

Experiential Learning

Lesson: Lost Spring

Activity name	Question the author
Level	XII
Skill	Speaking, Articulating, Critiquing
Time	2 periods of 40 minutes each
Grouping of students	Small groups (5 each)
Materials	Pen and paper for each student

Learning Outcomes: The students will be able to:

- identify and list main theme and sub-themes
- summarize the story
- pose questions and engage actively within a text
- ask questions of the author
- solidify their understanding
- apply techniques of critiquing the author's writing
- develop a higher emotional awareness of what child labour is through reflective work
- comment on the importance of going to school and how millions of children are denied this right
- develop their communication skills and encourages students to become agents of social change

Teacher Activity- Teacher will:

- select a passage that is both interesting and can spur a good conversation
- decide appropriate stopping points where you think your students need to delve deeper and gain a greater understanding
- create four queries for each group (questions to encourage critical thinking) for each stopping point
 - Ex: What is the author trying to say?
 - Ex: Why do you think the author used the following phrase?
 - Ex: Does this make sense to you?"

Student Activity- Students will:

- read the extract from the text
- respond to the questions on their own in writing
- read and share their response with the group
- react to each of the other group members' responses
- fifth member will summarise the points

Stages:

- Setting up (giving instructions – guidelines, objectives, rules, time limit): 5 minutes
- Preparation time: 20 minutes

- Conversation: 40 minutes
- Discussion and feedback: 15 minutes

Extracts from the Text

Extract 1:

“Why do you do this?” I ask Saheb whom I encounter every morning scrounging for gold in the garbage dumps of my neighbourhood. Saheb left his home long ago. Set amidst the green fields of Dhaka, his home is not even a distant memory. There were many storms that swept away their fields and homes, his mother tells him. That’s why they left, looking for gold in the big city where he now lives.

“I have nothing else to do,” he mutters, looking away.

“Go to school,” I say glibly, realising immediately how hollow the advice must sound.

“There is no school in my neighbourhood. When they build one, I will go.”

“If I start a school, will you come?” I ask, half-joking.

“Yes,” he says, smiling broadly. A few days later I see him running up to me. “Is your school ready?”

“It takes longer to build a school,” I say, embarrassed at having made a promise that was not meant. But promises like mine abound in every corner of his bleak world.

Would you agree that promises made to poor children are rarely kept? Why do you think this happens in the incidents narrated in the text?

Queries from Extract 1:

- Who do you think makes promises to these poor children?
- Would you agree that promises made to poor children are rarely kept?
- Why do you think this happens in the incidents narrated in the text?
- Why do you think the author made such a statement?

Extract 2:

After months of knowing him, I ask him his name. “Saheb-e-Alam,” he announces. He does not know what it means. If he knew its meaning — lord of the universe — he would have a hard time believing it. Unaware of what his name represents, he roams the streets with his friends, an army of barefoot boys who appear like the morning birds and disappear at noon. Over the months, I have come to recognise each of them.

“Why aren’t you wearing *chappals*?” I ask one.

“My mother did not bring them down from the shelf,” he answers simply.

“Even if she did he will throw them off,” adds another who is wearing shoes that do not match. When I comment on it, he shuffles his feet and says nothing. “I want shoes,” says a third boy who has never owned a pair all his life. Travelling across the country I have seen children walking barefoot, in cities, on village roads. It is not lack of money but a tradition to stay barefoot, is one explanation. I wonder if this is only an excuse to explain away a perpetual state of poverty.

Queries from Extract 2:

- What is the author trying to say?

- Give reasons why Saheb and his friends have been compared to ‘an army of barefoot boys’?
- Why does the author use the phrase, ‘a perpetual state of poverty’?
- Is it actually tradition that stops these rag pickers from wearing *chappals* (slippers)?

Extract 3:

We enter a half-built shack. In one part of it, thatched with dead grass, is a firewood stove over which sits a large vessel of sizzling spinach leaves. On the ground, in large aluminium platters, are more chopped vegetables. A frail young woman is cooking the evening meal for the whole family. Through eyes filled with smoke she smiles. She is the wife of Mukesh’s elder brother. Not much older in years, she has begun to command respect as the *bahu*, the daughter-in-law of the house, already in charge of three men — her husband, Mukesh and their father.

When the older man enters, she gently withdraws behind the broken wall and brings her veil closer to her face. As custom demands, daughters-in-law must veil their faces before male elders. In this case the elder is an impoverished bangle maker. Despite long years of hard labour, first as a tailor, then a bangle maker, he has failed to renovate a house, send his two sons to school. All he has managed to do is teach them what he knows — the art of making bangles.

Queries from Extract 3

- Why do Mukesh and his family live in a half-built shack?
- What do you think about the custom of daughters-in-law veiling their faces before a male elder?
- What has Mukesh’s father been able to achieve after so many years of toil?
- Will Mukesh be able to renovate the house? Why? Why not?

Extract 4:

“Why not organise yourselves into a cooperative?” I ask a group of young men who have fallen into the vicious circle of middlemen who trapped their fathers and forefathers. “Even if we get organised, we are the ones who will be hauled up by the police, beaten and dragged to jail for doing something illegal,” they say. There is no leader among them, no one who could help them see things differently. Their fathers are as tired as they are.

They talk endlessly in a spiral that moves poverty to apathy to greed and to injustice. Listening to them, I see two distinct worlds — one of the family, caught in a web of poverty, burdened by the stigma of caste in which they are born; the other a vicious circle of the *sahukars*, the middlemen, the policemen, the keepers of law, the bureaucrats and the politicians. Together they have imposed the baggage on the child that he cannot put down. Before he is aware, he accepts it as naturally as his father. To do anything else would mean to dare.

Queries for Extract 4:

- Is it going to be difficult for the bangle makers of Firozabad to form a cooperative?
- Why has the circumstance been described as ‘a spiral’?
- In what manner does the vicious circle of *sahukars*, middlemen, policemen, keepers of law and the bureaucrats keep the bangle makers oppressed?
- Is the extract about child labour? How can it be eliminated?

Lost Spring Worksheet

Write the character sketch of Mukesh and Saheb using STEAL -Character Sketch Graphic Organizer. **Do not forget to transfer the points in a paragraph.**

Name: _____

Characterization & S.T.E.A.L

Class/Sec: _____

Subject/Chapter: _____

The 5 elements of characterization can be explained with the acronym S.T.E.A.L.

SPEAK = what (dialogue) and **how** (speaker tags & tone) a character speaks to other characters.

THOUGHTS = What a character **thinks, believes, values**, and what **motivates** a character.

EFFECTS on OTHERS = The **relationships** the character has with other others and how characters treat each other.

ACTIONS = How a character behaves, including how they **react** to people & events.

LOOKS = A character's **physical appearance**. This includes physical features, clothing, body language, etc.

Directions: It is time to take a closer look at the main character. In this chapter, there are two extracts, and therefore, two main characters. Go back into the text to **identify & explain** aspects of their character. Find at least one textual example for each element of characterization (S.T.E.A.L.).

Example from text/extract	What insight does the textual example give us into the character?
<u>S</u>PEAK	
<u>T</u>HOUGHT	
<u>E</u>FFECTS	
<u>A</u>CTIONS	
<u>L</u>OOKS	