

BAHIRJI SMARAK MAHAVIDYALAYA BASMATHNAGAR

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BA/BCOM/BSC Second Year

Semester III

STUDY NOTES

Comprehension and Grammar – I

(L1: Compulsory English)

Course Code: HENGAEC1201

Ability Enhancement Course (AEC) in English

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1. Course Structure, Objectives and Outcomes

This gives you a bird's-eye view of the course before you start reading the detailed notes.

Understanding the structure first will help you organise your study time and know exactly what is expected of you in the examination.

1.1 Teaching and Examination Scheme

Course Code	Course Name	Teaching Hours	Credits
HENGAEC1201	Comprehension and Grammar – I (L1: Compulsory English)	02	02

Course Code	CA	ESE	Total	Time for ESE
HENGAEC1201	20	30	50	1.5 Hours

1.2 Objectives of the Course

The course has been designed with the following aims:

1. To introduce students to the English language through literature.
2. To acquaint students with the basic grammar of English.
3. To train students in reading comprehension.

1.3 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, learners will be able to:

4. Write effectively in English.
5. Write with grammatical correctness.
6. Comprehend and appreciate short literary pieces.

1.4 Curriculum at a Glance

Module	Topics	Hours
1	Lemon-Yellow and Fig (Malgaonkar); Father Returning Home (Chitre)	05
2	Father's Help (R. K. Narayan); Background Casually (Ezekiel)	10
3	Vivekananda: The Great Journey to the West (Rolland); The Road Not Taken (Frost)	10
4	Main Verbs: Do, Be, Have; Functions of Tenses	05

1.5 How Marks Are Distributed (Continuous Assessment — 20 Marks)

Component	Marks
Class Test	10
Assignment / Presentation / Viva / Quiz / Open Book, etc.	6
Attendance	4
Total	20

1.6 Pattern of the End Semester Examination (30 Marks)

The question paper generally follows this pattern:

- Q.1 — Short Notes: five sub-questions, compulsory, covering the entire syllabus (10 marks).
- Q.2 to Q.5 — One question each from Modules 1 to 4; students attempt any TWO out of these four (10 marks each).

Tip: Because Q.1 draws from the whole syllabus, never skip any topic while revising, even the ones that feel minor. A little preparation on every unit goes a long way in Q.1.

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Lemon-Yellow and Fig - Manohar Malgaonkar

1 About the Author

Manohar Malgaonkar (1913–2010) was a well-known Indian writer in English. Before becoming a full-time writer, he served in the Indian Army and worked in several other professions, which gave him rich material for his stories. He is best remembered for novels such as 'Distant Drum', 'Combat of Shadows' and 'The Princes', as well as for his short stories, which are known for their simplicity, gentle humour and sharp observation of everyday Indian life.

2 About the Story

'Lemon-Yellow and Fig' is a short, simple story that reads almost like a real-life incident. It is set in a small sari and choli-piece shop in Bombay (Mumbai) and revolves around a young salesman who is extremely conscious of his own honesty. The story is ironic because the very quality that got him the job — his honest and careful nature — is what eventually leads to a misunderstanding and the loss of his job.

3 Summary in Simple Words

The narrator of the story is a young man named Agarwal who has just been given a job as a salesman in a small shop that sells saris and matching choli pieces in Bombay. The shop belongs to Mr. Ratnam, who lives mostly in Bangalore and visits the Bombay shop only occasionally. When interviewing Agarwal for the job, Ratnam had told him plainly that he did not care much about experience — what he wanted most was honesty and a pleasant manner with customers, because his previous salesman had cheated him and run away with money from the shop.

Agarwal takes this advice to heart and works very sincerely. He is proud of his honesty and wants to prove himself worthy of his employer's trust. One day, while Ratnam is away, two well-dressed and well-perfumed young women visit the shop, one after the other. The first woman buys a lemon-yellow coloured sari, pays with a hundred-rupee note, and leaves after collecting her change. Soon after, a second woman — wearing what seems to Agarwal like the very same perfume — comes in and asks for a fig-coloured sari.

Agarwal suddenly remembers having heard of a common trick played by pairs of women on shopkeepers: one woman buys something and pays with a large note, and shortly after, her companion returns claiming that the change was not given properly, confusing the salesman into paying twice. Convinced that the two customers are working together to cheat him, Agarwal decides to outsmart them. To make sure the hundred-rupee note cannot be reused as 'proof' in a trick, he quietly removes it from the cash box, pretending that he is sending change to his brother who runs a

shop nearby. He also takes several other precautions to protect himself and the shop's money from what he believes is an elaborate con.

However, the twist comes when Mr. Ratnam himself arrives and finds that a hundred-rupee note is missing from the cash box. Not knowing about Agarwal's precautions, Ratnam immediately suspects his new salesman of dishonesty. It is later revealed that the two 'suspicious' customers were, in fact, Ratnam's own daughter and sister, who had come to the shop quite innocently to buy saris — there was no trick or scam at all. Agarwal's overcautious behaviour, born out of his anxiety to appear honest, ends up making him look dishonest instead, and he loses the very job he was trying so hard to protect.

4 Title Explained

The title 'Lemon-Yellow and Fig' refers to the colours of the two saris bought by the two lady customers in the story — the first sari is lemon-yellow in colour and the second is fig-coloured. The title is fitting because these two ordinary purchases, and the coincidence of colour and perfume associated with them, are what set off the entire misunderstanding. A very small, everyday detail (the colour of a sari) becomes the trigger for a life-changing event for the salesman.

5 Main Characters

- Agarwal (the narrator) — A young, sincere and honest salesman who is very anxious to prove his integrity to his employer. His excessive carefulness, rather than any real fault, causes his downfall.
- Mr. Ratnam — The owner of the sari shop, who values honesty above everything else in an employee, having been cheated once before. He is quick to suspect Agarwal without knowing the full picture.
- The two lady customers — Later revealed to be Ratnam's own daughter and sister; their innocent shopping trip is mistaken by Agarwal for a planned trick.

6 Themes

- Irony of Fate: The story is a fine example of situational irony — the one quality (honesty and caution) that should have protected Agarwal is exactly what destroys his career.
- Appearance versus Reality: What appears to be a scam is, in reality, an entirely innocent situation, showing how easily people misread events based on assumptions.
- The Value and Burden of Trust: The story shows both the importance employers place on trustworthy employees and how the pressure of maintaining that trust can sometimes lead to poor judgement.
- Everyday Life in Urban India: The setting of a small Bombay shop, with its practical, middle-class characters, reflects the flavour of ordinary Indian working life.

7 Important Questions and Answers

Q. Why did Mr. Ratnam hire Agarwal?

Ans. Mr. Ratnam hired Agarwal mainly because of his honest face and pleasant manner with customers. His earlier salesman had cheated him and run away with money, so honesty was the quality he valued most in his new employee.

Q. What suspicion did Agarwal form when the second lady arrived?

Ans. Agarwal noticed that the second lady wore the same perfume as the first one who had just left. Recalling a well-known trick where two women work together to cheat a shopkeeper over change, he suspected that the two customers were partners in a planned scam.

Q. What precaution did Agarwal take with the hundred-rupee note, and why did it backfire?

Ans. Agarwal secretly removed the hundred-rupee note from the cash box, pretending to send it as change to his brother's shop nearby, so that it could not be used as 'evidence' in a supposed trick. This backfired because when Mr. Ratnam checked the cash box and found the note missing, he suspected Agarwal of dishonesty, not knowing the real reason.

Q. Who were the two lady customers in reality?

Ans. The two lady customers were, in fact, Mr. Ratnam's own daughter and sister, who had come to the shop for a perfectly innocent shopping trip. There was no trick or scam involved at all.

Q. Why is the title of the story appropriate?

Ans. The title refers to the colours of the two saris purchased by the ladies — lemon-yellow and fig. These small, ordinary details of colour (and matching perfume) become the trigger for the entire chain of misunderstanding in the story, making the title both simple and fitting.

Q. What is the central irony of the story?

Ans. The central irony is that Agarwal's honesty and his eagerness to protect his employer from being cheated are exactly what make him look dishonest and cost him his job. The very virtue that got him hired becomes the cause of his dismissal.

Father Returning Home — Dilip Chitre

1 About the Poet

Dilip Chitre (1938–2009) was a distinguished Indian poet, writer, painter and filmmaker who wrote in both Marathi and English. He is considered one of the important voices of post-independence Indian English poetry. His poems often explore themes of urban alienation, family relationships and the emotional distance that can grow between people who love each other. 'Father Returning Home' is one of his most widely studied poems and reflects his characteristic plain, direct style combined with deep emotional undertones.

2 About the Poem

The poem describes a common, almost unremarkable scene: an old father returning home from work by a suburban train, walking through the rain, and finally reaching a house that feels distant and disconnected from him even though he lives there. Through this ordinary daily routine, Chitre powerfully captures the theme of generational and emotional distance within a modern, fast-paced urban family.

3 Central Idea (in Simple Words)

The poem shows an elderly father who, after a long, tiring day at work, travels home on a crowded suburban train in the rain. He is physically present in his own home, but emotionally he feels like an outsider. His children are engrossed in their own worlds — one is doing homework, another is dealing with her own studies — and nobody really talks to or connects with him. The father eats his dinner alone, reads religious or philosophical texts to find some peace, and eventually falls asleep, still feeling deeply lonely despite being surrounded by his family. The poem is a quiet, moving comment on how modern urban life and generational gaps can create isolation even within one's own household.

4 Important Images and Their Meaning

- The suburban train: Represents the daily grind and monotony of city life, and the exhausting routine the father must go through every single day.
- Rain: Adds to the atmosphere of gloom, discomfort and the father's physical tiredness as he makes his way home.
- The father's old body and eyes: Suggest ageing, fatigue and a sense of being worn out — not just physically but also emotionally.
- The children absorbed in their own activities: Symbolise the generational gap and the busy, self-centred pace of modern life, where family members live under one roof yet remain emotionally distant.

- The father reading religious texts before sleeping: Shows his attempt to find inner comfort and meaning in the face of loneliness, turning to spirituality rather than to his family for solace.

5 Themes

- Loneliness and Alienation: Even at home, surrounded by family, the father feels isolated and unheard.
- Generation Gap: The poem highlights the emotional distance between parents and children in a fast, modern urban setup.
- Monotony of Urban Life: The daily commute and repetitive routine reflect the tiring, mechanical nature of city living.
- Search for Inner Peace: The father turns to religious or spiritual reading as a private refuge from his loneliness.

6 Poetic Style

Chitre uses simple, everyday language and a free-verse structure (without a fixed rhyme scheme) to keep the tone conversational and realistic. The plainness of the language mirrors the plainness and dullness of the father's daily routine, while the carefully chosen images quietly build up the emotional weight of the poem.

7 Important Questions and Answers

Q. What does the suburban train symbolise in the poem?

Ans. The suburban train symbolises the tiring, repetitive routine of urban working life. It reflects how the father's daily existence is shaped by mechanical schedules rather than by warmth or personal choice.

Q. How does the poet show the generation gap between the father and his children?

Ans. The poet shows this by describing how the children are absorbed in their own activities, such as studies, and barely interact with the father when he returns home. There is no warm conversation or connection, highlighting the emotional distance between the generations.

Q. Why does the father read religious texts before sleeping?

Ans. The father reads religious or philosophical texts as a way of finding comfort and peace, since he does not receive emotional support or companionship from his family at home. It becomes his private escape from loneliness.

Q. What is the overall mood of the poem?

Ans. The overall mood is quiet, sad and reflective. It conveys a deep sense of loneliness and emotional isolation despite the ordinary, everyday setting of a man simply coming home from work.

Q. Why is 'Father Returning Home' an appropriate title for the poem?

Ans. The title is appropriate because it describes the literal action in the poem — a father coming back home after work — while also carrying an ironic undertone, since despite physically returning home, the father does not feel truly 'at home' or emotionally welcomed there.

Father's Help — R. K. Narayan

1 About the Author

R. K. Narayan (1906–2001) is one of the most celebrated Indian writers in English. He is best known for creating the fictional South Indian town of Malgudi, which serves as the setting for many of his novels and short stories, including 'Swami and Friends', 'The Guide' and numerous short story collections. Narayan's writing is admired for its gentle humour, simple language and deep understanding of middle-class Indian family life, especially the world of children.

2 About the Story

'Father's Help' is a humorous short story that takes place in Malgudi and revolves around Swaminathan, a schoolboy who tries to avoid going to school by pretending to be too unwell to attend. The story is a light-hearted, comic look at the small lies children tell and the way one lie often leads to another, more complicated one.

3 Summary in Simple Words

Swaminathan, a young student, does not want to go to school one day, mainly because he is afraid of being punished by his class teacher, Samuel, who is strict and known for caning students. To avoid school, Swaminathan tells his father a lie — he says that he has a headache and is not well enough to attend classes. His father, believing him, allows him to skip school that day.

However, this small act of skipping school creates a bigger problem the next day. When Swaminathan returns to school, his teacher demands an explanation, in writing, for his absence. Realising that a simple verbal excuse will not be enough, Swaminathan decides to ask his father to write an official leave application on his behalf, again lying about the reason for his absence.

His father, unaware that he is being used to support his son's earlier lie, writes an excuse letter mentioning a reason for the boy's absence. But things become complicated when Swaminathan alters or misuses this note in school, or gives a version of events that conflicts with what actually happened, leading to confusion when the matter reaches the class teacher and eventually the headmaster. The story humorously shows how the boy's small lie snowballs, dragging his innocent father into a situation neither of them anticipated, and how children often improvise increasingly complicated excuses to escape trouble, only to find themselves in even bigger trouble.

4 Title Explained

The title 'Father's Help' is ironic and humorous. On the surface, it suggests that the father is helping his son in a positive way — for example, by writing the school excuse note. However, the 'help'

actually ends up dragging the father, unknowingly, into his son's web of lies, and often makes the situation worse rather than better. The title, therefore, works as gentle irony typical of Narayan's storytelling style.

5 Main Characters

- Swaminathan — The mischievous, imaginative schoolboy at the centre of the story, who lies about being unwell to avoid school and then has to manage the consequences.
- Swaminathan's father — A caring but unsuspecting parent who is drawn into helping his son without realising he is supporting a lie.
- Samuel (the class teacher) — A strict teacher whose fear of punishment motivates Swaminathan's initial lie.

6 Themes

- Childhood Fears and Innocence: The story captures a child's very real fear of a strict teacher and how that fear leads to small deceptions.
- Humour in Everyday Life: Narayan uses gentle, warm humour rather than harsh judgement to portray the boy's misadventures.
- Consequences of Lying: The story humorously illustrates how one small lie can multiply into a much bigger and more complicated problem.
- Parent-Child Relationship: The father's innocent trust in his son, and his unwitting involvement in the boy's scheme, reflects the everyday dynamics of family life.

7 Narrative Style

R. K. Narayan is known for his simple, conversational prose and his ability to view the world through a child's eyes with warmth and gentle humour rather than moral lecturing. The Malgudi setting gives the story a familiar, small-town Indian atmosphere that many readers find relatable.

8 Important Questions and Answers

Q. Why did Swaminathan not want to go to school?

Ans. Swaminathan did not want to go to school mainly because he was afraid of his strict class teacher, Samuel, who was known for punishing students, often with caning. To avoid this fear, he decided to skip school.

Q. What lie did Swaminathan tell his father?

Ans. Swaminathan told his father that he had a headache and was too unwell to attend school, so that his father would allow him to stay home for the day.

Q. How does the father get unknowingly involved in his son's lie?

Ans. When Swaminathan is asked for a written explanation for his absence, he requests his father to write an excuse letter to the school. His father, unaware of the real reason behind the absence, writes the note in good faith, which pulls him into supporting his son's original lie.

Q. Why is the title 'Father's Help' ironic?

Ans. The title is ironic because, although the father genuinely believes he is helping his son by writing the excuse note, his 'help' actually deepens the boy's trouble and confusion at school rather than solving the original problem.

Q. What does the story tell us about Swaminathan's character?

Ans. The story shows Swaminathan as a mischievous but very human character — imaginative and quick-thinking when trying to avoid punishment, yet not fully able to foresee the complications that his small lies can create.

Background Casually — Nissim Ezekiel

1 About the Poet

Nissim Ezekiel (1924–2004) is regarded as one of the founding figures of modern Indian English poetry. Born into a Bene Israeli Jewish family in Bombay, his poetry is known for its precise language, ironic tone and honest, often self-critical exploration of personal and cultural identity. 'Background, Casually' is considered one of his most important and autobiographical poems, tracing his journey of self-discovery as a poet and as an Indian.

2 About the Poem

'Background, Casually' is a long, semi-autobiographical poem in which Ezekiel looks back at different stages of his life — his childhood, his schooling, the discrimination he faced for his religious background, his time abroad in England, and his eventual return to India — to reflect on questions of identity, belonging and his role as a poet.

3 Central Idea (in Simple Words)

The poem traces the poet's journey from a difficult, sometimes humiliating childhood in Bombay, where he was teased and mocked for being different because of his religious and cultural background, through his restless youth and travel to England in search of meaning and opportunity, and back to India. Despite facing hardship and a sense of not fully belonging anywhere, Ezekiel comes to accept his identity as an Indian poet who writes in English, choosing to stay and contribute to Indian society and literature rather than remain an outsider. The poem's tone is reflective and searingly honest, presented in a deceptively simple, conversational manner — hence the word 'Casually' in the title.

4 Structure and Key Movements

- **Childhood in Bombay:** The poet recalls being an outsider among his peers, facing teasing and a sense of alienation due to his minority background.
- **School Days:** He reflects on ordinary but formative school experiences, including exposure to religion and morality lessons that did not fully satisfy his questioning mind.
- **Journey to England:** As a young man, he travels abroad hoping to find deeper meaning, working at various odd jobs and facing financial hardship, loneliness, and disillusionment.
- **Return to India:** After his time in England, he returns to India, and gradually comes to terms with his identity, choosing to embrace his roots and his vocation as a poet writing in English about Indian life.
- **Self-Acceptance as Poet:** The poem ends on a note of quiet resolve, with the poet accepting his responsibility to write honestly about the society and country he belongs to.

5 Themes

- **Search for Identity:** The poem is essentially about the poet's long struggle to understand who he is — culturally, religiously and professionally.
- **Alienation and Belonging:** Ezekiel candidly describes feeling like an outsider both in India (due to his minority identity) and abroad, before finally choosing to claim India as his home.
- **The Role of the Poet:** The poem reflects on what it means to be an Indian poet writing in English, and the responsibility that comes with representing one's society through poetry.
- **Honesty and Self-Criticism:** Ezekiel does not romanticise his past; he is frank about his failures, discomforts and disappointments.

6 Poetic Style

The poem is written in a plain, conversational style, using simple vocabulary and a flexible structure divided into numbered sections. This 'casual' tone (as suggested in the title) allows Ezekiel to discuss deeply personal and serious themes of identity and belonging without sounding overly dramatic, making the poem feel honest and intimate.

7 Title Explained

The title 'Background, Casually' suggests that the poet is presenting the 'background' of his life and identity in a seemingly relaxed, informal or 'casual' manner. However, beneath this casual tone lies a serious and searching exploration of personal history, cultural belonging and the poet's chosen vocation.

8 Important Questions and Answers

Q. What is the central theme of the poem 'Background, Casually'?

Ans. The central theme is the poet's search for identity and belonging, tracing his journey from a difficult, alienated childhood through his time abroad, to his eventual acceptance of his role as an Indian poet writing in English.

Q. Why does the poet feel alienated in his childhood?

Ans. The poet feels alienated as a child because of his minority religious background, which made him a target of teasing and exclusion among his peers, creating an early sense of not fully belonging.

Q. What happens during the poet's time in England?

Ans. During his time in England, the poet faces financial struggles, works various odd jobs, and experiences loneliness and disillusionment, realising that going abroad does not automatically bring him the meaning or belonging he was seeking.

Q. How does the poem end, and what does this suggest about the poet's outlook?

Ans. The poem ends with the poet returning to India and accepting his identity and vocation as a poet who writes about Indian life and society. This suggests a mature acceptance of his roots and a sense of purpose in staying and contributing to his own country.

Q. Why is the title 'Background, Casually' appropriate for the poem?

Ans. The title is appropriate because the poet narrates deeply personal and significant events of his life in a plain, conversational and seemingly casual tone, even though the underlying themes of identity and belonging are serious and searching.

Vivekananda: The Great Journey to the West — Romain Rolland

1 About the Author

Romain Rolland (1866–1944) was a French writer, dramatist, art historian and Nobel Laureate in Literature (1915). Deeply influenced by Indian philosophy, he wrote biographical works on both Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda. His book on Vivekananda, from which this piece is taken, presents the Indian monk's life and ideas to Western readers with great admiration, sensitivity and literary skill.

2 About the Text

This chapter is an extract from Romain Rolland's biography of Swami Vivekananda. It describes Vivekananda's historic journey to America in 1893 to attend the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, and the powerful impression he made there as a young, unknown Indian monk who went on to become a global spiritual figure.

3 Summary in Simple Words

Swami Vivekananda travelled from India to America to represent Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. On his arrival, being unfamiliar with the city and having very little money, he faced considerable hardship — he wandered through Chicago without knowing where to stay, was turned away or ignored at several places, and even had to beg for food and shelter like a wandering monk, following his practice as a Sannyasin. Despite these initial difficulties, fate intervened when a kind lady, seeing him from her window and recognising that he might be a delegate to the Parliament, invited him in and helped him. This encounter connected him with people who would later become some of his most devoted American followers and supporters.

When Vivekananda finally appeared at the Parliament of Religions, his striking personal presence — his dignity, his commanding appearance, and the depth of his gaze — drew attention even before he spoke. When he did speak, he did not talk about a narrow, sectarian view of religion, as many other speakers had done. Instead, he spoke of the underlying unity of all religions, presenting Hinduism as a broad, tolerant and inclusive faith, one that taught acceptance and understanding of all paths to the divine. His message emphasised universal brotherhood and the idea that all sincere spiritual paths ultimately lead to the same divine truth.

His speech created a sensation. Unlike other speakers who spoke only for their own religion or sect, Vivekananda's words seemed to embrace and honour all faiths, and this universal, generous outlook won him tremendous applause and admiration from the audience. Rolland presents this moment as the turning point that transformed a relatively unknown Indian monk into an internationally

celebrated spiritual teacher, one who would go on to spread the message of Vedanta and Indian philosophy throughout the West.

4 Key Events Covered

7. Vivekananda's arrival in Chicago and the initial hardship he faced due to being a stranger with very limited resources.
8. His practice of begging for food and shelter as a wandering Sannyasin, and the difficulties this brought in an unfamiliar Western city.
9. A chance meeting with a sympathetic woman who helped him find his way to the Parliament of Religions.
10. His powerful and dignified presence at the Parliament, which impressed people even before he spoke.
11. His speech, in which he presented Hinduism as a religion of tolerance and universal acceptance rather than one confined to a single sect or belief.
12. The tremendous, enthusiastic response of the audience, which marked the beginning of his fame in the West.

5 Themes

- Perseverance and Faith: Despite hardship and uncertainty in a foreign land, Vivekananda's inner strength and faith carry him through difficult early days.
- Universal Brotherhood: His message at the Parliament stresses the essential oneness of all religions and calls for tolerance rather than division.
- East Meets West: The chapter symbolises a significant cultural exchange, where Indian spiritual philosophy is introduced powerfully to a Western audience for the first time.
- The Power of Character: Vivekananda's success is shown to come not just from his words, but from his commanding personal presence, dignity and sincerity.

6 Title Explained

The title 'The Great Journey to the West' refers literally to Vivekananda's voyage from India to America, but it also carries a symbolic meaning — his journey represents the larger movement of Indian spiritual thought travelling to and influencing the Western world for the first time on such a significant public platform.

7 Important Questions and Answers

Q. Why did Vivekananda travel to America?

Ans. Vivekananda travelled to America to attend and represent Hinduism at the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, aiming to present Indian spiritual philosophy to a global audience.

Q. What difficulties did Vivekananda face on his arrival in Chicago?

Ans. On his arrival, Vivekananda had very little money and no established contacts in Chicago. Following his practice as a Sannyasin, he tried to beg for food and shelter but was turned away or ignored at several homes, facing real hardship before he was helped by a sympathetic lady.

Q. What was unique or different about Vivekananda's speech compared to other speakers at the Parliament?

Ans. Unlike other speakers, who spoke only about their own particular religion or sect, Vivekananda spoke about the underlying unity of all religions, presenting Hinduism as a broad and tolerant faith that accepts and respects all paths to the divine, rather than promoting one narrow view.

Q. How did the audience respond to Vivekananda's speech?

Ans. The audience responded with great enthusiasm and admiration, giving him a memorable ovation, since his message of universal acceptance and tolerance stood out sharply from the more sectarian speeches of others at the Parliament.

Q. What impression did Vivekananda's personal appearance create even before he spoke?

Ans. Even before speaking, Vivekananda's commanding presence, dignified bearing and striking appearance drew the attention and respect of everyone present, creating a strong impression of natural nobility and confidence.

Q. What is the central message of Vivekananda's speech at the Parliament?

Ans. The central message is one of universal brotherhood and religious tolerance — that all genuine spiritual paths, despite their outward differences, ultimately lead towards the same divine truth, and that different faiths should accept and respect one another rather than compete or conflict.

The Road Not Taken — Robert Frost

1 About the Poet

Robert Frost (1874–1963) was an eminent American poet known for his realistic depiction of rural life, especially in New England, using plain, accessible language combined with deep, often philosophical undertones. He received four Pulitzer Prizes for his poetry and remains one of the most widely read and quoted American poets. 'The Road Not Taken' is among his most famous and frequently discussed poems.

2 About the Poem

The poem describes a traveller who comes across two diverging roads in a forest and must choose one path to continue his journey, knowing he cannot travel both. This simple situation of choosing a path becomes a powerful metaphor for the choices individuals make in life and their long-term consequences.

3 Central Idea (in Simple Words)

The speaker of the poem stands at a fork in a yellow, autumn wood where two roads diverge. He carefully looks down both paths as far as he can see, trying to decide which one to take. Both roads appear almost equally worn and similarly attractive, though the speaker feels the one he eventually chooses seems perhaps slightly less travelled by others, with grass that has not been walked upon as much. He tells himself he will save the other road for another day, while realising deep down that one road usually leads to another, and it is unlikely he will ever have the chance to come back and try the path he did not take.

The poem ends with the speaker imagining that, far in the future, he will look back and say, with a sigh, that he chose the road less travelled, and that this decision made all the difference in his life. The poem is often read as a reflection on individuality, the significance of personal choices, and the way we tend to give special meaning to the paths we choose, even when, in the moment, the choice may not have been as clear-cut or different as we later remember it.

4 Important Images and Symbols

- The forest and diverging roads: Symbolise the many choices and crossroads that arise throughout a person's life.
- The 'yellow wood': The autumn setting suggests a time of change, maturity or a turning point in life.
- Choosing a path: Represents the universal human experience of decision-making, especially decisions that cannot be reversed or undone.

- Looking back with a sigh: Suggests reflection, and possibly a mixture of nostalgia, wonder, or gentle regret about the choices one has made.

5 Themes

- Choices and Consequences: The poem explores how the choices we make, even seemingly small ones, can significantly shape the direction of our lives.
- Individuality: Choosing the 'road less travelled' can be seen as a symbol of independence and the courage to follow one's own path rather than the crowd.
- Uncertainty and Irreversibility: Once a path is chosen, it is usually impossible to go back and choose differently, reflecting the permanent nature of many life decisions.
- Self-Reflection: The poem captures how people often look back on their past choices and attach special meaning or significance to them, sometimes more than the moment itself may have warranted.

6 A Common Misreading — Important Point

Many readers assume the poem is a simple, motivational message about boldly choosing the unconventional path. However, a closer reading shows that the speaker actually says the two roads were 'really about the same' in terms of wear, and that he only later, with a sigh, claims to have taken the road 'less travelled'. This suggests a more complex idea: that we often create meaning and narrative about our choices in hindsight, even when, at the time, the choice was not as dramatically different as we like to remember.

7 Poetic Style

The poem is written in four stanzas of five lines each, with a simple rhyme scheme (ABAAB). Frost uses plain, natural language and a calm, reflective tone, and the imagery of the forest and road makes the poem's central metaphor about life's choices easy to visualise and relate to.

8 Important Questions and Answers

Q. What does the fork in the road symbolise in the poem?

Ans. The fork in the road symbolises the choices and decisions that people face at various points in their lives, particularly decisions where only one option can be chosen and the other must be left behind.

Q. Were the two roads really very different from each other?

Ans. According to the poem, the two roads were, in fact, quite similar — both were equally worn by travellers. The speaker only later describes one as 'less travelled', which suggests he gives the choice greater significance in hindsight than it may have had at the actual moment of decision.

Q. Why does the speaker say he will 'sigh' when telling this story in the future?

Ans. The sigh suggests a mixture of reflection, nostalgia and perhaps a hint of wonder or wistfulness about the path of his life, showing how people often look back on their choices with mixed emotions, aware that they can never know for certain what the other path might have brought.

Q. What is the significance of the title 'The Road Not Taken'?

Ans. The title draws attention to the road the speaker did not choose, emphasising how our decisions are always shadowed by the alternative possibilities we give up, and how we often continue to wonder about the paths not taken in our lives.

Q. What is the central theme of the poem?

Ans. The central theme is the significance of choices in shaping our lives, along with the idea that we often attach special meaning to our decisions when looking back, even if the choice did not appear especially dramatic or different at the time it was made.

Main Verbs: 'Do', 'Be', 'Have'

In English grammar, the verbs Do, Be and Have are special because they can function in two different ways: as main verbs (carrying their own full meaning) and as auxiliary or 'helping' verbs (supporting another main verb in a sentence). Understanding both roles is essential for correct sentence construction.

1 The Verb 'Do'

(a) 'Do' as a Main Verb

When 'do' is used as a main verb, it means 'to perform' or 'to carry out' an action, and it has its own complete meaning in the sentence.

- She does her homework every evening. (performs/completes)
- He did a wonderful job on the project. (performed)
- They do the dishes after dinner. (carry out the task)

(b) 'Do' as an Auxiliary (Helping) Verb

As an auxiliary verb, 'do' (along with its forms 'does' and 'did') is used to:

13. Form negative sentences: I do not (don't) like tea. / She does not (doesn't) drive. / They did not (didn't) come.
14. Form questions: Do you speak English? / Does he play cricket? / Did they win the match?
15. Add emphasis to a sentence: I do like your idea! / She does work very hard.

Note: When 'do' is used as an auxiliary verb, the main verb in the sentence remains in its base form (e.g., 'Does she like coffee?' — not 'likes').

2 The Verb 'Be'

'Be' is one of the most frequently used verbs in English and has several forms depending on the subject and tense: am, is, are (present); was, were (past); being, been (participle forms).

(a) 'Be' as a Main Verb

As a main verb, 'be' is used to describe a state, identity, quality or condition of the subject, and is often followed by a noun, adjective or place.

- She is a doctor. (identity)
- The weather is cold today. (quality/condition)
- They were at the market. (place)

(b) 'Be' as an Auxiliary Verb

As an auxiliary verb, 'be' is used to form:

16. Continuous (progressive) tenses: I am reading a book. / She was cooking dinner. / They will be arriving soon.
17. The passive voice: The letter was written by him. / The cake is being baked. / The window has been broken.

3 The Verb 'Have'

(a) 'Have' as a Main Verb

As a main verb, 'have' (with forms 'has' and 'had') is used to show possession, relationships, or to describe certain experiences and actions.

- I have a new phone. (possession)
- She has two brothers. (relationship)
- We had lunch at noon. (an action/experience — 'had' meaning 'ate')

(b) 'Have' as an Auxiliary Verb

As an auxiliary verb, 'have' (has/had) is used to form the perfect tenses, showing an action completed at some point relative to another time.

- I have finished my homework. (present perfect)
- She had already left when I arrived. (past perfect)
- They will have completed the project by tomorrow. (future perfect)

4 Quick Comparison Table

Verb	As Main Verb (Example)	As Auxiliary Verb (Example)
Do	He does his duty sincerely.	Do you like music? / She doesn't smoke.
Be	She is a teacher.	They are watching TV. / The work was done well.
Have	I have a car.	I have seen this movie before.

5 Important Questions and Answers

Q. Give one example each of 'do' used as a main verb and as an auxiliary verb.

Ans. As a main verb: 'She does her work carefully' (meaning she performs her work). As an auxiliary verb: 'Does she work here?' (used to form a question).

Q. How is 'be' used to form the passive voice? Give an example.

Ans. 'Be' (in its various forms) combines with the past participle of the main verb to form the passive voice. For example: 'The house was built in 1990,' where 'was' (a form of 'be') is combined with 'built' (past participle) to show that the subject received the action rather than performed it.

Q. Differentiate between 'have' as a main verb and 'have' as an auxiliary verb with examples.

Ans. As a main verb, 'have' shows possession or an action, for example, 'I have a bicycle' (possession). As an auxiliary verb, 'have' is used to form perfect tenses, for example, 'I have finished my work' (present perfect, showing a completed action).

Functions of Tenses

Tense in English grammar refers to the form of the verb that shows the time of an action — whether it happens in the present, past, or future. Beyond simply marking time, each tense also expresses whether an action is complete, ongoing, repeated, or habitual. There are three main time periods (present, past, future), and each has four aspects (simple, continuous, perfect, perfect continuous), giving a total of twelve main tense forms.

1 Present Tense

(a) Simple Present

Function: Used for habitual actions, general truths, facts, and permanent situations.

- She walks to school every day. (habit)
- The sun rises in the east. (general truth)
- Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius. (scientific fact)

(b) Present Continuous

Function: Used for actions happening right now, or temporary actions occurring around the present time.

- She is reading a book right now.
- They are staying with their grandparents this week. (temporary situation)

(c) Present Perfect

Function: Used for actions completed at an unspecified time in the past but relevant to the present, or actions that started in the past and continue up to now.

- I have finished my homework. (completed, relevant now)
- She has lived in Mumbai for ten years. (started in past, continues now)

(d) Present Perfect Continuous

Function: Used for actions that started in the past and are still continuing, emphasising the duration of the action.

- They have been playing football since morning.

2 Past Tense

(a) Simple Past

Function: Used for completed actions that happened at a specific time in the past.

- She visited her grandmother last week.

- He finished the exam yesterday.

(b) Past Continuous

Function: Used for an action that was ongoing at a specific time in the past, often interrupted by another action.

- I was reading a book when the phone rang.

(c) Past Perfect

Function: Used to show that one past action was completed before another past action took place.

- She had left the house before it started raining.

(d) Past Perfect Continuous

Function: Used for an action that was ongoing for a period of time before another action or point in the past.

- They had been waiting for two hours before the bus finally arrived.

3 Future Tense

(a) Simple Future

Function: Used for actions that will happen in the future, including predictions, promises, and spontaneous decisions.

- She will call you tomorrow.
- I think it will rain later today. (prediction)

(b) Future Continuous

Function: Used for actions that will be ongoing at a specific point in the future.

- This time tomorrow, I will be travelling to Delhi.

(c) Future Perfect

Function: Used for actions that will be completed before a specific time in the future.

- She will have finished her project by next Monday.

(d) Future Perfect Continuous

Function: Used for actions that will have been ongoing for a certain duration by a specific point in the future.

- By next year, they will have been living in this city for a decade.

4 Why Tenses Matter

Correct use of tense is essential for clear communication because it tells the reader or listener not only when an action happens, but also how it relates to other actions in time — whether something is finished, ongoing, repeated, or planned. Mistakes in tense usage are among the most common grammar errors and can confuse the intended meaning of a sentence.

5 Important Questions and Answers

Q. What is the function of the simple present tense? Give an example.

Ans. The simple present tense is used to express habitual actions, general truths and permanent facts. For example: 'The earth revolves around the sun' expresses a general truth.

Q. Explain the difference between the present perfect and past perfect tense with examples.

Ans. The present perfect tense connects a past action to the present moment, for example, 'I have completed my assignment' (completed at an unspecified time, relevant now). The past perfect tense shows that one past action happened before another past action, for example, 'I had completed my assignment before the teacher asked for it.'

Q. When is the future perfect continuous tense used? Give an example.

Ans. The future perfect continuous tense is used to show an action that will have been ongoing for a specific duration by a particular point in the future. For example: 'By December, she will have been working at this company for five years.'

Q. Why is it important to use the correct tense in a sentence?

Ans. Using the correct tense is important because it clearly communicates the time of an action and its relationship to other events, avoiding confusion. Incorrect tense usage can change or obscure the intended meaning of a sentence.

Model Long Answers (Sample Essay-Type Responses)

Module 1 — 'Discuss the theme of irony in Lemon-Yellow and Fig.'

Manohar Malgaonkar's short story 'Lemon-Yellow and Fig' is built almost entirely around a single, powerful irony. The protagonist, Agarwal, is hired by Mr. Ratnam specifically because of his honest and pleasant nature, since Ratnam's previous salesman had cheated him. Agarwal is deeply conscious of this expectation and works hard to prove himself trustworthy.

The irony develops when two customers — who happen to wear the same perfume and buy differently coloured saris — visit the shop one after the other. Agarwal, remembering a well-known trick used by pairs of women to cheat shopkeepers, becomes suspicious and takes precautionary steps, including secretly removing a hundred-rupee note from the cash box. His intentions are entirely good: he wants to protect his employer's money and prove his own alertness and honesty.

However, this very act of caution is what undoes him. When Mr. Ratnam discovers the missing note without knowing the reason behind it, he immediately suspects Agarwal of theft. The final twist reveals that the two customers were completely innocent — they were Ratnam's own daughter and sister. Thus, the very honesty and vigilance that should have protected Agarwal's reputation instead destroys it. This reversal of expectation, where a virtue produces the opposite of its intended result, is the central irony of the story, and it is this irony that gives the tale both its humour and its poignancy.

Module 2 — 'Discuss the theme of identity and belonging in Background, Casually.'

Nissim Ezekiel's poem 'Background, Casually' is a deeply personal exploration of identity, tracing the poet's journey from a difficult childhood to eventual self-acceptance. As a child growing up in a minority religious community in Bombay, the poet experienced teasing and a sense of exclusion, which planted an early seed of alienation in his mind.

This feeling of not quite belonging follows him into adulthood, prompting him to travel to England in search of greater meaning and opportunity. However, his time abroad brings further hardship — financial struggle, loneliness and disillusionment — showing that physical distance from home does not automatically resolve an inner sense of displacement.

The turning point of the poem comes with the poet's return to India. Rather than continuing to search elsewhere, Ezekiel gradually comes to accept his identity as an Indian, and specifically as an Indian poet who writes in English about Indian society and experience. This acceptance is presented not as an easy or sudden realisation, but as the result of a long, searching and often uncomfortable journey. The poem's plain, 'casual' tone allows Ezekiel to present these serious questions of belonging with

honesty rather than sentimentality, making the poem a landmark exploration of postcolonial Indian identity.

Module 3 — 'Describe Vivekananda's experiences and message at the Parliament of Religions.'

Romain Rolland's account of Vivekananda's journey to America captures both the personal hardship and the ultimate triumph of the young Indian monk. On arriving in Chicago in 1893, Vivekananda, unfamiliar with the city and carrying very little money, found himself struggling even to secure food and shelter. Following his practice as a wandering Sannyasin, he attempted to beg for basic necessities but was turned away at several homes, reflecting the harsh unfamiliarity of a foreign land.

His fortunes changed when a sympathetic woman, noticing him from her window, invited him in and helped connect him to the organisers of the Parliament of Religions. When he finally appeared at the Parliament, his commanding presence and natural dignity drew attention even before he had spoken a single word.

What made his speech truly remarkable was its content. While other delegates spoke only about their own specific religion or sect, Vivekananda spoke of the underlying unity of all faiths, presenting Hinduism as a religion of profound tolerance that recognises many paths to the same divine truth. This message of universal acceptance, delivered with sincerity and conviction, earned him a rousing ovation and marked the beginning of his international reputation as a spiritual teacher who bridged the philosophies of East and West.

Module 4 — 'Explain the functions of the present, past and future perfect tenses with examples.'

The perfect tenses in English are used to show a relationship between two points in time, usually indicating that an action was completed either before another action, or before a specific reference point in time.

The present perfect tense is used for actions completed at an unspecified time in the past that still hold relevance to the present moment, or for actions that started in the past and continue into the present. For example, 'She has finished her homework' shows a completed action relevant right now, while 'He has lived here for ten years' shows an action that began in the past and continues today.

The past perfect tense is used to indicate that one past action was completed before another past action took place. For example, in the sentence 'She had already left when I arrived,' the act of leaving (had left) occurred before the act of arriving, both of which are in the past.

The future perfect tense is used to describe an action that will be completed before a specific point of time in the future. For example, 'They will have finished the project by next Monday' shows that the completion of the project is expected before the future reference point of 'next Monday.'

Together, these three perfect tenses allow speakers and writers to describe precisely how different actions relate to one another across time, making communication clearer and more exact.

Glossary of Useful Literary Terms

Knowing these basic literary terms will help you write better, more precise answers in your literature questions.

- **Irony:** A situation or statement where the actual result is very different from, or opposite to, what was expected (as seen clearly in 'Lemon-Yellow and Fig').
- **Theme:** The central idea or underlying message of a literary work, such as loneliness, identity, or the consequences of choices.
- **Imagery:** Descriptive language that appeals to the senses and helps the reader visualise a scene, feeling or idea, such as the rain and train imagery in 'Father Returning Home'.
- **Symbol:** An object, person or action that represents a deeper meaning beyond its literal sense, such as the 'roads' in Frost's poem representing life choices.
- **Autobiographical Poem:** A poem based on the poet's own life experiences, such as 'Background, Casually', which reflects Ezekiel's personal journey.
- **Free Verse:** Poetry that does not follow a fixed rhyme scheme or regular metre, allowing a more natural, conversational tone, as seen in 'Father Returning Home'.
- **Tone:** The poet's or writer's attitude towards the subject matter, which can be reflective, ironic, humorous, serious, and so on.
- **Narrative Style:** The particular way in which a story is told, including the choice of narrator, language and structure, as reflected in R. K. Narayan's simple, warm storytelling in 'Father's Help'.

13. Frequently Confused Grammar Points

1 'Do' vs 'Does' vs 'Did'

- Use 'do' with I / you / we / they, and with plural subjects, in the present tense: Do they play football on weekends?
- Use 'does' with he / she / it, and with singular subjects, in the present tense: Does she like tea?
- Use 'did' with all subjects in the past tense: Did you finish your work?

2 'Was' vs 'Were'

- Use 'was' with I / he / she / it, and with singular subjects: I was at home yesterday.

- Use 'were' with you / we / they, and with plural subjects: They were at the party.

3 'Has' vs 'Have' vs 'Had'

- Use 'has' with he / she / it, and with singular subjects, in the present perfect: She has completed her work.
- Use 'have' with I / you / we / they, and with plural subjects, in the present perfect: They have completed their work.
- Use 'had' with all subjects in the past perfect: He had completed his work before the deadline.

4 Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Incorrect: 'She don't like coffee.' — Correct: 'She doesn't like coffee.'
- Incorrect: 'They was playing outside.' — Correct: 'They were playing outside.'
- Incorrect: 'He have finished his lunch.' — Correct: 'He has finished his lunch.'
- Incorrect: 'I am knowing the answer.' — Correct: 'I know the answer.' (state verbs like 'know' are not usually used in continuous form)

Keep practising these small distinctions — they are exactly the kind of details examiners look for in grammar answers.

Sample Question Paper

Instructions: Q.1 is compulsory. Attempt any TWO questions from Q.2 to Q.5.

Q.1 Write short notes on any FIVE of the following (10 marks)

18. The irony in 'Lemon-Yellow and Fig'.
19. The theme of loneliness in 'Father Returning Home'.
20. The character of Swaminathan in 'Father's Help'.
21. The significance of the title 'Background, Casually'.
22. Vivekananda's message of universal brotherhood.
23. The symbolism of the two roads in 'The Road Not Taken'.
24. 'Do' as a main verb and as an auxiliary verb.

Q.2 (Module 1) Answer any ONE (10 marks)

- Discuss the theme of irony in 'Lemon-Yellow and Fig'.
- Explain how Dilip Chitre presents the generation gap in 'Father Returning Home'.

Q.3 (Module 2) Answer any ONE (10 marks)

- Explain how one small lie leads to complications in 'Father's Help'.
- Discuss the theme of identity and belonging in 'Background, Casually'.

Q.4 (Module 3) Answer any ONE (10 marks)

- Describe Vivekananda's experiences and message at the Parliament of Religions.
- Discuss the theme of choices in 'The Road Not Taken'.

Q.5 (Module 4) Answer any ONE (10 marks)

- Explain the uses of 'Be' and 'Have' as main verbs and auxiliary verbs, with examples.
- Explain the functions of the present, past and future perfect tenses with examples.

End of Notes — All the best for your examination!

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