Grand Central Station?

Answer: They are searching for the third level because their friend Sam Weiner disappeared and is believed to have traveled to 1894 through that level.

c. Why did the protagonist's wife initially want him to stop looking for the third level, and why did he stop looking for a while?

Answer: The protagonist's wife, Louisa, was worried about his obsession with finding the third level.

She initially wanted him to stop because it was causing him distress. He stopped for a while to focus on his stamp collection.

d. What does the mention of Sam Weiner's disappearance and his preference for Galesburg reveal about his whereabouts?

Answer: The mention of Sam Weiner's disappearance and his preference for Galesburg suggests that he has traveled to Galesburg in 1894 through the third level, as the protagonist suspected.

III.

That night, among my oldest first-day covers, I found one that shouldn't have been there. But there it was. It was there because someone had mailed it to my grandfather at his home in Galesburg; that's what the address on the envelope said. And it had been there since July 18, 1894 "the postmark showed that" yet I didn't remember it at all. The stamp was a six-cent, dull brown, with a picture of President Garfield. Naturally, when the envelope came to Granddad in the mail, it went right into his collection and stayed there "till I took it out and opened it. The paper inside wasn't blank.

IV. Questions :

a. Why did the protagonist find an unusual first-day cover among his oldest covers?

- A) It was from a distant relative. B) It was a rare stamp.
C) It was wrongly placed there. D) It had a postmark from 1894.

Answer: C) It was wrongly placed there.

b. What was significant about the first-day cover found among the protagonist's oldest covers? Answer: It had an address from 1894 and contained a paper inside.

c. Why did the first-day cover have an address from 1894, and what does this discovery signify?

Answer: The first-day cover had an address from 1894 because it had been mailed to the protagonist's grandfather in Galesburg at that time. This discovery suggests that the protagonist's earlier experiences and beliefs about time travel may have some validity, as the cover appears to have traveled through time.

d.: What does the phrase "first-day cover" refer to in the passage?

Answer: A "first-day cover" is an envelope with a stamp that is postmarked on the first day of its release, often collected by philatelists.

V. That night, among my oldest first-day covers, I found one that shouldn't have been there. But there it was. It was there because someone had mailed it to my grandfather at his home in Galesburg; that's what the address on the envelope said. And it had been there since July 18, 1894 "the postmark showed that" yet I didn't remember it at all. The stamp was a six-cent, dull brown, with a picture of President Garfield. Naturally, when the envelope came to Granddad in the mail, it went right into his collection and stayed there "till I took it out and opened it. The paper inside wasn't blank.

a. Why did the protagonist find an unusual first-day cover among his oldest covers?

- A) It was from a distant relative. B) It was a rare stamp.
C) It was wrongly placed there. D) It had a postmark from 1894.

Answer: C) It was wrongly placed there.

b. What was significant about the first-day cover found among the protagonist's oldest covers? Answer: It had an address from 1894 and contained a paper inside.

c. Why did the first-day cover have an address from 1894, and what does this discovery signify?

Answer: The first-day cover had an address from 1894 because it had been mailed to the protagonist's grandfather in Galesburg at that time. This discovery suggests that the protagonist's earlier experiences and beliefs about time travel may have some validity, as the cover appears to have traveled through time.

d. What does the phrase "first-day cover" refer to in the passage?

Answer: A "first-day cover" is an envelope with a stamp that is postmarked on the first day of its release, often collected by philatelists.

Short answer type questions to be answered in 40- 50 words.

1. Explain the phrase –‘swear on a stack of timetables’.

In the story "The Third Level," the expression "swear on a stack of timetables" is a rhetorical device employed to underscore the absolute certainty and conviction of the presidents of the New York Central and New York, New Haven, and Hartford railroads. They use this phrase to assert that Grand Central Station has only two levels. It conveys their unwavering confidence in their statement, as if they were taking a solemn oath on a pile of crucial documents.

2. Why do you think Charley withdrew nearly all the money he had from the bank to buy old-style currency?

Ans. In the story "The Third Level," Charley decides to withdraw a significant portion of his funds from the bank to acquire old-style currency. He does this because he firmly believes that the third level at Grand Central Terminal serves as a gateway to the past. His intention is to secure a financial means of sustenance in the year 1894. Charley's confidence stems from his belief that the currency from that era would have greater value in the past, providing him and his wife, Louisa, with a financial safety net in case they cannot return to the present day.

3.How did Charley often get lost on the Grand Central Station? (2010 Delhi)

Answer: The Grand Central Station's expansion resembled the growth of a tree, with countless corridors, doorways, and stairs extending like roots. Its pathways were complex and interwoven, leading to confusion. Navigating the station often involved moving both up and down as one searched for entrances and exits, causing Charley to frequently lose his way.

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

Answer: The challenges, stresses, and uncertainties of the modern world are having a significant impact on people's mental well-being. They often feel powerless and overwhelmed, leading them to seek temporary relief from the harsh realities of life. Charley, facing a fast-paced and stressful life, saw the third level as a means of escape. However, this was a product of his own imagination. His intention was to break free from the modern world's insecurities, fears, worries, and stress by entering a world of dreams and fantasies.

5.What made Charley believe that he was actually standing at the third level?

Answer: One evening, Charley worked late at his office, feeling rushed to return home. He decided to take the subway from Grand Central Station. While navigating, he entered an arched doorway and unintentionally found himself on the third level of Grand Central Station. This level had a distinctly old and romantic atmosphere with fewer, wooden ticket windows, open flame gaslights, and people sporting beards and vintage clothing. Charley's experience led him to believe he was truly on the third level, longing to escape from the challenges of the modern world into the serene setting of 1894.

6.What is being inferred from Sam's letter to Charley?

Answer: Sam's letter to Charley is postmarked July 18, 1894, and originates from Galesburg, Illinois. In response to Charley's claim of having visited the third level, Sam, who shares similar doubts and insecurities, expresses his desire for the entire experience to be true. He, too, believes in the existence of the third level. The letter contains some noteworthy inferences. The introductory section of the letter validates Charley's belief in the third level's existence. It also suggests that those who discover the third level can journey to Galesburg and partake in the merriment, music, and serenity of the 1890s. In this manner, the author utilizes Sam's letter to blend elements of reality and fantasy, creating a unique narrative.

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

Answer. This story exemplifies the interplay of time and space. It features a dichotomy between the contemporary world and the 1890s, symbolized by the two levels of Grand Central Station. The presence of 21st-century elements like New York Central and references to Galesburg, Illinois in 1890s underscores this intersection. Charley and Louisa, rooted in the present, seek to access the past, emphasizing the convergence of different temporal and spatial dimensions. The letter sent to Charley's grandfather in 1894 further accentuates this interplay, as it involves individuals from different time periods.

8. Apparent illogicality sometimes turns out to be a futuristic projection. Discuss.

Answer. Yes, apparent illogicality sometimes turns out to be a futuristic projection. This is not only true but has been proved time and again. Sometimes what seems to be illogical at the very beginning turns out to be a reality in the future. World's greatest discoveries and the technologies without which we can't imagine our lives today were once an idea in someone's mind and were unimaginable to most people. The idea of the light bulb was regarded as impossible until Thomas Edison invented it. The invention of aeroplanes and cars, electricity and the internet, mobile phones, and televisions were considered impossible too. The ideas of these inventions were regarded as illogical and the scientists working on them were called insane. But, today we use it all. Similarly, the possibility of having a railway station that allows us to time travel from past to future cannot be completely ruled out.

9. Philately helps keep the past alive. Discuss other ways in which this is done. What do you think of the human tendency to constantly move between the past, the present, and the future?

(Philately: the collection and study of postage stamps)

Answer. In addition to philately, various aspects of our daily lives serve to preserve the past in the present. This includes collecting old-style currency, indulging in vintage books, movies, and music, preserving photos, letters, and keepsakes that evoke cherished memories. Visiting heritage sites and upholding traditional customs also connects us to our cultural roots. The human capacity to recollect the past and anticipate the future enables us to seek solace and understanding in a fast-paced, often stress-inducing world. Reflecting on the past aids in learning from past errors and shaping our choices to realize our envisioned future.

10. You have read 'Adventure' by Jayant Narlikar in Hornbill Class XI. Compare the interweaving of fantasy and reality in the two stories.

Answer. The intertwining of fantasy and reality is a common theme in both stories, which delve into the science fiction concept of time travel. Both narratives illustrate how our strong desires can lead us to believe in things that aren't real. Charley and Professor Gaitonde grapple with a blurred line between reality and imagination. Gaitonde becomes consumed by the Battle of Panipat, altering its outcome in his mind. Charley, desiring a better life, imagines the existence of the third level at Grand Central Station as an escape from his reality. Both characters use fantasy to cope with disappointing circumstances.

11. Why did Charley run away from ticket counter when he went to buy old currency?

Ans. When Charley went to the ticket counter to purchase tickets for himself and Louisa to Galesburg, he used contemporary currency, which was unacceptable due to the old-fashioned nature of the station and the era it represented. The ticket clerk, upon seeing the modern currency, threatened to have Charley arrested unless he left immediately. Fearing imprisonment, Charley hastily departed from the counter.

12. What convinced Louisa and Charley about the existence of the third level?

Ans. Initially, Louisa was very concerned when Charley told her about the third level. She didn't want Charley to look for the third level anymore. Louisa and Charley became convinced of the existence of the third level when Charley found a letter from his friend Sam. The letter was dated July 18, 1894, and was sent from Galesburg, Illinois. This letter provided concrete proof that supported Charley's claims about the third level. It showed that the third level was a real place, not just a product of Charley's imagination, as Sam had written about visiting it in the past.

13. What does Charley's journey to Galesburg reveal about the power of imagination?

Ans: Charley's journey underscores the power of a vivid imagination to transport an individual to an alternate time and place, albeit solely within their mental realm. It showcases the capacity of human imagination to create immersive and convincing experiences, blurring the lines between reality and fantasy.

14. In your opinion, was Charley's belief in the third level a delusion, or did he really travel back in time?

Ans.: The story purposefully does not provide a definitive answer to this question, leaving it open to readers' interpretation. Charley's experiences can be seen as either a product of his imagination (a delusion) or a real journey through time. The story allows for individual perspectives and opinions regarding the nature of his adventures.

Long answer type questions to be answered in 120-150 words.

1. In "The Third Level," Sam is a character deserving of evaluation. Two notable qualities that characterize him are his intellectual acumen and unwavering skepticism, both of which find ample substantiation in the text. Explain.

Answer : Sam exhibits a profound intellect and expertise in his role as a psychiatrist. This is evident when he accurately diagnoses Charley's condition and provides a thorough understanding of the psychological underpinnings of Charley's obsession. He succinctly articulates his assessment, stating, "Your Third Level, in short, is a form of escape, of wish fulfillment, from the stresses and problems of your life and your times." This demonstrates Sam's capability to comprehend the intricacies of Charley's situation and convey his analysis cogently.

Moreover, Sam's skepticism is a defining aspect of his character. Throughout the narrative, he maintains a rational and questioning stance in relation to Charley's claims of having stumbled upon a portal to the past. He continuously challenges Charley, encouraging him to introspect and consider whether these experiences are manifestations of his psychological state rather than authentic time-travel occurrences. This critical skepticism underscores Sam's commitment to the empirical and his reluctance to readily embrace fantastical notions. However, as the story concludes, it is revealed that Sam, too, has uncovered the third level and ventured back in time, an unexpected twist that subverts his initial skepticism, further adding depth to his character.

2. In "The Third Level," Charley's journey to confirm the existence of the third level is marked by a series of intriguing discoveries. 'The World,' a significant piece of evidence, played a pivotal role in confirming his doubts regarding this extraordinary phenomenon.

Upon first entering the third level, Charley was understandably bewildered by the abrupt shift in surroundings and time. However, his initial uncertainty began to dissipate as he made a remarkable observation. Within the third level, he encountered a seemingly ordinary, yet profoundly telling artifact:

a copy of 'The World,' a widely recognized newspaper that had ceased its publication prior to 1894.

As Charley leafed through the pages of this newspaper, he made an astonishing revelation. The publication date on 'The World' was clearly indicated as June 11, 1894. This unambiguous temporal marker served as a critical piece of evidence, substantiating his belief that he had indeed traveled back to the year 1894. However, it was the lead story within the newspaper that truly solidified Charley's confirmation.

The article featured information about President Cleveland, further anchoring the year in historical context. This revelation was instrumental in dispelling any lingering doubts Charley might have harbored about the authenticity of his time-travel experience, as it *clearly* situated him within the historical timeline of 1894.

3. 'It's easy to judge others and give advice, but much more difficult to apply it to ourselves.'

Elaborate with reference to the character of Sam in The Third Level.

Ans : In the narrative of "The Third Level," the character of Sam initially presents a stance steeped in skepticism and doubt regarding Charley's conviction that the third level of the Grand Central Terminal serves as a gateway to the past. He readily scrutinizes Charley's assertions and provides logical explanations for what initially appears to be an implausible phenomenon.

Nevertheless, as the story unfolds, a transformation occurs within Sam. He progressively becomes captivated by Charley's unwavering fixation on the third level and commences to entertain the possibility that there may be validity to his friend's claims. This evolution in Sam's perspective culminates in his personal voyage of discovery, wherein he, too, encounters the third level and embarks on a journey through time, thereby substantiating Charley's convictions.

Sam's trajectory throughout the narrative illuminates a poignant lesson on the challenge of applying one's counsel and beliefs to their own life experiences. In spite of his rational disposition and initial skepticism, Sam ultimately embraces the notion of time travel and the actuality of the third level. This narrative element underscores the notion that modifying one's own preconceived notions and beliefs can be a far more intricate endeavor than offering advice or solutions to others. It exemplifies the complexity of reconciling personal skepticism with an openness to the extraordinary, and the transformative power of direct experience in reshaping one's perspective.

4. Imagine that you come across Louisa's diary. What might you find in it about the third level? Compose at least one diary entry based on any of the events from the story, 'The Third Level'.

Dear Diary,

Today was a day like no other. My husband, Charley, came home with an astonishing tale of a hidden third level within the Grand Central Terminal. He claims that this mysterious level can transport a person back in time. Initially, I dismissed it as a fanciful notion or perhaps a sign of undue stress.

Charley's enthusiasm for this idea was infectious, though, and as he began to present evidence, such as the antiquated currency he obtained from our bank, doubt began to creep into my mind.

What struck me most was Charley's unwavering conviction. He believes in this third level so profoundly that he has withdrawn a substantial portion of our savings to invest in outdated currency. This decision has me deeply concerned about our financial security, but it also kindles a spark of curiosity within me. What if Charley's extraordinary theory holds some truth? What if it's possible to journey into the past?

In truth, I find myself torn. Part of me is apprehensive about the risks Charley is taking, while another part is captivated by the allure of time travel. Charley's steadfast belief is a stark contrast to my own tendency to question and doubt. It makes me wonder if I should embrace such resolute convictions, even if they entail significant risks.

The future is uncertain, but it holds the promise of adventure and discovery as Charley delves further into the enigma of the third level. Perhaps, in time, I may find myself joining him on a remarkable journey through the annals of history.

Yours truly,

Louisa