



SECOND EDITION

# Mellifluous

*"I have always imagined that  
Paradise will be a kind of library."*

*-Jorge Luis Borges*

Book Club  
IIT KANPUR



# LETTER TO KAFKA

Dear Kafka,

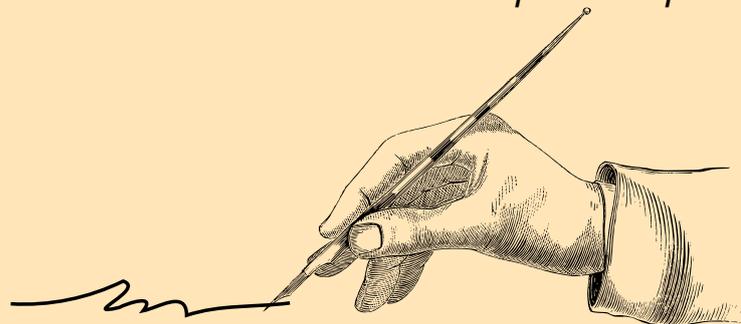
I don't know when it really began. Maybe after a few random Reddit posts or Instagram reels that I didn't think much of. Then I picked up *The Metamorphosis*, not expecting anything serious, and Gregor Samsa felt uncomfortably familiar—not like a character, but like a feeling I already knew. When I found out that parts of him came from your own life, something in me sank and stayed there. Since then, even small reminders—a line, an image, a passing thought—leave me quietly sad. Not enough to stop my day, just enough to weigh it down.

I was angry with you while reading *The Trial*. Angry at what you did to Josef K., angry at how everything closes in on him without reason or mercy. I remember closing the book and just staring for a while, feeling like something unfair had happened to someone I cared about. There were moments when I wanted to write letters the way you wrote to Milena—not because I had something important to say, but because writing to someone felt necessary, like proof that I existed somewhere outside my own head.

And I don't like admitting this, but I was also disappointed that you left things unfinished—*The Castle*, *Amerika*. I know that's selfish, but it felt like being left in the middle of a thought.

What troubles me most is knowing that you doubted your own work, that you wanted it destroyed. I try to understand that kind of self-doubt, but it still hurts. And it hurts even more knowing that the world recognized you only after you were gone—too late for it to matter to you. I came to you late, very late, and I'm still trying to understand you through fragments and silences. Soon I'll be in Prague. I'll visit the museum and stand there quietly, maybe imagine sharing a bottle with you—not to celebrate, just to understand. I think this letter is really just me admitting that your words stirred something in me, and I needed to write it down somewhere, even if it never reaches you.

*-Sidharth Swaroop Meikap*



# In the Shadows Between Right and Wrong

-Ilika Bera

Every book club has that meeting. The one where the conversation derails because someone casually says, “I don’t care, I loved them,” and someone else gasps. Welcome to the morally grey character debate.

These characters break rules, cross lines, and make decisions that are objectively grim. And yet, we remember them long after the plot details fade. Not because they’re admirable, but because they’re interesting. They live in that uncomfortable middle ground where intention, circumstance, and consequence collide.

So let’s talk about five unforgettable morally grey characters, in the exact order they tend to blow up a book club discussion.

## **Severus Snape: Hero, Bully, Tragic Disaster of a Man**

Let’s start with the one who can end friendships. Severus Snape is brave. That part isn’t really up for debate. He spies, lies, risks his life, and ultimately helps bring down Voldemort.

Unfortunately, he also spends his free time emotionally eviscerating children and holding grudges with Olympic-level dedication.

Snape’s moral greyness comes from contradiction. He does enormous good while being, on a daily basis, deeply unpleasant. His love for Lily motivates him—but it’s tangled with obsession, resentment, and an inability to move on. He never becomes nicer. He never earns how to treat people better. He just... chooses the right side and stays miserable about it.

Snape forces us to confront an awkward truth: someone can do the right thing and still be kind or awful. And that’s why we’re still arguing about him decades later.

## **Jay Gatsby: Romantic or Red Flag?**

Ah yes, Jay Gatsby, patron saint of “if I just try harder, it’ll work this time.”

Gatsby is charming, hopeful, and deeply committed to the idea that the past is a suggestion, not a fact. He also lies about his entire life, makes his money illegally, and builds his identity around a woman who hasn’t asked for any of this.

And yet he’s hard not to root for.

Gatsby’s moral greyness lies in his devotion. His love isn’t violent or cruel, but it is obsessive. Daisy becomes less of a person and more of a goal, a symbol, a prize at the end of the American Dream. Gatsby doesn’t want Daisy as she is; he wants Daisy as proof that his dream was worth it.

He reminds us that good intentions don’t prevent harm and that romanticizing someone can be its own kind of moral failure.

## **Daenerys Targaryen: When “I Know What’s Right” Becomes Dangerous**

Daenerys Targaryen starts off as someone very easy to root for. She’s abused, powerless, and determined not to let the world stay broken. She frees the enslaved. She punishes tyrants. She believes in justice, fiercely.

The problem is that she slowly stops believing in doubt. Daenerys’s moral shift isn’t sudden; it’s cumulative. Each victory reinforces her belief that she is uniquely qualified to decide who deserves mercy. Opposition becomes betrayal. Violence becomes a moral necessity. And by the time she crosses the final line, she truly believes she’s still the hero.

That’s what makes Daenerys terrifying. She doesn’t become evil because she stops caring. She becomes dangerous because she cares too much and only trusts her own judgment.

# In the Shadows Between Right and Wrong

## **Katniss Everdeen: The Reluctant Hero Who Never Wanted the Job**

Katniss Everdeen does not want to save the world. She wants to survive and keep a very short list of people alive. That's it.

Katniss lies, manipulates public emotion, and kills when necessary. She performs love on cue while emotionally shutting down. She is not inspiring in a traditional sense, and she's often angry, withdrawn, and blunt.

And that's exactly why she works.

Katniss's moral compass is situational. She doesn't fight for ideals—she fights because the alternative is death. Her story reminds us that moral purity is nearly impossible in systems built on violence. Sometimes doing “the right thing” looks like making the least terrible choice available.

Katniss shows us that survival isn't pretty, and heroism doesn't always feel heroic.

## **Tom Ripley: Why Are We Rooting for This Man?**

And finally, the one who makes us deeply uncomfortable with ourselves: Tom Ripley.

Tom lies. Tom steals. Tom murders. And yet, we keep turning the pages.

Ripley is insecure, intelligent, and acutely aware of class barriers. He wants comfort, beauty, and belonging.

And when those things are denied to him, he takes them. Quietly, efficiently, with unsettling rationality. What makes Ripley so compelling is how reasonable he sounds to himself. He doesn't see his actions as monstrous; he sees them as necessary corrections to an unfair world. And sometimes, disturbingly, we almost agree.

Ripley exposes the thin line between empathy and excuse. He's a reminder that understanding a character doesn't mean endorsing them and that we, as readers, are far more flexible with our morals than we like to admit.

## **Why We'll Always Argue About Them**

Morally grey characters don't give us closure. They don't fit into neat categories. They make us debate intention versus impact, love versus harm, survival versus selfishness.

When we argue about these characters in book club, we're really asking bigger questions:

Where would I draw the line?

What would I justify?

And who would I become if the rules stopped applying?

That's why we can't forget them.

Not because they were good.

Not because they were right.

But because they made us uncomfortable enough to keep talking and maybe, just maybe, to look a little harder at our own morally grey areas.

# Certain books choose us at the right time

Books don't change.

We do.

A book chooses us when our heart has learned the language it speaks. Before that, the words are just words. After that, they become mirrors. They point at wounds you didn't know had names. They explain feelings you never managed to articulate. Sometimes a book arrives when you're tired of pretending you're okay.

Sometimes when you've outgrown an old version of yourself.

Sometimes when you're quietly breaking and need to know someone else has been there too.

You don't search for these books.

They slip into your life through a friend, a quote, a late-night scroll, a dusty shelf. Almost casually.

Almost accidentally.

But nothing about it is random.

The right book doesn't teach you something new. It reminds you of something you already felt but couldn't hold onto.

And when you close it, you don't feel smarter.

You feel seen.

That's how you know the timing was right.

*-Bala Swetha S*



# Do Endings Need Moral Closure?



We often expect endings to tell us what to think. Who was right? Who was wrong? What the story meant. Moral closure feels reassuring. It restores balance. The good are rewarded, the guilty are punished, and the world of the book makes sense again. Many books follow a similar pattern of helping readers leave the story without any discomfort, at least morally.

But some books refuse to do that. They end quietly, ambiguously, or even unfairly. Characters escape consequences. Justice remains incomplete. And readers are left unsettled. But maybe, that discomfort may be the point.

Life rarely offers moral clarity. People act from mixed motives, consequences are uneven, and closure is often something we create after the fact and for our own satisfaction. Morally speaking, no action can be categorized in a binary fashion. When a book denies moral closure, it reflects reality more honestly than a neatly wrapped ending ever could. This is the reason such endings linger in our minds, because they respect the complexity of human interactions and behaviour.

Ambiguous endings engage the reader. Instead of being handed over a judgment, we must make one ourselves. We weigh actions, intentions, and outcomes on our own and hence, become moral participants ourselves rather than being a mere spectator. In doing so, the story continues beyond the final page, inside the reader's mind, and every reader has their own version of "moral closure".

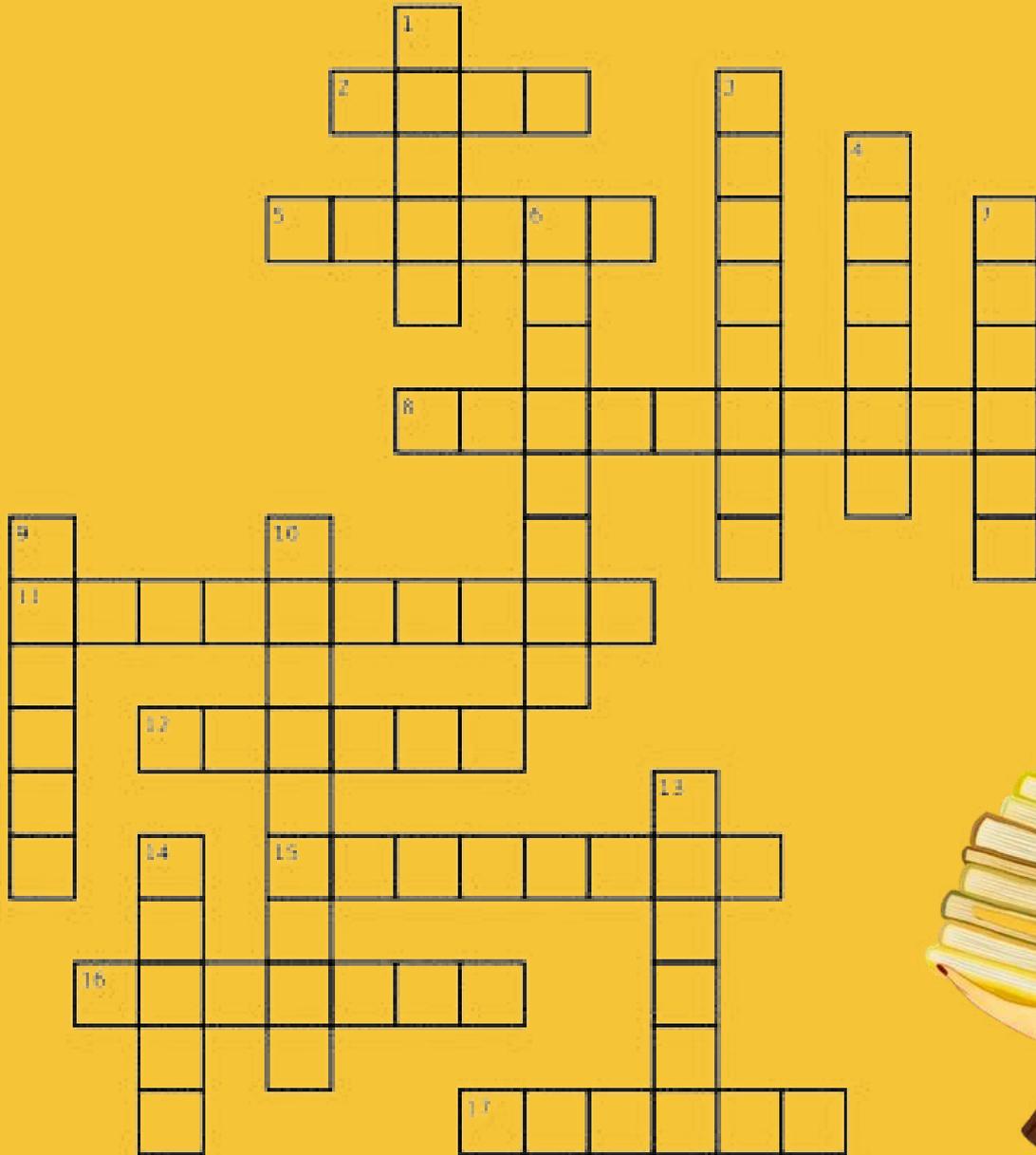
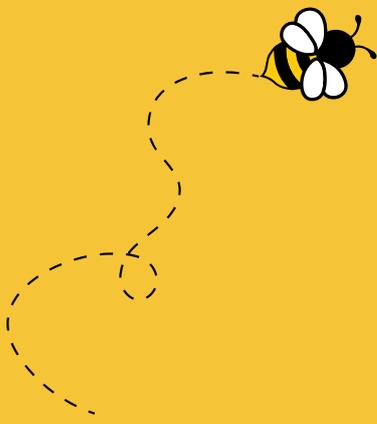
That doesn't mean moral closure is unnecessary. In stories of injustice or suffering, resolution can feel deeply satisfying, even healing. Sometimes we need a book to say what life refuses to say, "this was wrong".

But literature is not a courtroom. Its power lies not in delivering verdicts, but in asking better questions. Some endings close the story. Others open the reader. Often, the most honest endings are the ones that refuse to decide for us.

*-Aditya & Mihir*

# Crossword

-Nideesh & Abhinav Bhardwaj



Down:

Across:

1. Mystery, Fiction, Biography, Classics and many more
2. What pet did Lord Byron bring when he was not allowed to bring a dog in Cambridge?
3. A famous whale
4. Sherlock Holmes's Trusted Companion
5. The magical land found through a wardrobe
6. One tower in Mordor and One tower in \_\_\_\_\_
7. Author of famous dystopian books born in Bihar under British reign
8. The Bestselling non-religious, fiction book of all time
9. The Great \_\_\_\_\_
10. A book that is not hardcover
11. George Orwell's Political Allegory
12. Author of The Alchemist
13. Author of Pride and Prejudice
14. The boy who lived
15. A place to borrow books
16. The most famous vampire, created by Bram Stoker
17. First name of the richest author in the world

# FUN FACTS ABOUT READERS !!

A well-known study found that just 6 minutes of reading can reduce stress levels by up to 68%, making it more effective than listening to music or taking a walk.

Brain studies show that readers can experience emotions for fictional characters similarly to real social connections and hence the heartbreak after finishing a good book.

Book discussions help readers remember plots better and notice themes they might have missed alone.

There's even a word for this habit-Tsundoku-a Japanese term for collecting unread books with good intentions.

Research links frequent reading to stronger imagery and more narrative-driven dreams, because the brain is trained to build stories.

The brain processes memories from books similarly to real memories. That's why you might say, "I remember when that happened"-even though it was fictional.



# Childhood portrayed in Fantasy

Fantasy does not imagine childhood as a sanctuary, it imagines it as a threshold. On one side lies innocence and on the other lies the demanding bravery and responsibility to save the world. But before they become heroes they are the innocent children adding colors to life. Fantasy novels often use childhood to portray their central theme as it mingles innocence and curiosity to the courage and need to act as a result. A child protagonist is often expected to behave as an adult taking tough decisions and to hide their emotions. But is this portrayal close to reality or is it just a hypothetical figment of imagination? While some fantasy works represent real life emotional problems, they often exaggerate them by adding magical and extraordinary elements to the available issues. The children come to learn faster than ordinary children. In the beginning these children start like the ordinary children with normal lives having their personal problems and life fears. Much like Lucy Pevensie from The Chronicles of Narnia or Bilbo Baggins from Hobbit, these protagonists begin with fears, curiosities, and a reliance on adult protection. In some ways fantasy childhood does capture emotional realism making them relatable to the readers. The difference arises when this safe space is disrupted with the loss of a guardian, exposure to violence or the responsibility to save the world. As seen in Harry Potter where the death of his parents turned Harry's life upside down forcing him to leave his house. Under these unnatural circumstances these children are forced to leave their safe space and make bold decisions. Burdened with the power and the responsibility to counter the negativity of the world they are made to take bold decisions which drains them physically and psychologically.

Unlike the ordinary children they are not supposed to show fear and are always asked to behave confidently. They are expected to act alone and lack the stable guidance from the adults around them. Katniss Everdeen from the Hunger Games is denied to express her vulnerability and forces to become Mockingjay. But all this can't be equated with loneliness, bonds such as Harry, Ron, and Hermione's friendship or Frodo's dependence on Sam are the some of the best instances where protagonists find the bonds among the similar people. Fantasy doesn't leave children to be isolated; rather they are grown up in a community with similar people forming deep and strong bonds. A new family is found amidst the crisis which compensates for the absence of the childhood they never had.. For the children in the fantasy novels their childhood is the most impactful phase of their whole life. The experiences they had in the early years shaped their moral compass and how their overall personality came out. Though these heroes may save entire worlds, they rarely reclaim innocence. Unlike real life where healing can restore fragments of childhood, fantasy often presents such loss as irrevocable and defining. The extraordinary description of the childhood depicted might sometimes look unnatural but it left readers with meaning. Readers form emotional connections with these characters which validates fear and discomfort and their hope that everything becomes better at the end. Fantasy reminds us that childhood is not only a phase of life but a foundation which was once fractured but it continues to shape who we become, even in worlds where magic can mend almost anything else.

# Dark Academia

-Kanishka S

A group of students kills someone, then calmly goes to class.

That's dark academia.

It's a genre where murder slips into elite academic spaces: universities, boarding schools, small closed circles that believe normal rules don't apply. The violence is controlled, almost polite. Donna Tartt's *The Secret History* set the pattern. The crime comes early; the real story asks what happens when guilt appears, friendships fall apart, and privilege is no longer able to save them. You're not reading for the mystery. You're reading to watch smart, privileged people rot quietly. Over time, the genre lost its bite. As education became more open, elitism stopped feeling dangerous, and Pinterest-isation turned dark academia into candles, tweed, and highlighted classics, with the blood carefully edited out.

What still keeps people reading is the thrill. These stories make you question your moral compass. You stop, think, and keep turning pages to see how far things go, and how far you're willing to follow.

Where to Start :

The Secret History by Donna Tartt

If We Were Villains by M.L. Rio

These Violent Delights by Micah Nemerever

The Maidens by Alex Michaelides



# What Kind of Reader Are You?



-Nayana S Pujar

## A Literary Archetype Quiz

### Instructions:

For each question, choose the option that feels most like you. There are no right answers, only familiar ones.

At the end, count which letter you chose the most.

1. You finish an excellent book. What happens next?

- A. I reread my favourite parts immediately
- B. I look up interviews, essays, or discussions about it
- C. I sit quietly for a while, letting it sink in
- D. I start another book in a completely different genre
- E. I miss the characters like real people

2. Your ideal reading environment is...

- A. Somewhere comfortable and familiar
- B. A quiet place where I can focus deeply
- C. Anywhere, as long as I'm emotionally invested
- D. Somewhere that helps me escape reality
- E. A calm, distraction-free space where I can read slowly

3. You're choosing your next book. You're drawn to...

- A. Something I already know I'll love
- B. A book that challenges or questions me
- C. A story people say "made them feel something."
- D. A world unlike my own
- E. A book I can take my time with

4. What frustrates you most while reading?

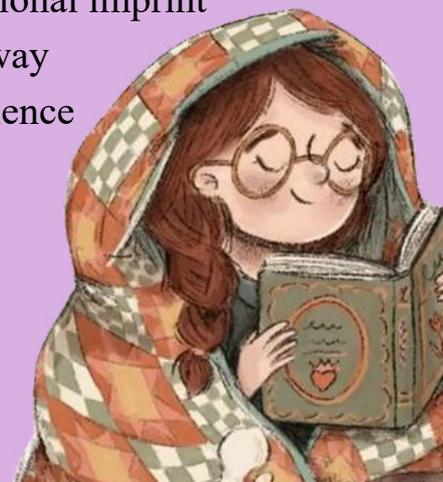
- A. When a book feels cold or detached
- B. Weak writing or shallow themes
- C. Characters that feel emotionally hollow
- D. A story that feels too realistic
- E. Being rushed through the experience

5. Your relationship with rereading is best described as:

- A. Essential, I return to books often
- B. Occasional, mostly to re-examine ideas
- C. Only when a book meant a lot emotionally
- D. Rare, I want new worlds
- E. Slow rereads are my favourite

6. A "good book" is one that...

- A. Feels like home
- B. Makes me think long after finishing
- C. Leaves an emotional imprint
- D. Takes me far away
- E. Teaches me patience



# Your Literary Archetype

If your answers were mostly...

## A - The Comfort Seeker

You understand that familiarity is not stagnation, it is a foundation of trust. You return to stories because they've already proven they can hold you. In a world that constantly demands novelty, you choose depth instead.

You notice small details others overlook: the way a scene settles, the rhythm of a paragraph you've read before, the comfort of knowing what comes next. Your reading life is shaped by memory, and that gives it a quiet richness.

You don't read to escape who you are; you read to return to yourself.

Your strength as a reader: Emotional intelligence and loyalty to stories that matter.

You remind us that love for a book doesn't expire.

## B - The Analytical Mind

You read with attention and intention. Stories, for you, are layered constructions, built from language, silence, structure, and choice. You enjoy noticing patterns, questioning narrators, and sitting with ambiguity rather than rushing past it.

You aren't afraid of difficult books. In fact, you welcome them. You know that understanding takes time, and that clarity often comes after discomfort. Your reading life is shaped by curiosity, patience, and thoughtfulness.

You don't just consume stories, you engage with them.

Your strength as a reader: Depth of thought and interpretative insight.

You remind us: That meaning grows when we slow down to look closely.

## C - The Emotional Reader

You read with your heart open. Books don't just interest you, they affect you. Characters feel real, scenes linger, and certain lines stay with you long after the page is turned.

You trust your emotional responses, even when they're hard to explain. You understand that literature is not only about ideas, but about feeling seen, understood, and accompanied. Your reading life is guided by intuition rather than rules.

You let stories touch you, and that is a rare kind of courage.

Your strength as a reader: Empathy and deep emotional connection.

You remind us: That stories matter because they make us feel.

## D - The Escapist

You are drawn to worlds beyond the familiar. Fantasy, speculative fiction, dark academia, surrealism, these are not distractions for you, but spaces of imagination and freedom. You read to step outside the limits of the everyday.

You understand that distance can be healing. Seeing another world can clarify your own. Your reading life is fueled by wonder, curiosity, and a longing for something more than what is immediately visible.

You believe stories should transform us, even if only for a while.

Your strength as a reader: Imagination and openness to possibility.

You remind us: That books are doorways, not mirrors alone.

## E - The Slow Reader

You read deliberately, sometimes quietly, often patiently. You don't measure your reading in numbers, but in moments. A single book can stay with you for months, and that's exactly how you like it.

You resist the pressure to read faster, more, or better. Instead, you read honestly. You understand that attention is a form of care, and that slowness allows meaning to deepen.

You treat reading not as a task, but as a practice.

Your strength as a reader: Presence and mindfulness.

You remind us: That reading is not a race, it is a relationship.

# Stories Don't Always Tell the Truth

-Aryan Prajapati

## Storytelling Styles I Noticed

You have read many stories, novels, short stories, and you saw many styles of how a story is structured, how it unfolds, how a narrator tells about an incident, how characters describe their backstories and give some plot holes and many more things. So I thought: Why don't I collect and organise some storytelling styles I know.

### 1. Rashomon

Okay, so the Author lets their characters do storytelling and guess what?

Everyone tells a slightly same story in different ways.

Everyone in the story has different version, different motivation and different dialogue of the same character.

Just like in Real Life, twelve witnesses to a crime gave thirteen different stories of what happened.

So basically, A Rashomon-Style story is where the same event is recounted by several characters, and the stories differ in ways that are impossible to resolve. It shows that two or more people can view the same event quite differently.

The author invites the audience to hear them all out and then compare and contrast these divergent points of view. Sometimes the work provides no definitive answer as to what actually happened. It's a cast full of Unreliable Narrators. Other times, the audience might get the definitive true version of the story at the beginning or end of the episode; and usually both sides will be truthful about some things and exaggerate, downplay, or outright lie about others.

Inspired by the famous Akira Kurosawa film *Rashomon*, itself inspired by the short story "In a Grove" by Ryunosuke Akutagawa.

Some Examples -

Agatha Christie's *Five Little Pigs*, *The Dark Maidens*, *Carrie* by Stephen King.

### 2. In Media Res

"You may be wondering how I got here? Well here's your answer..."

The Hero Says this in the Middle of Chaos or dilemma, then goes flashback to real Beginning. The Story then starts.

Meaning "Into The Middle of Things" from Horace. In Media Res is a technique of beginning a narrative poem at a late point in the story, after much action has already taken place.

This is common in biographies, specifically the author will start with a taste of some part of the subject's life that everyone's familiar with, then jump back to the mundanities of their heritage and upbringing.

Examples -

Isaac Asimov was told to "start every story as late as Possible", Homer's *The Illiad*, *Odyssey* – The Earliest Use of this, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, *Paradise Lost*

### 3. Epistolary Novel

14th January

I am writing a letter to tell you about how I wrote this article.

It was a Long, Heavy Day, but you see....

15th January

Look I am Trying to tell you about something, The Epistolary Novel (from the Latin *epistula*, meaning "letter") is written as a series of in-story documents, often ones that are sent between one or more of the characters, such as letters, diary entries, news clippings, emails, blogs.

16th January

Sometimes, Two Different Authors can Do this type of Novel.

I will Now tell you about some Examples because I am very forgetful-

Isaac Asimov's *Blind Alley*, *The Bible*, *The Dracula* by Bram Stoker, Stephen King's *Jerusalem's Lot*, *Love Letters to the Dead*

### 4. Stream of Consciousness

Sometimes what you read looks like a mess, like no beginning, no structure, not even proper sentences.

What you are looking at is the character's mind.

Just like real life, Thoughts come and go, half finished, random, emotional, Important but quickly dismissed.

Is this reliable for a story? No. But that's the point.

Stream of Consciousness shows that truth inside a person's head is not logical, not chronological, and definitely not well-edited. You don't get what happened. You get what it felt like.

Examples - *The Tell-Tale Heart* by E.A. Poe, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, *How Late It Was How Late*, *The Sound and the Fury*



# My Experience at Book club

My reading habit truly began to take shape through the Book Club at IIT Kanpur, starting right from my first year. What began as a simple visit gradually turned into a conscious pause in my otherwise hectic academic routine. In the middle of packed schedules and constant deadlines, reading offered me a rare moment of stillness. It was not something I did out of obligation or necessity, but something I chose for myself.

I would often go to the Book Club early, settle into a quiet corner, and spend about an hour immersed in a book. There was no pressure to finish a certain number of pages or extract academic value from what I read. That freedom allowed me to read at my own pace, helping me develop consistency and patience as a reader. Slowly, reading shifted from an occasional activity to a habit I genuinely looked forward to.

With time, the Book Club became much more than just a reading space—it turned into a personal retreat. Surrounded by shelves of books and an atmosphere of silence, I found it easier to detach from academic stress and mental clutter. Those quiet hours helped me reconnect with myself, offering a sense of balance amid the constant rush of college life.

These regular reading sessions not only strengthened my habit but also reshaped my relationship with books. Reading began to feel calming and restorative, rather than demanding or goal-oriented. The Book Club taught me that books can be a source of comfort as much as knowledge, and that taking time to read can be an act of self-care as well as personal growth.

*-Suryamani*



# Plot Holes in Fairytales

-Agrima verma

## Plot Holes Big Enough to Trip a Fairy Godmother

Fairy tales are supposed to be magical. They promise us happy endings, true love, and the comforting idea that everything will work out as long as you're kind and patient. We grow up believing them without question.

But reread them as an adult, and something strange happens. The magic is still there, but the logic has quietly packed its bags and left the kingdom. Princes forget faces, wolves pull off terrible disguises, and everyone makes decisions that would immediately get them grounded in real life.

Let's take a fun stroll through some classic fairy tales and point out the plot holes so large you could lose a glass slipper in them.



## Cinderella : Love, Amnesia, and a Kingdom-Wide Foot Inspection

Cinderella gives us one of the most confusing love stories of all time. The prince dances with a mysterious girl all night, talks to her, laughs with her and then completely forgets what she looks like the next day. Instead of remembering her face, he decides the best plan is to try a shoe on every woman in the kingdom. Apparently, faces are forgettable, but feet are unforgettable. And somehow, no one else has the same shoe size. Not one person. In an entire kingdom. Also, if the fairy godmother's magic ended at midnight, why didn't the glass slipper disappear too? Was it immune? Did it miss the deadline ?

### **Little Red Riding Hood and Zero Survival Instincts**

In Little Red Riding Hood, a mother sends her young daughter alone into a forest where a dangerous wolf lives. This is treated as a normal errand. Things don't improve when Red reaches her grandmother's house. The wolf is clearly not her grandmother. He has fur. He has teeth. He has a tail. Very un-grandmotherly vibe... And yet Red politely comments on his appearance instead of running for her life. At no point does she think, "This seems suspicious." It's a bold story about trusting strangers and ignoring every red flag along the way.

### **The Little Mermaid and a Crush Taken Too Far**

The original Little Mermaid is less romance and more emotional chaos. She falls in love with a prince who doesn't even know she exists. They don't talk. They don't interact. He has no idea she's the one who saved him. Still, she gives up her voice, lives in constant pain, and risks her life for him. When the prince marries someone else, her friends hand her a knife and suggest murder as a solution. When that fails, she dramatically turns into sea foam. Meanwhile, the prince mourns the sea foam despite never knowing a mermaid was involved. Romantic? Debatable. Logical? Not even slightly.

### **Goldilocks and the Bears Who Forgot Locks Exist**

Goldilocks and the Three Bears raises many questions, starting with: why do bears own furniture? These bears leave their house unlocked while their porridge cools, go for a walk, and return to find a stranger eating their food and sleeping in their beds. Somehow, Goldilocks faces zero consequences. Also, why are bears eating porridge? Where did they buy oats? Do they shop? Do they pay taxes? Goldilocks commits breaking and entering, and everyone just... moves on. Also, bears own a house, furniture, and kitchenware, but not a single lock. Incredible planning.

### **Rumpelstiltskin: Worst Deal Ever Made**

In Rumpelstiltskin, a man who can spin straw into gold demands a firstborn child as payment. Not gold. Not land. A baby. Even stranger, the only way to escape this terrible deal is guessing his name. Not breaking the contract. Not asking for help. The only escape? Guessing his name. In this universe, knowing someone's name is more powerful than lawyers, contracts, or common sense. Terrifying, really.

**Fairy tales don't always make sense and that's okay. They were never meant to be realistic. They're dramatic, exaggerated, and deeply unserious and slightly unhinged and that's why we remember them. If fairy tales followed logic, they'd be boring. And if they made good decisions, they'd be very short. So yes, fairy tales make no sense. But at least they commit to it.**



# Blind Date with a Book

-Chhaya

## Candidate #1: The "High-Concept Heavyweight"

- Name: The Spice Trader
- Age: 20,000 years in the future (but feels like 1965).
- Bio: I'm a bit dry, very gritty, and I have serious family drama. I'm not into small talk; I'm into politics, religion, and ecology. People say I'm "unfilmable," but Timothée Chalamet tried anyway. I'm long, I'm complex, and I contain literal worms.
- My Ideal Date: Someone who doesn't mind sand getting everywhere and is ready to start a revolution.
- Red Flags: I use a lot of made-up words without explaining them immediately.
- Song Anthem: Desert Rose – Sting.

## Candidate #2: The "Academic Validation"

- Name: The Lab Partner
- Age: Late 20s (PhD misery era).
- Bio: I'm smart, awkward, and I believe that love—like science—requires empirical evidence. I'm fully convinced that fake dating is a legitimate solution to my life problems. I feature a grumpy professor and a sunshine student, and yes, there is only one bed.
- My Ideal Date: Someone who understands the pain of a rejected grant proposal and loves biology puns.
- Red Flags: I will make you want to date a professor. Please do not actually date your professors.
- Song Anthem: Science & Faith – The Script.

## Candidate #3: The "Deadly Silent"

- Name: The Quiet Type
- Age: 33.
- Bio: I haven't spoken a word in six years. People think I'm crazy because I may or may not have shot my husband five times in the face. I'm a psychological puzzle wrapped in a Greek tragedy. You think you're analyzing me? I'm analyzing you.
- My Ideal Date: A therapist who thinks they can "fix" me. Good luck with that.
- Red Flags: I have a twist ending that will make you throw the book across the room.
- Song Anthem: Secrets – OneRepublic.



Who did you match with?

Dune by Frank Herbert (The Sci-Fi Epic)

The Love Hypothesis by Ali Hazelwood (The STEM Rom-Com)

The Silent Patient by Alex Michaelides (The Thriller)

# Lost and Found in Translation: How Stories Travel Across Language

Every book carries a passport. Before it reaches our shelves, our hearts, and our late-night reading marathons, some books travel much farther than others—across borders, cultures, and languages. When a story is translated into English, it doesn't simply change words; it transforms, adapts, and sometimes even reinvents itself.

At its core, translation is a delicate balancing act. A translator must decide how faithful to be to the original language while making the text feel natural to English readers. Think of it as hosting a guest from another country: you want them to feel at home, but you don't want them to lose their accent. Some of the most beloved books in English were born in other languages. The *Little Prince* began its life in French, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in Spanish, *The Diary of a Young Girl* in Dutch, and *The Trial* in German. Each of these works reached a global audience thanks to translators who acted as cultural bridges. Without them, these stories might have remained confined to a single linguistic world.

One fascinating aspect of translation is how much freedom a translator actually has. Some translations aim to be literal, staying as close as possible to the original sentence structure and wording. Others take a creative or adaptive approach, prioritizing mood, rhythm, and emotional impact over exact phrasing. There's also localization, where cultural references are gently adjusted so readers don't feel lost. None of these approaches is "correct" or "incorrect"—each creates a different reading experience. Sometimes, translators make a deliberate and beautiful choice: they leave certain words untranslated. Khaled Hosseini does this wonderfully in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by retaining Farsi

words like *harami*, *kolba*, and *naan*. These words carry emotional and cultural weight that English equivalents simply can't capture. Rather than interrupting the story, they enrich it, reminding readers that they are stepping into another world, not just another plot.

This technique appears across literature. Japanese novels often keep honorifics like *san* or *sensei*, and many Latin American works retain Spanish expressions of affection or frustration. These small linguistic details add texture and authenticity, allowing readers to feel the culture rather than just observe it.

Fun fact: translators are sometimes called "invisible authors," yet their influence is immense. Different English translations of the same book can feel like entirely different stories. Dostoevsky's novels, for instance, have multiple English versions, each with its own tone—some poetic, some sharp, some surprisingly modern.

Ultimately, book translation is not about perfection; it's about connection. It allows stories to cross oceans and generations, to be read by people who may never speak the original language but still feel its emotions deeply. Every translated book is proof that stories are universal—even when the words change, their magic does not.

So the next time you open a translated novel, take a moment to appreciate its journey. You're not just reading a book—you're witnessing a conversation between languages, cultures, and hearts.

-Om Nuli

# Short Stories

-Harsh Bajpai

.....1.....

Life doesn't follow a straight line, sometimes it's like the ocean— calm one day, stormy the next.

You don't need to have it all figured out. The waves will come, and they will go, but you'll still be here, still moving forward.

The tree sheds its leaves in winter, resting until it's time to bloom again.

Sometimes, like the river, you too need to pause— but you'll flow once more, even if it feels like standing still.

You don't ask the sky to stay clear forever, because the clouds will pass.

And the sun will find its way back to you, even if it doesn't feel like it now.

And when you feel like that flower, blooming just once a year, don't worry— your time will come. What you give to the world will be worth the wait.

Like a mountain lost in the fog, you still stand strong. Your quiet strength, and the patience you carry, are enough.

Life's like the stars— steady, even when unseen.

You don't have to shine every night, just be here, and the world will find you.

When the nights are long, and you're unsure of your way, remember— it's okay to feel lost. The dark is how you learn to shine. The stars are still there, even when you can't see them.

Like the wind, you'll find your way. You'll change course when you need to, but you'll always keep moving. Trust where you're going.

You don't need to be perfect— life's messy, but you're the beauty in the chaos. Because you're here, just as you are, and that's enough.

.....2.....

Life Never Leaves

I sat on an old park bench, watching children run through the grass, their laughter filling the afternoon air. A little boy tripped and fell. His mother rushed to help him up. For a moment, he cried, but then he wiped his tears, brushed the dirt off his knees, and ran again, like nothing had happened. Beside me, an old man sighed, folding his newspaper with slow, careful hands.

"Life is strange," he said, half talking to me, half to himself. "One day, you're running, believing time is endless and before you know it, you're just sitting, watching it pass."

I looked at him, his eyes lost in a place only he could see. "Do you miss being young?" I asked. He smiled, shaking his head. "No," he said. "I just think people forget that life never really leaves them. It just changes. Like the seasons. Like the way a river moves. It keeps flowing, even when you feel stuck."

His words settled over me, like leaves drifting in the wind. I thought about the friends who drifted away, their voices now soft echoes. The dreams I once held so tightly, slipping through my fingers like grains of sand.

"Sometimes it feels like life forgets me," I said quietly. The old man chuckled, his voice steady, certain. "Life doesn't forget," he said. "It's still with you. In the way the sun rises every morning, in the way you breathe, in the way you keep moving, even when it's hard."

I watched the little boy, laughing again, his fall already forgotten. Maybe life was like that too. It knocks you down, but it also gives you reasons to get up. Maybe I wasn't forgotten. Maybe I just wasn't looking closely enough. As I stood to leave, a breeze brushed against my cheek, wrapped in the warmth of the setting sun, like a quiet whisper, like life reminding me—

"I never left you."

# Short Stories

-Harsh Bajpai

.....3.....

## The Promise of Time

"Good things come to those who wait," time whispered. So he sat, hands open, watching the world move without him.

The sun rose, the sun set. Doors opened, then quietly closed.

He told himself, "Not yet—soon."

But soon was always a step away.

Once, he danced with the present, laughed at the little things, held joy in his hands without asking how long it would stay.

Then a promise came, soft and certain, whispering of a better tomorrow. So he stopped. Stood still.

Waited.

And tomorrow never came.

He counted days instead of living them, measured time by empty spaces where something should have been.

How many smiles did he ignore, thinking a bigger one was on its way?

Now, he wonders—  
was it time that betrayed him, or the waiting that made him blind? Did the world move too fast, or had he simply forgotten to move?

How many doors had opened, while he stood staring at a locked one? How many moments had passed, while he chased the shadow of the next? Did he lose time, or did time lose him?

Perhaps time was never his to hold, nor fate his to command.

Perhaps the promise was never false, but only a mirror, showing him the walls he built himself.

He looks at his empty hands, at the days that vanished like mist, and asks himself—  
"Was I waiting for life, or was life waiting for me?"

.....4.....

We've become a society obsessed with forever, haven't we? Like that uncle who keeps his 20-year-old Maruti.

Nothing wrong in that but we've become so obsessed with this "till death do us part" philosophy that we're applying it to everything - from career choices to which brand of toothpaste we use.

Here's the thing - why do we label every ended chapter as a failure? Your friend runs a cozy café for three years, brings joy to hundreds, then moves on to teach art?

Suddenly they're that "failed businessman" at family gatherings. Someone transitions careers? "Ah, couldn't stick to one thing." A beautiful 5-year relationship that ran its course ends? "Failed marriage."

It's like we're all expected to be those Nokia 3310s from the 2000s - indestructible and unchanging. But life isn't a Sooraj Barjatya film where everything needs to last till the end credits roll.

Think about it - those intense college friendships, that Himalayan trek phase, your brief stint as a poetry writer - just because they ended doesn't make them less valuable.

They're like those perfect summer mangoes - precious because they don't last forever.

Maybe success isn't about making everything eternal. Maybe it's about embracing each season, learning its lessons, and gracefully moving to the next - Maybe it's time we normalized the beauty of temporary.

Like those perfect pani puris that last for exactly two seconds but leave a lifetime of happiness. Or those midnight conversations with school friends that eventually fade into comfortable silence but remain golden in memory.

After all, isn't life more interesting as a collection of beautiful chapters rather than one endless, monotonous story?

# Short Stories

-Harsh Bajpai

.....5.....

## A Philosophical Duel Between Dostoevsky and Nietzsche

On Humanity:

Dostoevsky: "Man is a living being who walks on two legs, yet is ungrateful."

Nietzsche: "Man is nothing but a being that must be surpassed."

On Life:

Dostoevsky: "Every person in this world must love life, not try to understand it."

Nietzsche: "Life is nothing but a smile on a dead man's lips."

On Happiness:

Dostoevsky: "I am searching for happiness, but: where is it?"

Nietzsche: "We have invented happiness as an invention."

On Contentment:

Dostoevsky: "At first, they cried; then they adapted and got used to it. Man can adapt to anything... how despicable."

Nietzsche: "In truth, I hate those who see everything as good and this world as the best of worlds. These are merely the contented ones who accept everything and savor it without true taste."

On Reason:

Dostoevsky: "Reason guides me, and that is precisely what has destroyed me."

Nietzsche: "The most deeply rooted beliefs in the mind are those things that seem unbelievable."

On the Heart:

Dostoevsky: "He fell victim to his great belief in the nobility of the human heart."

Nietzsche: "I love only what man has written with his blood... desire runs deeper than heartbreak."

On Homeland:

Dostoevsky: "The days are gone when our parents worried about us abroad. Now, in our estrangement, we fear for them at home."

Nietzsche: "Every homeland has its own hypocrisy, which it calls its virtues. As for its best qualities, it is ignorant of them and refuses to know them."

On Children:

Dostoevsky: "The soul is healed by being with children."

Nietzsche: "No nation can thrive if the roots of its children are corrupted."

On Love:

Dostoevsky: "He loved her greatly but hated that absurd excess in showing emotions. He despised those feelings that resembled the emotions of cattle."

Nietzsche: "There is not enough love and goodness in this world for us to abandon either to imaginary beings."

On Intelligence:

Dostoevsky: "Intelligence is a problem, and being highly perceptive is a true curse."

Nietzsche: "When we think too much and too intelligently, it is not only the face that changes, but the entire body takes on intelligence."

On History:

Dostoevsky: "I cannot value the history of the world; it is merely the study of human foolishness."

Nietzsche: "Some historians and biographers sell us legitimate lies and fabricated stories that we are happy to believe."

On Freedom of Opinion:

Dostoevsky: "Suppose I am wrong; even so, I still possess the freedom of belief, and that is a sacred universal right."

Nietzsche: "It is difficult to remember my opinions without recalling the reasons that made me express them."

On Willpower:

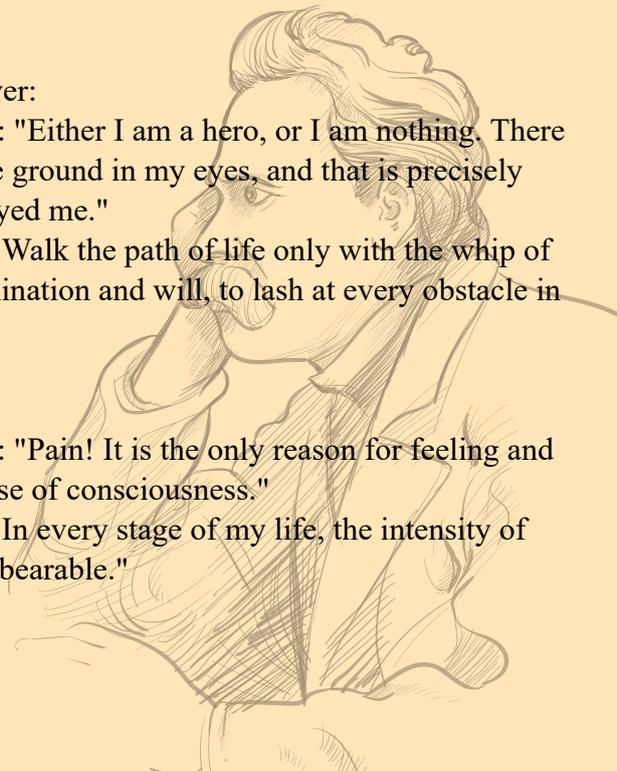
Dostoevsky: "Either I am a hero, or I am nothing. There is no middle ground in my eyes, and that is precisely what destroyed me."

Nietzsche: "Walk the path of life only with the whip of your determination and will, to lash at every obstacle in your way."

On Pain:

Dostoevsky: "Pain! It is the only reason for feeling and the sole cause of consciousness."

Nietzsche: "In every stage of my life, the intensity of pain was unbearable."



# Short Stories

-Harsh Bajpai

.....6.....

To SOMEONE WHO OVERTHINKS,

When I say life is all about the LITTLE THINGS irrespective of your age,I mean it.I ain't exaggerating. Nope,not even a bit.

Believing in pinky promises are my things and they've had been the highest level of trust factor for me. It's really exhausting to live a double life, we are happy,cheerful souls in the morning,sad in the afternoon and 2 ams are meant for depression and self doubt.Period.

There comes a time when we are tired of plastering smiles on our faces and living up to everyone's expectations. Sometimes the cement hardens so fast that we hardly succeed in giving it a shape we desire.

We sometimes need someone to just lay beside us and listen to our non stop rants of career,self doubt, relationships, financial decisions without judging.

No matter how many lavender scented candles we burn in the hope of feeling good,those long pampering shower sessions with loud music we have, workouts we do,get along with our friends,eat our favourite chicken biryani,we still can't get through the day if we are all doing is overthinking about that one soul or maybe that one dream college and job.

Sometimes a hug is what we crave for, we just feel laying our head on our mother's lap and talk about every damn shit going on in our mind, but we can't.WE JUST CAN'T.

There are some days when we feel like having dinner in our room, in our space, with no human interaction and wish to just get tucked into our blanket as soon as it gets over. Yes, such days do exist. Somedays we just feel like taking our bike out and travel with no pre-decided destination. We neither function properly on some mornings nor get simple things done like finding a maid even though she comes at specific hours. So,

Kyun na rok kar khud ko ek mashwara kar lein,for all the little things that matter in love.

"Aadatan to sochenge" "Hota yoon to kya hota

.....7.....

I was back to school today. A primary school in Tirthan, run by Mohan's landlord Mishraji. The three musketeers (Mohan, Abhiram & Sudeep) were sleeping in the morning after the late-night ride, so I left quietly, without disturbing them. I did slip a handwritten letter under their door. Hope they found it before the cleaner threw it in the bin.

Schools in Himachal make students sit in the sun and study. The insides of the rooms could get too cold in winters. I was lucky because from Monday, the school is shutting for winter, and today was the last day, a half-day. Mishraji introduced me to the kids at the assembly. I was to interact with a chirpy bunch aged between 5-6, all dressed in the school uniform—two layers of red sweaters, some with red monkey-caps too. I went there hoping to teach them math & a little English but they ended up teaching me in return. I never faced so many questions as a baba than today, as their teacher for a day. One of them asked me, 'Why do I have two eyes if I only see one thing?' and I didn't have an answer to that. I told him I would ask my fellow writers. Please write back if you know why.

I felt safer teaching them numbers and language (over science—the subject of whys). Introducing them to multiplication was easy but to make them understand why tables of 1, 2, 3 and 4 were called tables, not chairs was difficult. I switched to teaching them how alphabets form into words and words can get attached to each other like train bogies to form a sentence. They liked the train analogy. It was relatable. Much like good writing.

Whenever you are in doubt about your story, try telling it to a child. The smaller in age, the better. You will have to make your story not only simpler but the simplest. Not simplified, mind you. The story remains the same. The plot has to come out in its barebones and if it doesn't make sense to a child, ask them why. Take their answers in your briefcase: go through them a hundred times. Answer their questions through your story. Your story will be relatable.



# In Closing...

-Harsh Bajpai

Talking about children and languages and numbers remind of one hell of a mystery novel, *The Curious Incident of A Dog in the Nighttime* by Mark Haddon. The novel is narrated in the first-person perspective by Christopher John Francis Boone, a 15-year-old boy who describes himself as "a mathematician with some behavioural difficulties" living in Swindon, Wiltshire. Christopher is so much in love with prime numbers that the chapters of the book are prime numbers. 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17 and so on.

A lot of us word lovers have been scared of math (and numbers) as a kid growing up. I encourage you to dissuade this fear of yours by reading about numbers, not as mathematics but literature. Without a fondness of numbers, timing in your storytelling goes for a toss. Poetry follows meter, lyrical prose follows a rhythm, even classics like the lines in Shakespeare's famous plays are written in an iambic pentameter. To be or not to be. (Ta-da Ta-da Ta-da).

Another book worthy of mention is the Booker-winning *The Luminaries* by Eleanor Catton. So fond was Eleanor with the golden ratio (two quantities are in the golden ratio if their ratio is the same as the ratio of their sum to the larger of the two quantities), which signifies all things of beauty in nature, that she expressed love in her novel through mathematics: 'I to you is what you are to both of us.' How beautiful, true to what the golden ratio stands for, isn't it?

By the way, I am back in Dharamshala now. I didn't have to walk for hours this time. The school-principal Mishraji (Mohan's landlord) seemed happy enough with my interaction to send his car to drop me. I am writing this later, sitting in a café, sipping lemongrass tea. The place is warm and cosy, and there are a couple of Buddhist monks seated a little far from me. I wish to chat up with them. I will read soon.

This time, I leave you with a poem, a math poem, by noted Vijay Seshadri:

Consciousness observes and is appeased.

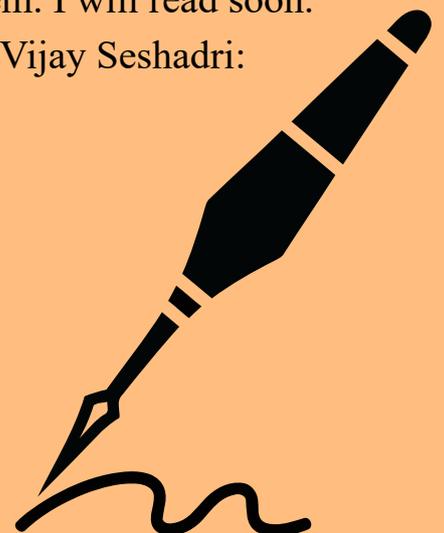
The soul scrambles across the screens.

The soul,

like the square root of minus 1,

is an impossibility that has its uses.

With childlike wonder,



# GUESS THE BOOK BY EMOJIS

-Ishika Gupta



---

## ANSWERS

1. Harry Potter Series

2. Beauty and the Beast

3. Sherlock Holmes Series

4. The Kite Runner

5. The Lord of the Rings

6. The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo

7. The Fault in our Stars

8. the Girl on the Train

9. Murder on the Orient Express

10. The Diary of A Young Girl

11. Wings of Fire

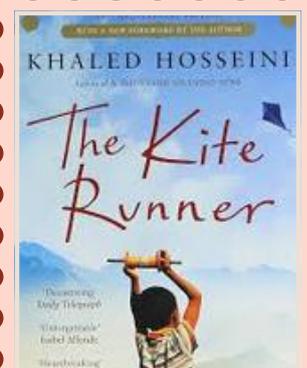
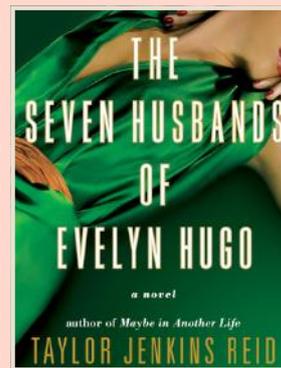
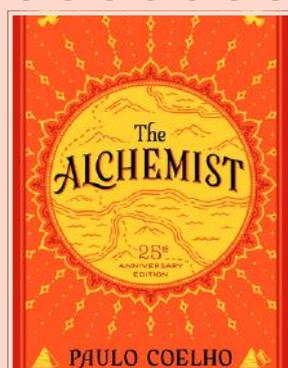
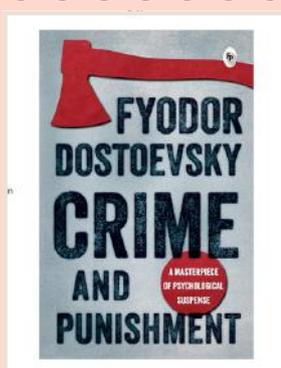
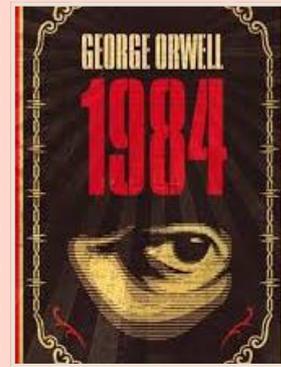
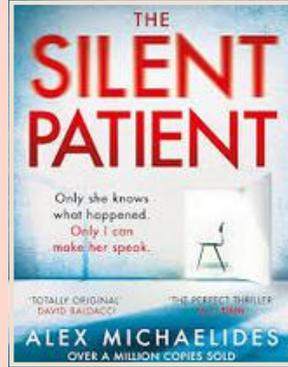
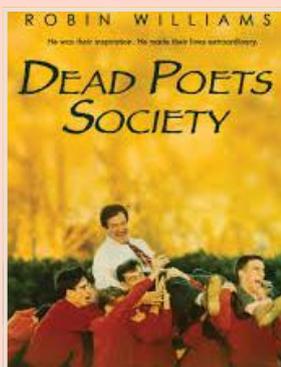
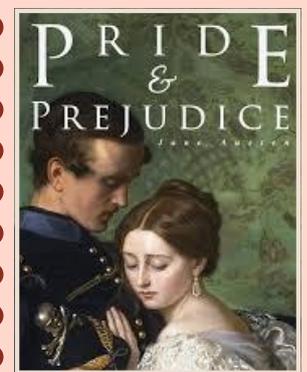
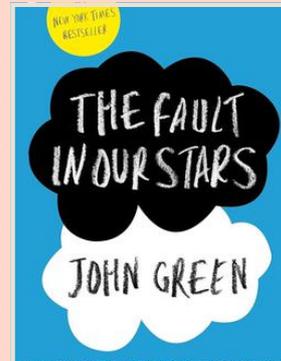
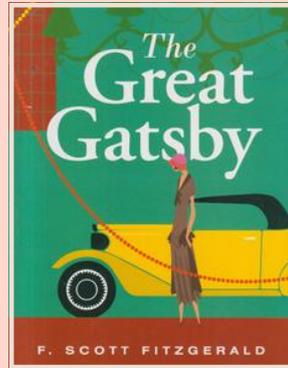
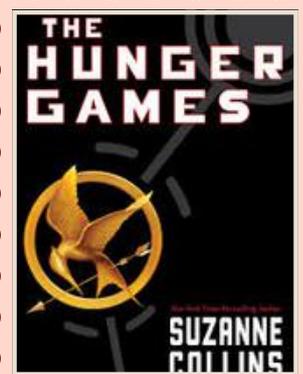
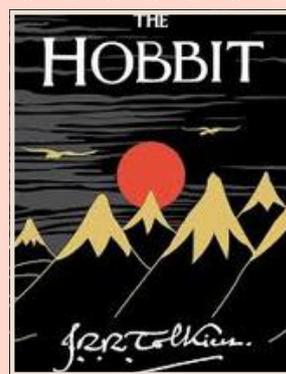
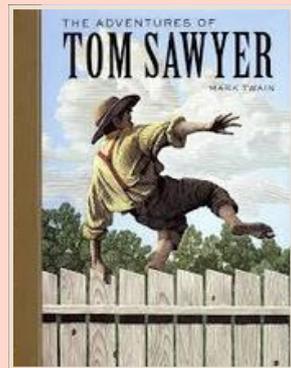
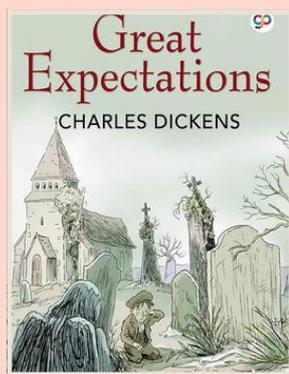
12. And Then There Were None

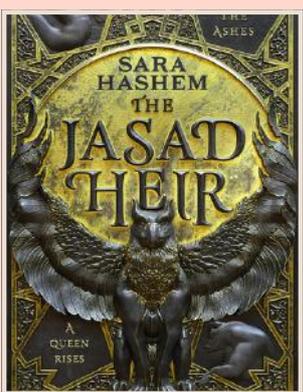
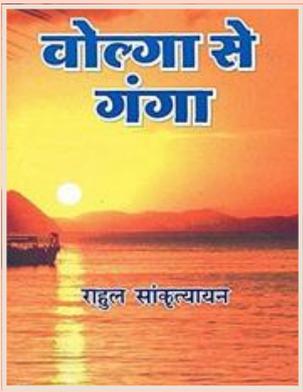
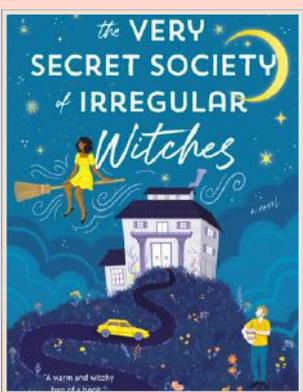
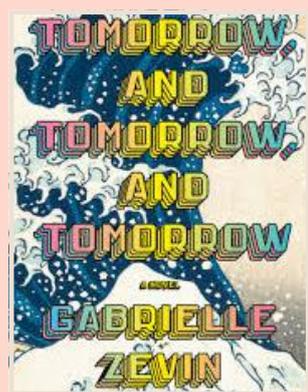
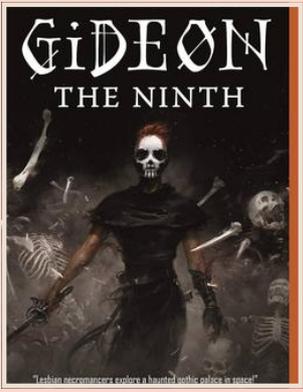
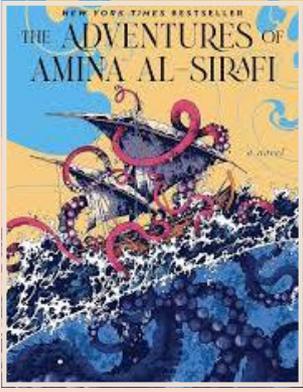
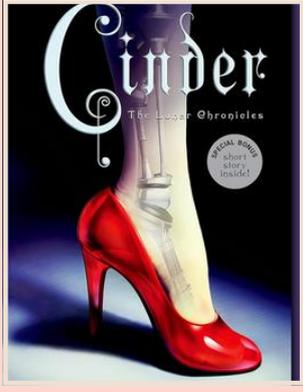
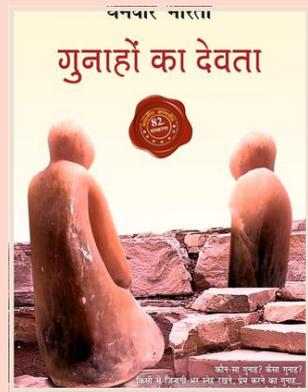
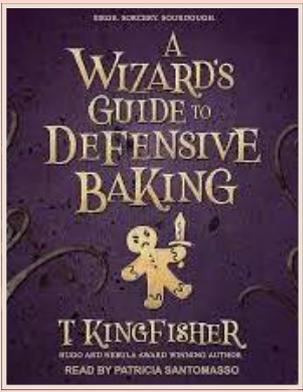
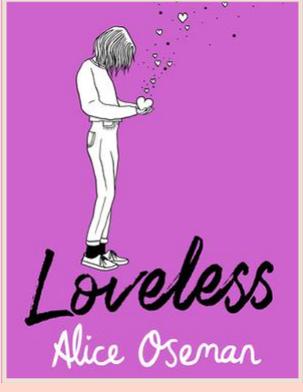
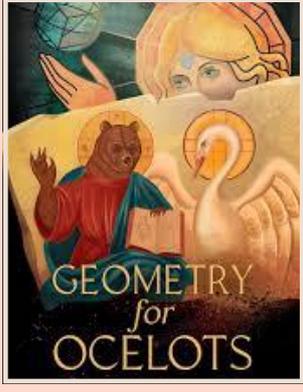
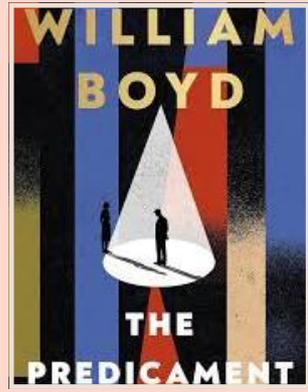
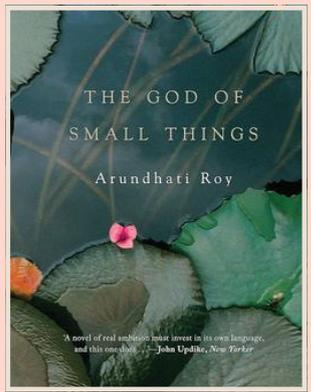
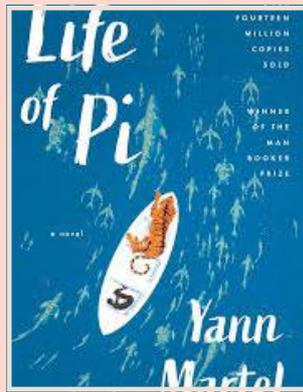
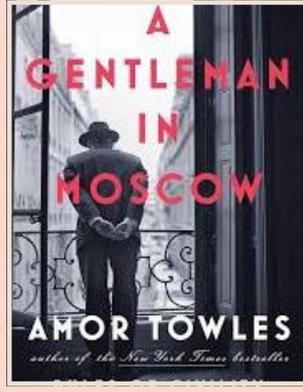
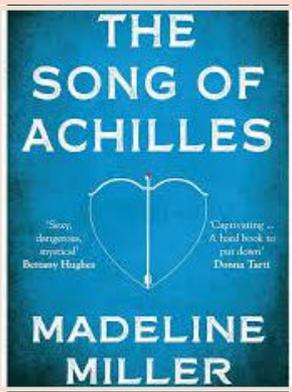
13. The Silent Patient

14. Me Before You

15. Alice in Wonderland

# Book Recommendations





# BOOK BINGO

-Nideesh

Harry Potter	Hunger Games	Metamorphosis	Sherlock Holmes	Pride and Prejudice
The Kite Runner	Frankenstein	Agatha Christie	Sherlock Holmes	Horror
The Fault in our Stars	Atomic habits	Solo Leveling	Dan Brown	Vinland Saga
Chetan Bhagat	Hitchhiker's Guide	Tolkien	Gone Girl	The Silent Patient
To kill a mockingbird	Seven Husbands Of Evelyn Hugo	Norwegian Wood	Book Thief	Da Vinci Code



# QUIZ!

A real-life serial killer in the late 19th century terrorized the Whitechapel district of London. Though never officially identified, the brutality and mystery of the crimes have inspired countless works of fiction, including graphic novels and films. One particularly famous graphic novel reimagines the murders with a royal conspiracy theory at its core. What is the name of this graphic novel?

In one of the most controversial cases solved by Hercule Poirot, the murderer is revealed in a way that shocked readers because the story's narrator turns out to be the killer. Which novel is this?

**Answer to previous edition:**

1. Murder on the Orient Express
2. Catch-22

## Book Club

IIIT KANPUR

“I have always imagined that paradise will be a kind of library.”

The quote hits us just right but you don't need to just restrict to imagining such a heaven, because we at the Book Club, aim to bring down that paradise — loaded with a diverse collection of books and not to mention, comfy bean-bags for the feel of it. Whether you are new to the world of books or a dedicated bookworm, we got your back! Our collections include Fiction, Non-Fiction, Historical Fiction, Horror, Fantasy, Classics, Poetry, Drama, Collections, Comics, Self Help, Romance, Biographies, Autobiographies, and even regional novels in Bengali and Hindi. In general, we conduct events that range from novel-based competitions, regular book discussions and fun get-togethers to our flagship event, The Halloween Party!

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