

- The Interview Introduction
- Summary of The Interview

The Interview Introduction

"The Interview" is an excerpt from the "Penguin Book of Interviews" written by Christopher Silvester. This chapter explores the interview as a technique of interrogation, particularly in journalism. The author discusses the significance of interviews in modern life, emphasizing their role across all social classes and literacy levels. The chapter also includes an excerpt from an interview with the writer Umberto Eco by Mukund Padmanabhan, providing insight into Eco's literary methods.

Theme

The chapter presents two contrasting perspectives on interviews, highlighting their capacities, benefits, and strategies. Interviews serve as a mechanism for discussion and help form distinctive impressions of the interviewee. Skilled interviewers can distinguish fact from fiction, making interviewing an art form.

Message

The lesson conveys that extraordinary individuals possess unique traits that enable them to achieve accomplishments beyond the expectations of ordinary people.

Title Significance

The title "The Interview" aptly reflects the chapter's focus on the purpose and objectives of interviews. It shows how interviews reveal the uniqueness of individuals and provide interesting and informative conversations, as exemplified by Umberto Eco's interview.

Key Terms

- **Primitive:** Very simple and not developed.
- **Lionised:** Given a lot of public attention and approval.
- **Interstice:** A gap or empty space.
- **Ordeal:** A very unpleasant and prolonged experience.

Practice Set

Level 1 – Easy

- What is the main focus of the chapter "The Interview"?
- Define the term "interstice" as used in the chapter.

Level 2 – Moderate

- Explain the contrasting opinions about interviews mentioned in the chapter.
- Why does the author consider interviewing an art form?

Level 3 – Challenging

- Discuss the significance of the title "The Interview" in relation to the content of the chapter.
- Analyze how interviews shape our impressions of contemporary figures according to Christopher Silvester.

Answer Key

Level 1 – Easy

- The chapter focuses on the technique of interviewing, its importance in journalism, and its role in revealing the uniqueness of individuals.
- "Interstice" means a gap or empty space, referring to moments of productivity in Umberto Eco's life.

Level 2 – Moderate

- Some view interviews as a source of truth and communication, while others see them as intrusive and diminishing.
- Interviewing is considered an art because skilled interviewers can extract facts from fiction and create meaningful conversations.

Level 3 – Challenging

- The title highlights the chapter's focus on interviews as a method to understand individuals uniquely and informatively.
- Interviews provide vivid impressions of people, shaping public perception and understanding of contemporary figures.

Quick Reference

- Interviews: A journalistic technique for communication and understanding.
- Contrasting views: Interviews as truth vs. intrusion.
- Interviewing as an art: Skillful extraction of facts.
- Umberto Eco: Scholar and novelist, illustrating the interview's depth.

Glossary

- **Interview:** A conversation where questions are asked to obtain information.
- **Journalism:** The profession of reporting news.

- **Interviewer:** The person who asks questions in an interview.
- **Interviewee:** The person who answers questions in an interview.

Summary of The Interview

Part 1 – Christopher Silvester

General Introduction about Interviews

Interviews, invented about 130 years ago, have become a staple in journalism. They evoke varied responses and have been conducted with numerous celebrities over time.

Diverse Opinions about Interviews

Opinions about interviews vary widely. Some see them as a source of truth and a platform for communication, offering insights into contemporaries. Others, especially interviewees, may feel victimized or vulnerable, viewing interviews as intrusive.

Historical Perspectives

Primitive cultures believed photographs could capture a person's soul. V.S. Naipaul felt interviews could wound people. Lewis Carroll feared being interviewed and avoided it. Rudyard Kipling considered interviewing immoral but ironically interviewed Mark Twain later. H.G. Wells found interviews an ordeal but participated frequently. Saul Bellow described interviews as suffocating.

True Nature of Interviews

Despite drawbacks, interviews are effective communication tools. Denis Brian described interviews as expressive media that shape our vivid impressions of contemporaries.

Part 2 – Umberto Eco

Interview with Umberto Eco

Umberto Eco, a scholar and novelist, discusses his philosophical interests and how they influence his academic and literary work. He explains that his books, including those for children, reflect his philosophical themes of peace and nonviolence.

Interstices

Eco describes "interstices" as gaps in life where much productive work occurs, similar to empty spaces in atoms and the universe.

Academic and Literary Identity

Eco identifies primarily as an academic scholar who writes novels on weekends. He is unconcerned about being labeled a novelist since scholarly work reaches fewer people.

The Name of the Rose

Eco's novel combines detective fiction with metaphysics, theology, and medieval history. Its success is partly attributed to perfect timing, which remains a mystery.

Practice Set

Level 1 – Easy

- Who is Umberto Eco, and what are his main interests?
- What does Eco mean by "interstices"?

Level 2 – Moderate

- Explain how Eco balances his academic and literary work.
- Describe the themes present in "The Name of the Rose."

Level 3 – Challenging

- Analyze the significance of timing in the success of Eco's novel.
- Discuss how Eco's philosophical interests influence his writing.

Answer Key

Level 1 – Easy

- Umberto Eco is a scholar and novelist interested in semiotics, literary interpretation, and medieval aesthetics.
- "Interstices" are gaps or empty spaces in life where productive work happens.

Level 2 – Moderate

- Eco works as an academic during the week and writes novels on weekends, balancing both roles.
- "The Name of the Rose" includes themes of detective fiction, metaphysics, theology, and medieval history.

Level 3 – Challenging

- The novel's success is partly due to its release at the right time, which Eco considers mysterious.
- Eco's philosophical interests in peace and nonviolence are reflected in his literary works.

Quick Reference

- Umberto Eco: Scholar and novelist with philosophical interests.
- Interstices: Productive gaps in life.
- "The Name of the Rose": Complex novel blending multiple themes.
- Timing: Crucial for success.

Glossary

- **Semiotics:** The study of signs and symbols.
- **Metaphysics:** Branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of reality.
- **Theology:** The study of religious beliefs.
- **Philosophy:** The study of fundamental questions about existence and knowledge.