

## **10 Character Sketches for class 10**

### **Important points to be noted while creating Character Sketches**

- ❖ Recall the story and identify the characters.
- ❖ Describe the role and significance of the character.
- ❖ Describe the character's physique/appearance.
- ❖ Describe the character's personality traits like manners, behaviour, temperament etc.
- ❖ Write about the character's relationship with other characters in the story.
- ❖ Quote details from the story to substantiate your views.

#### **1. Vanka**

*Vanka is the central character in the story Vanka by Anton Chekhov. He is a nine year old orphan. He was living in a village with his mother and grandfather. After his mother's death, he was sent to Moscow to apprentice under a shoe-maker named Alyakhin. At a very tender age he became a child labour. He was deprived of all his child rights. He did not get his primary education other than what he learned from his play-mate Olga. Vanka has to suffer a lot at the Alyakhin's. It has been only three months since he reached Moscow. But his sufferings are so severe and beyond description that made him write a letter pleading his grandpa to come and save him as quickly as possible. Vanka is very much afraid of his master, mistress and other senior apprentices. When he wrote the secret letter, he was watchful not to be seen by others. He is very nostalgic about his village life, especially of the Christmas time he used to spend with his mother, grandpa and Olga. Vanka's child-like innocence is very visible in his letter. Even when he wrote about his miserable life, which was worse than that of a dog, he did not forget to write about the wonderful sights of the big town of Moscow. In a little village boy's eyes, shops selling fishing-hooks, guns and even butchery are sights of surprise. The boy is very innocent and he does not know even the basic of sending a letter. He posted the letter without proper address and postage, and he spends days in the dreams of his grandpa's arrival, his sole saviour!*

#### **2. Konstantin Makarich, Vanka's Granddad.**

*Konstantin Makarich is the grandfather of Vanka, the protagonist in the story Vanka. He is a night watchman on the estate of the Zhivarev family. He is a small, lean, old man*

about sixty five years of age. He is remarkably lively and agile with a smiling face and eyes bleary with drink. He is a fun-loving man. In the day time either he sleeps in the back kitchen or spends time cracking jokes with the cooks and other kitchen maids. In the night he does his watchman duty walking round and round the estate, sounding his rattle, wearing a large sheepskin coat and felt boots. He has two dogs namely Kashtanka and Eel. He will always be in the company of his beloved dogs. He has the habit of snuffing tobacco and he will offer the snuff to kitchen maids and even to his dogs. He enjoys seeing them sneeze, breaking out into jolly laughter. This grandfather is the only relative of Vanka now remaining in this world for him. When we read about Vanka's miserable plight at Alyakhin's, we might ask ourselves why this man has sent the boy to such a cruel person. But we cannot blame the old, innocent and illiterate man. We are sure that while sending Vanka to Moscow, he must have in his mind only the thought that his grandchild should learn a trade and earn a living!

### **3. The Homoeopathic Doctor**

The homoeopathic doctor is the protagonist of the story **The Snake and the Mirror** by the renowned Malayalam writer **Vaikom Mohammed Basheer**. The story is a humorous account of the doctor's encounter with a cobra. He is a young and unmarried doctor recently set up his medical practice, and therefore, his income is very meagre. He is staying alone in a rented house, and there are lots of rats to share the room with him. He is very beauty-conscious and often lives in the world of dreams. He believes that he has more acceptance in the society as he is a young, handsome bachelor and a doctor by profession. He seems that he wants to be rich by a short-cut way. He wants to marry a rich, young woman doctor having a good medical practice. His humour sense is revealed when he says that he wants to marry a fat lady for a valid reason. The reason is that she should not be able to chase and catch him if he did some silly mistake and needed to run away. One night, as usual when he was in a flight of fancy sitting in front of the mirror in his room, a big cobra slithered up on him and coiled on his left arm. Despite he had to sit like a stone image in fright, he did not lose his presence of mind. In the helpless situation he could not but rely on the mercy of God, and he pathetically scribed the words 'O God' on the walls of his heart, though he had not been that much religious till then. Seeing its image in the mirror, the snake left him and moved towards it leaving him. He jumped out of the room and ran for his life until he reached his friends. The doctor is a jovial person having a good circle-of-friends. He likes killing times with them smoking beedis, discussing various topics and telling stories. The 'snake story' is one of such stories.

#### **4. Mr. Thorat**

*Mr. Thorat is one of the most important characters of Satyajit Ray's memoir **Project Tiger**. He is the ringmaster of the Bharat Circus. He is a South Indian, very well built, with features somewhat like those of a Nepali. He is not more than forty years old and he is in charge of the risky tasks of training and keeping wild animals in the circus company. He has undergone many tiger attacks, and he has their scars on his hand. He appears to be a man with enough practical wisdom. He brings two tigers instead of one to the shooting location. If one tiger does not behave well, the other one can be used; that is his idea. He seems not be confident about setting his tigers free on their own. But he himself suggests a solution. A thin but strong iron wire can be fixed around the neck of the tiger and it will not be visible to the camera. He is seen very much frightened and helpless at the unexpected misbehaviour of the ferocious tiger. He fails to control the animal when it turned violent. But Mr. Thorat is hard working and adventurous and a man of high regard for others. When the first shooting attempt failed, he readily agrees to take the risk of bringing the tigers for the second time. He is a very cooperative person, and without his cooperation Ray's film *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* would not have been realized.*

#### **5. Mr. John in the anecdote 'The Best Investment I Ever Made'**

*Mr. John appears in the story as a middle-aged man in his early 40s. He is short-built with a fair complexion and clear blue eyes. He has started getting bald as his thin hair began to recede from his forehead. He is rather reserved in temperament and serious in appearance, especially in his dark suit and sober tie. He has earnestly been in search of Dr AJ Cronin for quite a quarter of a century. But when he comes across him unexpectedly during a ship journey, his timidity prevents him from approaching Dr Cronin. His wife persuades and encourages him to meet and talk to Dr. Cronin. Mr. John is a respectful person with high regard to his life saviour. He tries to remind Dr. Cronin the tragic incident that took place about 25 years ago. Mr. John had an unpleasant and miserable past. In his youth he led a loose life and lost everything he possessed. He gambled, borrowed money hugely and spent extravagantly. He even stole some money from his work place. Lost everything, became distressed and anguished he decided to end his life. From the suicide attempt he was saved by three kind-hearted people – Dr. AJ Cronin, a police sergeant and the landlady of the lodge where he had stayed. After gaining a second life, he decided to become a new man with a fresh start. He pledged the rest of his life for charity and social work. For the last 15 years he and*

his wife have been in the field of the social service. Mr. John remembers the three people in utmost gratitude and believes that he is indebted to Dr. Cronin for every breath now he takes.

### **6. Martha in the short story 'The Scholarship Jacket'**

*Martha*, the central character in the story '**The Scholarship Jacket**' is a character of mixed feelings. She is sensitive, bold and brilliant. She is 14 years old and an eighth grade student maintaining a consistent 'A' level since her first grade. She is in every sense qualified enough to win the prestigious scholarship jacket, an award to the class valedictorian of her school. Martha is the daughter of a poor Mexican farm labourer. Owing to the poverty at her own family, she has been living with her grandparents. In appearance she is very lean and her friends call her 'beanpole' and 'string bean'. Once she happens to overhear a heated argument between her two teachers. She understands that a conspiracy is going on to undermine her chance of winning the jacket. Eventually the principal asks her to pay 15 dollars for the award. Although bold and brilliant, this incident makes her cry in despair. But when Martha's granddad tells her that a paid award is not an award at all, she accepts his words. She strongly believes that she deserves the award by merit and it will come on her way. She determines to tell the principal looking straight into his eyes that she is not ready to pay. Here, we see a bold Martha. However, later when Martha hears from the principal the happiest news that she is going to get the jacket, she cannot control her happiness. She wants to express her extreme joy by whatever means – she wants to yell, jump or run the mile. While rushing back home to impart her happy news to her grandpa and grandma, she can't help crying – but this time a cry of joy. Martha's words and deeds show that she is quite bold and sensible but at the same time sensitive and childlike.

### **7. Martha's Grandfather**

Martha's grandfather is probably the most important character in the story, **The Scholarship Jacket**. In our mind he will be the winner once we finish reading the full story. His words "if you pay for it, it won't be a scholarship jacket" could make even the principal change his decision. He is somewhat a rich farmer owning a two-hundred acre ranch. He is seen in the story working always in his farm field. He is a sort of reserved type but a man of strong determination. Though he is uneducated, he believes that it is injustice to pay for a deserving award. So he strongly stands with his belief even when his granddaughter cried for money. Finally, his words win and Martha gets the award. On both the occasions when he hears the sad and happy news regarding the scholarship jacket, his reaction does not change. When his granddaughter tells him about her

winning the jacket, he still doesn't express his rejoice in words. He just gives her a smile and a pat on her shoulder. As the proverb says, 'still waters run deep', some people will not show overtly their deep love and affection. We are sure that Martha's grandfather is a man of this sort.

### **8. Think-Tank**

In the play, **The Book that Saved the Earth**, the most ridiculous and funniest character is **Think-Tank**. He has a domineering mentality over others. He thinks himself to be the most intelligent and powerful creature in the whole universe. He is the great and mighty commander-in-chief of the Martians. He appears to be a funny creature with a huge egg-shaped head and he wears a long robe decorated with circles and stars. When the apprentice Noodle addresses him as "great and mighty Think-Tank, most powerful and intelligent creature in the whole universe", he simply does not become satisfied. He orders to address him again from beginning including the missing part of his salutation. Noodle salutes him again adding "Ruler of Mars and her two moons". Think-tank asks the mirror who 'the most fantastically intellectually gifted being in the land' is. He gets angry and smacks the mirror, when the reply to this question is a little delayed. When he sees a book, he intellectually interprets it as a sandwich and the bookshelves as crude refreshment stands. When Noodle says that the book may be a communication device, he immediately pretends that he knows it already and calls it a communication sandwich. The Martians under their great and mighty commander-in-chief Think-Tank are on a mission to attack the Earthlings. But at the end of the play, Think-Tank is seen very much afraid of the Earthlings. He himself seeks ways to escape and orders his crew to leave the earth at once. All these words and deeds of Think-Tank show that, although he thinks himself to be the most intelligent and the mightiest, he is really a gullible coward.

### **9. The mother in the story 'Adolf'**

The narrator's mother in the story, 'Adolf' by **DH Lawrence**, is probably a character having the equal prominence as Adolf himself. Throughout the story the mother and Adolf are seen at opposite poles. Though the mother's words and deeds are apparently against the idea of keeping pet animals at home, she has her own justification for every protest she makes. She always complains about the father's wantonness and the habit of bringing wild creatures home, but she is seen as a person of some practical wisdom. Though she is seen as a resentful woman, she is a responsible house-wife and an affectionate mother. Though the father and children do not take her objections seriously and her words are always drowned in their persistency, often her words sound sensible. She strongly believes that the wild animals are always wild, and we cannot fully alter their natural instinct of being wild by our love and care. The more we love them, the more our pain will be, if we lose them. She does not want her children suffer from that pain. And that is one of the reasons why she always objects making wild animals as pets. She hates animals putting nose in the food, making inside the house dirty and destroying household things. We cannot but see all these as good qualities of a responsible home-

maker, and she cannot be blamed for. Even when keeping Adolf is worse than having a child to look after, she is very anxious about his protection from the prowling cats. Also, when Adolf destroyed her proudly owned lace-curtain and beloved pelargonium, she does not punish him severely. But, in fact, the mother's stand teaches the father and children the fact that human love and affection towards wild animals will make them feel suffocated and under arrest. This realisation finally prompts them to send Adolf back into the wild woods.

### **10. The Father in the story 'Adolf'**

The father in the story **Adolf** gives us the impression that he is a bit rough-and-tough type man. His children feel uneasy in his presence at home. His presence is always disturbing and trammelling for them. He is a night-shift worker in a mine. He has got a heavy slurring walking manner. But he likes to take long walk through the dew fields in the early mornings. He appears in the imagination of the readers as a discomforting personality. He has yellow-grey eyes, large red lips and he keeps a thick beard. He talks little and laughs enigmatically. He has peculiar and haphazard mannerisms. He sits heavily in his armchair, blows his tea and wipes his naked forearm over his lips and beard. The mother in the story complains him to be a wanton person. He is in the habit of bringing wild creatures home and trying to make them pets. Many he has brought before, but none has lived so far. It has created storms of tears and trouble in their house. That's why the mother always objects his habit of bringing wild creatures home. Though the father appears to be a tough man, inwardly he is loving and kind-hearted. He loves to make his children happy at home, and shows mercy to abandoned little creatures outside. His consideration and compassion towards the creatures compelled him to bring home the little rabbit when he found it left alone by the side of its dead mother and other three dead little ones. Finally, when Adolf became unmanageably troublesome at home, the father once again put the rabbit in his pit-jacket pocket and took it back into the wild woods!

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