



Let's log in:

'There is no sun without shadow...it is essential to know the night.'

- Albert Camus

What do you think 'sun' and 'shadow' mean in the context?

What does the 'night' represent?

How are good times and bad times related to each other?

You may discuss these questions in groups.



Let's read and reflect:

Kindness and empathy are essential qualities in our world. These spread light and hope even in the darkest times. Our society tends to isolate the ones who appear different, especially those who are weak and vulnerable. We may not always realise that even small acts of compassion can have a significant impact on many lives.

A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings

- Gabriel Garcia Marquez

The light was weak, even at noon. When Pelayo was coming back to the house, it was hard for him to see what was moving and groaning in the rear of the courtyard.

He had to go very close to see that it was an old man, a very old man.



The man was lying face down in the mud. In spite of his tremendous efforts, the man couldn't get up, **impeded** by his enormous wings.

Frightened by the sight, Pelayo ran to get Elisenda, his wife. She was putting **compresses** on their sick child.

While we read

- Why does the sight of the old man frighten Pelayo?
- Why was the old man unable to get up?

My words

My questions

He took her to the rear of the courtyard. They both looked at the fallen body.

The man was dressed like a **ragpicker**. There were only a few faded hairs left on his bald skull and very few teeth in his mouth. His pitiful condition seemed that of a **drenched** great-grandfather. This took away any sense of **grandeur** he might have had. His huge **buzzard** wings, dirty and half-plucked, were entangled in the mud.

They looked at him so long and so closely that Pelayo and Elisenda very soon overcame their surprise. In the end they found him familiar. Then they dared speak to him. He answered in an **incomprehensible dialect** with a strong sailor's voice.

They concluded that he was a lonely **castaway** from some foreign ship, wrecked by the storm. Then they called in a neighbour woman to see him. All she needed was one look to show them their mistake. "He's an angel," she told them. "He must have been coming for the child, but the poor fellow is so old that the rain knocked him down."

On the following day everyone knew that a flesh-and-blood angel was held captive in Pelayo's house. Pelayo watched over him all afternoon from the kitchen, armed with his **bailiff's** club. Before going to bed, he dragged him out of the mud and locked him up with the hens in the chicken coop.

A short time afterward the child woke up without a fever and with a desire to eat. Then they felt **magnanimous**. They decided to put the angel on a raft with fresh water and provisions for three days, and leave him to his fate on the high seas.

But when they went out into the courtyard at the first light of dawn, they found the whole neighbourhood in front of the chicken coop having fun with the angel. The visitors were tossing him things to eat through the openings in the coop. It was as if he weren't a supernatural creature but a circus animal.

While we read

- c. The couple consider the old man a 'lonely castaway'. Why?
- d. Why was the neighbour woman sure that the old man was an angel?
- e. Why did Pelayo arm himself with a club?
- f. What made the couple suddenly decide to treat the man with some 'kindness'?
- g. Why does Pelayo lock the old man in the chicken coop?
- h. Why do the people treat the old man like a 'circus animal'?

My words

My questions

The news of the captive angel spread with great rapidity. After a few hours, the courtyard had the bustle of a marketplace. The couple had to call in troops to disperse the mob.

They got the idea of fencing in the yard, and charging five cents for admission to see the angel. The curious came from far away. The most unfortunate **invalids** on earth came in search of health.

Pelayo and Elisenda were happy with fatigue. In less than a week they had crammed their rooms with money. Still the line of pilgrims waiting their turn to enter reached beyond the horizon.



The angel was the only one who took no part in his own act. He spent his time trying to get comfortable in his borrowed nest. At first, they tried to make him eat some **mothballs**. But he ate nothing but eggplant mush.

His only supernatural virtue seemed to be patience. He was quite patient when the hens pecked at him, searching

for the parasites in his wings. He was patient again when the cripples pulled out his feathers to touch their limbs with. He remained patient when even the most merciful threw stones at him. After all, they were only trying to get him to rise so that they could see him standing.

It so happened that during those days there arrived in the town a travelling show. The main attraction was a woman who had been changed into a spider by a burst of thunder and lightning. The admission fee to see her was less than the fee to see the angel. So, the people flocked to see her. They were also permitted to ask her all manner of questions about her absurd state.

While we read

- i. Do you think Elisenda is shrewd and clever? Why?
- j. 'His only supernatural virtue seemed to be patience.' Why does the author say so?
- k. Why do more people flock to see the woman rather than the old man?

My words

My questions

The owners of the house had no reason to lament. With the money they saved they built a two-storey mansion with balconies and gardens. It also had high netting so that crabs wouldn't get in during the winter, and iron bars on the windows so that angels wouldn't get in.

Pelayo also set up a **rabbit warren** and gave up his job as a bailiff for good. Elisenda bought some satin **pumps** with high heels and many dresses of **iridescent** silk.

The chicken coop was the only thing that didn't receive any attention. The dung-heap stench from the coop was turning the new house into an old one.

At first, when the child learned to walk, they were careful that he did not get too close to the coop. But then they began to lose their fears and got used to the smell. Before the child got his second teeth, he'd gone inside the chicken coop to play, as the wires were falling apart. They both came down with the chicken pox at the same time.

The doctor who took care of the child couldn't resist the temptation to listen to the angel's heart. He found so much whistling in the heart and so many sounds in the kidneys. What surprised him most, however, was the logic of his wings. They seemed so natural on that completely human organism. He couldn't understand why other people didn't have them too.

When the child began school, the sun and rain had caused the collapse of the chicken coop. The angel went dragging himself about here and there like a stray dying man. He seemed to be in so many places at the same time.

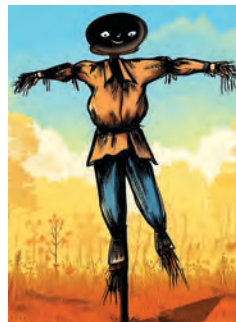
He could scarcely eat, and his eyes had also become so foggy that he went about bumping into posts. Pelayo threw a blanket over him and let him sleep in the shed. Only then did they notice that he had a temperature at night. They became alarmed, for they thought he was going to die. And yet he not only survived his worst winter but seemed improved with the first sunny days. He remained motionless for several days in the farthest corner of the courtyard. At the beginning of December some large, stiff feathers began to grow on his wings. They looked like the feathers of a **scarecrow**.

While we read

1. Why is the doctor surprised by the 'logic' of the wings?

My words

My questions



scarecrow

One morning Elisenda was cutting some bunches of onions for lunch when a wind blew into the kitchen. Then she went to the window and found the angel in his first attempts at flight. These were so clumsy that he was on the point of knocking the shed down as he couldn't get a grip on the air. But then, he did manage to gain altitude.

Elisenda let out a sigh of relief, for herself and for him, when she watched him pass over the last houses. He was holding himself up in some way with the risky flapping of a **senile** vulture.



She kept watching him even when she was through cutting the onions. She kept on watching until it was no longer possible for her to see him. He was no longer an annoyance in her life but an imaginary dot on the horizon of the sea.

(Adapted)

While we read

m. Why does Elisenda let out a sigh of relief?

My words

My questions

About the Author

Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1927-2014) was a Colombian novelist and one of the greatest writers of the 20th century. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982. His notable works are *Love in the Time of Cholera*, *No One Writes to the Colonel* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. He is one of the best known Latin American writers of our time.



Magical realism is one of the unique narrative styles of the last century. Many Latin American writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez and others such as Salman Rushdie and Angela Carter have contributed to the genre. Works in the genre depict the real world with an undercurrent of magic or fantasy. Like fairy tales, works of magical realism blur the line between fantasy and reality.



Let's rewind:

Revisit the story and respond to the following questions.

1. What is the old man's role in the story? How does his presence affect Pelayo's family?
2. Mention any two traits of the old man that impress you.
3. What elements of the story do you consider magical? Why?
4. Describe the old man's first clumsy attempts at flight.
5. What happens to the old man's popularity in the course of time?
6. Pick out instances of the following from the story:

Imagery	Simile	Magical elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enormous wings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> like a ragpicker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wings

7. The old man finally manages to fly away. Elisenda watches him till he disappears. You may discuss in groups and attempt alternative endings to the story.
8. Who suffers the most in the story? What does the story tell us about the need for compassion?



Let's recall and recreate:

1. Go through the story again and list the physical and other traits of the old man, and of Pelayo and Elisenda.

	Old man	Pelayo	Elisenda
Physical traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • old and frail • enormous wings • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •
Personality traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mysterious • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical • responsible • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loving mother • • •
Significance in the story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • represents the weak and the vulnerable • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • represents ordinary people • • • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maternal instincts • • •

Now, with the information you've gathered, write brief **character sketches** of the old man, Pelayo and Elisenda.

2. The news of the sudden appearance of a very old man with enormous wings spreads rapidly in the neighbourhood. One of the local residents comes across a notice advertising the opportunity to see the angel for five cents. He is deeply saddened by the treatment of the elderly man. He decides to write a letter to the editor expressing his concern. Let's go through the letter.



The Editor

(Name of the newspaper)

(Place of publication)

Sir,

I am writing to express my deep concern over the harsh treatment of the very old man with enormous wings, who was recently discovered in our neighbourhood.

The mysterious elderly man is locked up in a chicken coop and subjected to ridicule and harassment. He is being exploited for financial gain. This is a shameful reflection on the character of our society. Our lack of compassion and respect for the dignity of others is deplorable.

As a community, we should be ashamed of our actions. We claim to be caring and compassionate, but our treatment of this vulnerable individual tells a different story.

May I request you to cover this story in the pages of your esteemed newspaper. This would impel the leaders of the community to ensure the old man's safety and well being. We must provide him with the care and respect he deserves.

Sincerely

Sd/-

(Name)

The editor of the newspaper sends a reporter to investigate and report the incident. Prepare the likely **news report**.

3. With the arrival of the very old man with enormous wings, Pelayo's life changes. He notes his concerns in his diary. Write the likely **diary entry**.
4. Examine the picture carefully.



What does the picture tell you? Write a phrase/sentence about it.

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Now, read the following phrases.

Believe in the impossible.

The future is now.

Passport to adventure

Colours of imagination

Mindful moments

Good vibes only

Do you find these phrases interesting? Why?

A caption is a title or brief explanation of a picture, an illustration, a cartoon, or a poster.

Now, write suitable captions for the following:



Conduct a **caption writing** contest in your class. You may create a video montage of the pictures and their captions to be displayed in your school. Your teacher will help you.

Montage: [mawn-taash] a picture, film, or piece of music which consists of several different things put together.

- The old man is treated differently by various characters in the story. This is a reflection on human nature. Discuss in groups and fill in the blanks below.

Character	Instances from the story on how they treat the old man	Attitude to the old man
Pelayo		
Elisenda		
neighbour woman		
crowd		
doctor		
child		

Now prepare a **write-up** on the basis of above table, about the attitude of society to the weak and the vulnerable, and the need for compassion and kindness.

6. Read this conversation between an aged mother and her caregiver in an old age home.

Ritu (caregiver) : Good morning, Sudha auntie! How are you today?

Ms Sudha : (sighs) Just another day, dear. Another day without my family.

Ritu : I'm so sorry, auntie. I know it's hard. How can I help you?
Can you tell me more about what's on your mind?

Ms Sudha : You know they brought me here and left. It is a long story, dear. My children told me that they couldn't take care of me any more.

Ritu : Auntie... I understand your feelings.

Ms Sudha : Understand? No! Nobody understands me. I sacrificed my life for my kids and here I am...all alone.

Ritu : Oh! I know you're suffering, auntie. But, you're loved and valued here. Consider us your new family.

Ms Sudha : Do you really care? You are just doing your job, aren't you?

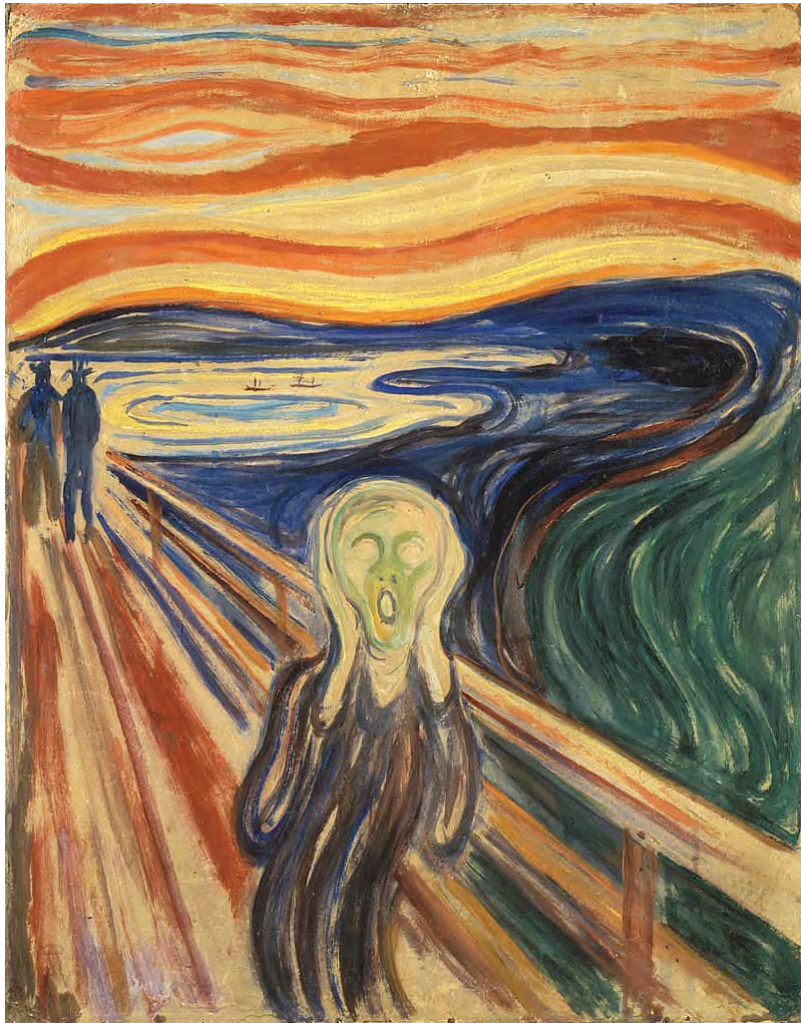
Ritu : No, auntie. We are here to love you and to listen to your stories and experiences. You will never be alone again, never.



This conversation highlights the emotional state of elderly individuals who may feel that there is nothing left in life. It also underscores the rising need for empathetic caregivers.

Prepare a short **script for a skit** to be performed in your class, based on the above conversation.

Look at the painting carefully.



The Scream

- Edvard Munch

- What do you see in the picture?
- What do you feel when you look at this painting?
- Is the scream caused by fear, anxiety, or despair? What do you think?
- If the subject of the painting were to speak, what would he/she say?