

The Third Level

Jack Finney (Walter Braden) 1911-

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Jack Finney graduated from Knox College in Galesburg Illinois. He worked for an advertising agency in New York until his stories began to sell. Since then he has published stories in almost all the major magazines in this and other countries. Many of his books, such as Good Neighbor Sam and The Bodysnatchers, have been made into movies. His stories are noted for their unusual, bizarre plots and flights into imagination.

Let us Understand

The Grand Central Station sits in the middle of New York City. It is one of the largest railroad stations in the world. Each day thousands of passengers pass through the station's massive halls. Every day adventures take place there but no adventure was stranger than Charley's visit to the third level.

Charley in the story insists that there is third level at Grand Central even though in reality there are two levels. Charley consults his psychiatric friend who describes his condition as someone who is awake but transported to another world of his wishes and desires. This has happened because he is unhappy.

• **Charley does not agree with the psychiatrist what is Charley's response to this?**

Charley's grandfather lived a carefree life. He also faced the problems in life. Yet he collected stamps as hobby.

• **Charley gives this explanation in response to a statement. Locate in the story the situation and the statement.**

• **According to Charley Grand Central is like a maze. How does he describe it? Find out from the text.**

Charley is sure that he reached the third level of the station. What evidence does he give for example;

• **The room was small**

• **There were fewer ticket windows**

Read the text and add more points.

Charley says when he reached the third level he saw people dressed in old fashion. It reminded him of dress styles of 1894.

- **What was so peculiar about their dress and appearances?**

Charley realizes that at third level he can buy tickets for his wife and himself to go anywhere in United States specifically to Galesburg.

• **Read the text and write about Galesburg as described by Charley.**

- ***Why do you think Charley preferred to live in 1894?***

Writer's Craft

In order for a fantasy to be successful, reader must accept an unreal world. In order to accept this unreal world, the readers must, however, find everything else in the story to be realistic, consistent, and believable. Marianne Moore emphasized this idea in a poem in which she said that even “imaginary gardens” must have “real toads in them.” The writer coerces the readers to accept willingly the fantasy as a reality.

• **Read the story and find instances where the author makes the reader believe that Charley could find the third level at Grand Central Station.**

Vocabulary

Context clues are surrounding words or ideas that help reader understand the general meaning of an unfamiliar word. There are various types of context clues. The most obvious type is called the Direct Explanation Context Clue. Context clue gives a straightforward explanation or definition of the unfamiliar term. Here is an example from The Third Level:

Do you know what a *first-day cover* is? When a new stamp is issued, stamp

collectors buy some and use them to mail envelopes to themselves on the very first day of sale; and the postmark proves the date. The envelope is called a first-day cover. They're never opened; you just put blank paper in the envelope.

If you were asked to give the general meaning of *first-day cover*, all you would have to do is sum up the direct-explanation context clues in your own words:

First-day cover: an envelope that a stamp collector mails to himself or herself, that has the postmark of the date of the release of the stamp, and that is left unopened.

A. Each passage given below is based on "The Third Level" and contains one *italicized* word. Write a general definition for each *italicized* word by using direct-explanation context clues. Write your answers like the example above.

- The *leg-of-mutton sleeve* was popular then. It was very wide at the top and narrowed considerably by the time it reached the cuff. The shape of the sleeve was copied from the shape of a sheep's leg.
- On the wall hung nineteenth-century American *lithographs* by Currier and Ives. These pictures had been printed in large numbers from flat stone plates, on which designs had been made with special grease crayons and ink.
- Opposite the benches were two shiny brass pots. Every few minutes, a waiting traveler got rid of his chewing tobacco by spitting it into one of the pots. Each man's accuracy was duly noted as he hit, nearly hit, or completely missed the brass *spittoons*.

B. Write some direct-explanation context clues of your own for the following words from "The Third Level". Make sure your context clues would help someone else understand clearly what each word means.

Currency Psychiatrist lapels suburban

Let us Reflect and Write

A good story is narrated in wider context of other stories and ideas. The story in its true nature never comes to an end. Read the authentic and original stories from *Panchtantra* and see how one story leads to another story.

The last part of the story transports the reader to the climax of fantasising.

- Read the last line of the story and find out what is discovered in the end.

- What is ironic about the discovery?

Do you think this is the end of the story or it can be further extended with a new found protagonist? If you agree then extend the story in your own words. Keep in mind that;

- it should relate to the already written story,
- it should be a fantasy.