

MAHESH PUBLIC SCHOOL

STUDY MATERIAL

Subject- English Language & Literature (184)

Book – First Flight

Chapter -1 A Letter to God by G.L. Fuentes

About the author - Fuentes was born at Lanzarote in the Canary Islands. As a teenager, he worked on cargo ships. He migrated permanently to Cuba when he was 22. He died of cancer in Cojimar in 2002 at the age of 104.

Theme – ‘A Letter to God’ is a story of extreme faith in God. A natural calamity leaves Lencho, a simple and hardworking farmer in distress. In such adverse conditions he feels that only God can help him so he writes a letter to God. The chapter concludes in a very ironic situation.

Summary - The story, "A Letter to God" depicts unwavering faith of a farmer in God. It begins with a farmer, named Lencho expecting for a rain shower to nourish his field of corn. He is confident that his harvest is going to yield him huge profits just like it does every year. To his utmost excitement, rainfall did happen but soon, it turned into a hailstorm destroying his entire crop field. The damage posed a threat to the family's survival as their entire livelihood was dependent on the year's produce. Although disheartened, the family had robust belief in the almighty. Lencho, despite having worked day and night at the field, knew how to write and thus, decided to write a letter to God explaining his situation and asking for help by sending him 100 pesos. He went to town to post his letter addressed "To God". The letter on being noticed by the postmaster, at first amused him, but then motivated him want to do something for the farmer so as to keep his immense belief intact. He contributes from his salary and collects money from his colleagues and friends who willingly contributed for an act of charity. To his dismay, he could only collect 70 pesos which he wrapped in an envelope to make it seem like a reply from the deity. On having found the letter, the writer (Lencho) is not at all shocked, but instead, he gets angry on finding that the amount is less than what he had expected. He again writes a letter to God conveying his disappointment and distrust in the employees of the post office who he thought had stolen the remaining amount.

Two kinds of conflict in the story:

Between man and nature: In the beginning of the story, the farmer hopes for a rain shower for the benefit of his corn field. On actually receiving rain, he becomes overjoyed and starts thinking about all the profit that would come in. Not much later, his joy is turned into sorrow when the wind becomes strong leading to a hailstorm. This depicts the disagreement between man and nature wherein humans want the nature to act according to their aspirations.

Among men themselves: The second divergence arises when Lencho starts doubting the honesty of the post-office employees who actually helped him with the money anonymously. This is the conflict among men themselves, wherein, we are ready to trust in the idea of God's existence but we are not ready to trust each other.

Irony in the story: Lencho thought that it is the postmaster or the employees of the post-office who had stolen his remaining amount, as is evident from his second letter to God where he requests the deity not to send money by mail next time. The irony here is that, it was actually the postmaster and the employees who had collected the money out of their clean intent to keep Lencho's faith intact, but are the ones who ended up getting blamed for stealing the missing amount.

Character Sketch of Lencho

Lencho was a simple farmer who was very hard working. He was completely dependent on the yield of his fields. He had good knowledge of farming. His crops had always been good. He knew his crops needed a good downpour to get good yield. But when the rain changed into a hail storm his crop was totally destroyed. He became very sad. But since he had strong faith in God, he didn't lose hope. He needed God's help. He knew how to read and write. He wrote a letter to God asking for help. He was fully confident that he would get the money. When he didn't get as much money as he had asked, he became unhappy. He was not ready to be happy with what he received. He felt that he was being cheated. But he was not ungrateful to God. He felt angry thinking that the people in the post office are crooks and they had stolen the rest of the money. So he wrote another letter to God, instructing him to send money directly to him, not through the post office. Lencho's innocence and staunch belief in God are clearly depicted in the story.

Character Sketch of Postmaster

The postmaster of the story is a kind, generous, helpful, amiable, and God-fearing man. He received a letter from Lencho which was written to God asking for hundred pesos so that he could sow his fields again. The postmaster did not want to shake the writer's faith in the almighty, and thus, out of virtuous intentions, decided to collect money for "an act of charity. He also signed the letter in the name of God to conceal his identity as he wanted Lencho to think it was actually a reply from God. This shows that he was a very good man at heart.

Answer the given questions on the basis of your reading the above content

1. Who did Lencho write a letter? What did he ask for?
2. What does the postmaster do to answer Lencho's Letter?
3. What were Lencho's feelings when he found the letter with money in it?
4. Why was Lencho angry? What did he do?
5. Who does Lencho think has taken the rest of the money?