

# Doctor in the house essay sample

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



“ Doctor in the House” by R. Gordon

The text under analysis is taken from the book “ Doctor in the House” written by Richard Gordon. Richard Gordon is the pen name used by Gordon Ostlere, an English surgeon and anaesthetist. As Richard Gordon, Ostlere has written numerous novels, screenplays for film and television and accounts of popular history, mostly dealing with the practice of medicine. He is most famous for a long series of comic novels on a medical theme starting with Doctor in the House. Gordon worked as anaesthetist at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital (where he was a medical student) and later as a ship’s surgeon and as assistant editor of the British Medical Journal. In 1952, he left medical practice and took up writing full time<sup>1</sup>. The text is devoted to the final examinations at the medical institutions and tells us about the condition of students before, during and after exams. It begins with the comparison the final exams with death; this image presents the students’ attitude to the event. The author gives the description of preparation for the examinations. Then the narrator depicts the procedure of the exams which consists of two parts: written papers, after which one of the students gives a very specific theory of the way the tripos is marking at Cambridge; and the viva – the oral examination, before which he characterizes different types of candidates’ behavior anticipating it. After that the reader gets know about the process of announcing of the results. The story ends with the detailed description of the emotional state of the author before the very moment of his success. At the end learn that he passed the exams.

This extract is constructed around the single theme which can be formulated as procedure of the exams. The author uses numerous thematic words, such

as: the student, the final examinations, the exams, to prepare, the examiners, cheating, textbooks, to swot up, the written papers, uniformed, examinees, knowledge, tripos, viva, marking, grading, to pass and so on. Besides the basic theme the text touches upon many very important secondary themes: the psychological types of students, cheating at the exams, students' prejudice, disadvantage of women student at the exams, the psychological pressure of the process of the examination on the students. The main idea conveyed by the author may be expressed as: the final examinations are reason for a great psychological pressure and a real challenge for the students. The following key words can prove it: student, exams, viva, writing papers, contest, prize-fighter, fighting spirit, to hope, to hit, depressing and others. If to look at the text from the other point, we may notice that it is written in the 1st person narration: " I walked down the stairs feeling as if I had just finished an eight-round fight..." or " I stood before table four. I didn't recognize the examiners." But the story is intercepted with lines of dialogs: "" How did you get on? " I asked. " So-so" he replied. " However, I'm not worried. They never read..." and a great number of descript passengers: " The examination began with the writing papers. A single invigilator sat in his gown and hood on a raised platform to keep an eye open for flagrant cheating. He was helped by two or three uniformed porters..." or " One minute to twelve. The room had suddenly come to a frightening, unexpected silence and stillness, like unexploded bomb. A clock tingled..." The text is easily divided into complete parts. The exposition contains the general information about

students' attitude to the final examinations and the way of preparation for this important event.

The exposition begins with "To a medical student the final examinations are something like death: an unpleasant inevitability to be faced sooner or later..." and ends with "... and ran a final breathless sprint down the well-trodden paths of medicine." The complication of the narration is showing the process of exam, candidates' excitement and suspense of the results. This part of the text stretches from "The examination began with the written papers" to "'Number three oh six?' the Secretary whispered, without looking up from the book. 'R. Gordon?' 'Yes' I croaked." The climax is the moment the highest intensity when the Secretary is pronouncing the narrator's result and this very moment his fate is at stake. "The world stood still. The traffic stopped, the plants ceased growing, men were paralysed, the clouds hung in the air, the winds dropped, the tides disappeared, the sun halted in the sky. 'Pass,' he muttered." The denouement of the text is the untying of the knot of this story a kind of liberation and the ending of suffering. "Blindly, like a man just hit by a blackjack, I stumbled upstairs." Richard Gordon tries to convey hard emotional state of the medical students in his novel. To achieve desired effect in describing characters and environment the author uses different stylistic devices. The most frequent are similes and the most important are following: "To a medical student the final examinations are something like death" The author sews the string of death through the whole linen of the story to show all seriousness of this period for the student and associates it with inevitability and ending of their easygoing lives.

The other simile shows that students position themselves as the prisoners sentenced to death feeling helpless and despondency: “ I was shown to a tiny waiting-room furnished with hard chairs, a wooden table, and windows that wouldn’t open, like the condemned cell.” The narrator gives us an opportunity to look at the process of exams through the eyes of student and many times underlines their mental suffering which becomes nearly physical after the oral examination: “ The days after the viva were black ones. It was like having a severe accident.” The next simile illustrate “ d us a breathless expectation of the results emphasizes the extremely depressed condition of the main character during long waiting . “ The room had suddenly come to a frightening, unexpected silence and stillness, like an unexploded bomb.” The author brilliantly uses the allusion referring to the Bible’s Judgment day. We discover that final exams are death and the Secretary as an archangel corresponds where they would go to the paradise or to hell. “ The candidate would step up closely to the Secretary, who would say simply “ Pass” or “ Failed”. Successful men would go upstairs to receive the congratulations and handshakes of the examiners and failures would slink miserably out of the exit to seek the opiate oblivion.” Some hyperboles create a great chasm between students and examiners:” But the viva is judgement day.

A false answer, and the god’s brow threatens like imminent thunderstorm.” The other ones reflect the influence of candidate’s fears on theirs health and perception of the world: “ But the viva is judgement day. A false answer, and the god’s brow threatens like imminent thunderstorm.” At the end of this text our attention attracts repetition of sound [s] into the next paragraph:” The room had suddenly come to a frightening, unexpected silence and

stillness, like an unexploded bomb. A clock tingled twelve in the distance. My palms were as wet as sponges. Someone coughed, and I expected the windows to rattle. With slow scraping feet that could be heard before they appeared the Secretary and the porters came solemnly down the stairs. The elder porter raised his voice.”. This alternation resembles a sound of burning fuse, a hissing snake, a mounting threat. The following short parallels constructions help to reflect the tense during anticipation of the narrator’s result: “ The world stood still. The traffic stopped, the plants ceased growing, men were paralysed, the clouds hung in the air, the winds dropped, the tides disappeared, the sun halted in the sky.” Thanks to an interesting subject this story occupies the reader’s attention. It makes us to empathize with the students and feel their psychological state. But despite of numerous frightful similes we may see ironical slant of text which make it interesting to read. Having read only one fragment from the “ Doctor in the house”, I found that Richard Gordon is a talented writer, who could perfect reflect the students’ emotion having avoided usage of widespread stamps and clichés.