

MAHESH PUBLIC SCHOOL

SUBJECT : ENGLISH CORE

CLASS: XII

TEXT BOOK : VISTAS

CHAPTER :1 THE THIRD LEVEL



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Walter Braden "Jack" Finney (born **John Finney**, October 2, 1911 – November 14, 1995) was an American author. His best-known works are science fiction and thrillers, including *The Body Snatchers* and *Time and Again*. The former was the basis for the 1956 film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and its remakes.

Finney was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and given the name John Finney. After his father died when Finney was three years old, he was renamed Walter Braden Finney in honor of his father, but continued to be known as "Jack". He attended Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, graduating in 1934. He married Marguerite Guest, and they had two children, Kenneth and Marguerite. After living in New York City and working for an advertising agency there, he moved with his family to California in the early 1950s. He lived in Mill Valley, California, and died of pneumonia and emphysema in Greenbrae, California, at the age of 84.

Explanation

The Third Level at Grand Central Station

Grand Central Station of New York has two levels. But Charley, a thirty-one year old dweller of the city, talks about there being three. Not only does he believe in the existence of this hypothetical third level but also claims to have been there.

A visit to his psychiatrist friend

Charley visits a psychiatrist friend to talk about this problem. The psychiatrist calls it a “waking-dream wish fulfillment” and rationalises Charley's psychology by saying that the “modern world is full of insecurity, fear, worry, and war...” and everybody wants to escape to some “temporary refuge from reality.” According to him, even hobbies like stamp collection is a manifestation of this escape.

Charley loses his way at Grand Central

The fast growing Grand Central station at times seems to be a maze to Charley. He had lost his way a couple of times earlier too while taking the subway. Once, he entered the lobby of the Roosevelt Hotel while the other time he emerged at an office building that was three blocks away. But this time when he loses his way, something unique happens. He visits the third level!

The Third Level

Charley keeps walking in the quiet corridor, angling left and slanting downward, till he reaches an architecturally old station that is completely different from the two familiar levels. The antiquated small room with fewer ticket counters and train gates, a wooden information booth, flickering open flame gas lights and brass spittoons reminds him of the architecture of the 1800s. He also finds that people are dressed in outmoded outfits. He notices that the date on the newspaper *The World* is printed June 11, 1894. As he tenders money to the clerk at the counter to buy two tickets, he realises that he need to have old currency bills to do so.

Charley's plan for a journey not realised

He had always wanted to travel to Galesburg with his wife, Louisa. In his mind, it is “a wonderful town still, with big old frame houses, huge lawns, and tremendous trees....” It is a place with long and pleasant summer evenings and where people have ample of time. So, the next day during lunch, he exchanges three hundred dollars for old style bills amounting to some two hundred only. The loss doesn’t bother him much as he believes that in Galesburg everything will be cheaper and that he can manage even with a small amount. But, he could never again find the corridor leading to the third level.

Sam goes missing!

His wife Louisa is worried after knowing all this and asks him not to look for the third level any further. Suddenly Charley realises that his friend, Sam Weiner, is nowhere to be found, so he and his wife keep looking for him in the weekends. Sam was the one with whom Charley used to share his ideas about Galesburg.

Philately & the first day covers

Philately is not just stamp collection but a broad term including the study of stamps, postal history and other related items. When a new stamp is issued, on the first day, people mail a blank paper to themselves and then retain that unopened letter with the date on the postmark. Charley has inherited the hobby and the collection from his grandfather.

A letter from Sam

One day while fidgeting with his stamp collection, Charley comes across a letter that was not there earlier. It bears the postmark on a faded six-cent

stamp with a picture of the President Garfield. The envelope was sent on July 18, 1894 to Charley's grandfather in Galesburg and is addressed to Charley. The letter reads that Sam has reached Galesburg and is having whale of a time there. He also invites Charley and Louisa to Galesburg. When Charley goes to the stamp and coin store, he is apprised of Sam's exchanging eight hundred dollars for the old currency bills to establish his business of hay feed and grain in Galesburg. The letter was written by Sam Weiner, who was Charley's psychiatrist!