

"the english teacher"  
by r.k. narayan essay  
sample



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## **“ The English Teacher” by R. K. Narayan Essay Sample**

### Growth and Development

- Krishna’s growth begins with the arrival of his wife and child. Susila introduces him to the pastoral traditions of the past. Furthermore, the visit from his mother also begins his indoctrination into his culture.

- Krishna has to withdraw from reality to achieve growth.

### Death

- Fate is an important aspect of the philosophical process.

- The novel discusses the boundaries to human power and Western science indicating that there is a limit to human understanding.

- While in Eastern cultures death is celebrated as a new beginning and life elsewhere, Krishna sees death as the end—a typically Western view indicating his ignorance and weakness of mind.

### Education

- The novel also compares Western and Eastern educational methods. The British education system as exhibited by the novel’s protagonist seems to be not so much about helping the boy’s to succeed (Krishna’s keeping boys occupied and not teaching).

- Krishna blatantly exclaims on page 8 that were it not for the 100 rupees he would not be a teacher.

Perspectives on Education • According to Webster's dictionary, to educate is to develop skill, knowledge or characters of. Education is described as the process of teaching or educating.

• Knowledge arises in the mind of an individual when the person interacts with an idea or experience. There are two contrasting theories on knowledge. One dictates that knowledge exists with a person and needs to be unlocked. Accordingly, Socrates argued that education was about drawing out what was already in the student. This is the method of education undertaken by the schoolmaster Leela's nursery. The Eastern method. The opposing perspective on knowledge argues that knowledge exists apart from the human thought process. Socrates' opponents, the Sophists- a group of itinerant teachers- were thought to give their students knowledge.

### Colonialism

• The English Teacher is a social commentary on colonialism in India during the last few years of British rule before the attainment of independence on the 15th August 1947.

• The book contains strong anti-colonial sentiments as expressed, for example, by Krishna on page 2 where he confronts Gajapathy on the unrealistic expectations of the British principal who expects his pupils to write and speak English flawlessly while he, after living in India for thirty years has made no attempt to learn any of the over two hundred languages spoken there. The double standard by which the boys are expected to seamlessly assimilate the British culture is exposed and chastised.

- However it is also immediately apparent that Krishna who while exposes this flawed society, is also partial to English. He idolizes Carlyle, Milton and Shakespeare and as a poet, his language of choice is English and not his native Tamil.

#### SYMBOLS AND MOTIFS:

-Jasmine-Lotus-Bamboo

- Jasmine is a powerful motif and symbol in the novel. The Jasmine flower is thought to be a gift from God. Called God's own flower, it is a Hindu symbol of love. The potent scent represents elegance and grace, sensuality and generosity; the white flower represents modesty. The jasmine flower releases its fragrance at night, after the sun has set and when the moon is waxing towards fullness. The fragrance is thought to remind one of a lover. The author does an exemplary work in portraying Krishna's despondency without Jasmine, the fragrance of his life.

- The bamboo is a symbol of longevity in China. In India, it is a symbol of friendship. It is a common Eastern belief that the bamboo activates stagnant energy wherever it is placed. The bamboo grows on average about 3 m daily. Also believed that bamboo plants kept in homes or offices will aid in growth in all aspects of life. Bamboo is also thought to protect the occupants of the home from unseen forces. It is often given as a gift and is a symbol of luck and success.

- Lotus blossoms have various symbolic meanings throughout Hinduism and since Hindu influences pervade Buddhism it became important there too. A lotus flower grows in the mud, its root stretching below the surface of the water, the stem reaches up through the water and the flower appears to

float on top of the water. This reflects symbolically the growth of the soul through materialism (the mud), experience (the water) and the sunshine (enlightenment/Nirvana).

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