

Flamingo- Prose Lessons (short summary)

1. The Last Lesson – Alphonse Daudet

This story is set in Alsace, France, during the Franco-Prussian war. The Prussians had captured the region and ordered that German, not French, be taught in schools. Franz, a little schoolboy, always avoided studying French. One day, he went late to school and expected scolding, but instead found a serious and unusual atmosphere. His teacher, M. Hamel, announced that it was their last French lesson. The villagers also came to attend the class to show respect for their language and teacher. M. Hamel explained how important it is to love and preserve one's mother tongue, which is a symbol of freedom and identity. Franz realized the value of French and regretted not studying it properly earlier. M. Hamel gave the lesson with deep emotion and patriotism. At the end, he wrote "Vive La France" (Long Live France) on the blackboard.

👉 The story teaches us to respect our language and culture, and not to take them for granted.

2. Lost Spring – Anees Jung

This lesson is based on the miserable conditions of poor children in India. It is divided into two parts. The first part describes Saheb, a rag-picker boy who migrated from Bangladesh with his family. He collects garbage to earn a living. Though he dreams of going to school, poverty forces him to work. His name "Saheb-e-Alam" ironically means "Lord of the Universe," but in reality, he lives in poverty and helplessness. The second part is about Mukesh, a boy from Firozabad, whose family is involved in the glass bangle-making industry. Generations of families are trapped in poverty, illiteracy, and exploitation. Mukesh, however, dreams of becoming a motor mechanic, showing hope for change. The author highlights how children are deprived of education, forced into child labour, and denied basic joys of childhood.

👉 The story shows the harsh reality of child labour and conveys that education and freedom are the rights of every child.

3. Deep Water – William Douglas

This autobiographical story describes the author's fear of water and how he overcame it. As a child, William Douglas had a near-drowning experience when a big wave knocked him down at a beach. Later, at the YMCA swimming pool, he almost drowned again when someone pushed him into the deep end. He struggled, felt helpless, and lost consciousness. This incident left a permanent fear of water in him,

which stopped him from enjoying water activities. Years later, he decided to fight this fear. He hired a swimming instructor who trained him step by step. Slowly, he gained confidence and mastered swimming techniques. Still, fear sometimes returned, but Douglas faced it courageously and finally overcame it. Later, he swam in lakes and rivers without fear and felt victorious.

👉 The story shows that fear is our biggest enemy, but with courage, determination, and hard work, we can overcome it.

4. The Rattrap – Selma Lagerlöf

This story is about a poor man who sells rattraps but also steals to survive. He believes that the world itself is a “rattrap,” where people are trapped by greed and temptations like money and possessions. One day, he steals money from a crofter and hides in the forest, but soon feels caught in life’s “trap.” Later, he takes shelter at a rich ironmaster’s house. The ironmaster mistakes him for an old friend and invites him home. Though the rattrap seller wants to refuse, the ironmaster’s daughter, Edla, treats him kindly and with respect. Her generosity and kindness touch his heart. On Christmas Eve, instead of stealing, he leaves behind a rattrap as a gift with a letter and the stolen money, showing that he wants to change and live an honest life.

👉 The story teaches us that kindness and compassion can bring out the goodness in anyone.

5. Indigo – Louis Fischer

This is a true story about Mahatma Gandhi’s struggle for the rights of poor peasants in Champaran, Bihar. The landlords forced the farmers to grow indigo on 15% of their land and pay rent for it. The farmers were exploited and helpless. Gandhi visited Champaran after a farmer named Rajkumar Shukla requested him. Gandhi met the peasants, investigated the issue, and refused to obey the British officials’ unjust orders. He faced summons and trials, but with courage and non-violence, he continued his fight. Finally, the British landlords agreed to refund part of the money to the farmers, and later the system of indigo cultivation was abolished. Gandhi also helped improve education, healthcare, and hygiene in Champaran villages.

👉 The story shows the power of truth, courage, and non-violent resistance, and how Gandhi became a true leader of the people.

6. Poets and Pancakes – Asokamitran

This lesson is an extract from Asokamitran's autobiography. It gives a humorous and satirical description of the Gemini Studios in Chennai, one of the biggest film studios of India. "Pancake" was a famous makeup brand used in the studio. The makeup department had harsh lights and did not suit Indian skin tones, making actors look strange. The author worked in the story department and observed the daily happenings. He humorously describes the makeup artists, office boys, and even the actors. The studio often invited important people for lectures, but sometimes these guests were not even understood by the staff. For example, a foreign writer once came to talk, but people did not know much about his ideas. Later, the author discovered that the visitor was a famous writer, MRA.

👉 The story shows the working of the film industry in a light, humorous way, and also reflects on the ignorance and limitations of people at that time.

7. The Interview – Christopher Silvester

This chapter discusses the art of interviewing and its importance in modern journalism. Interviews are a common method to get information about people and their thoughts. However, many famous personalities see them as an intrusion into their privacy. The author gives examples of how interviews can sometimes be unpleasant. He also presents the positive side, saying that interviews can be a source of truth and provide authentic details about people's lives. The chapter includes an interview with the famous writer Umberto Eco. Eco talks about his success, writing style, and how he manages to work in different fields like philosophy, literature, and fiction. He explains how he finds "empty spaces" in life and uses them productively.

👉 The lesson highlights that interviews are a powerful tool of communication, though opinions about them may differ.

8. Going Places – A. R. Barton

This story is about dreams and imagination of youth. The main character, Sophie, is a schoolgirl who dreams of a glamorous life. She often imagines herself becoming a successful fashion designer, actress, or manager, but her family is poor. Her father and brother Geoff are practical and discourage her unrealistic dreams. Sophie, however, continues to live in her fantasy world. She imagines meeting Danny Casey, a famous football player, and even tells her family about it. But in reality, it is only her imagination. She goes to meet him again, but he never comes, showing that it was only a dream.

👉 The story tells us that daydreaming is natural for young people, but one must be practical and realistic in life.