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## Introduction to On the Face of It

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"On the Face of It" is a play by Susan Hill that explores the lives of two individuals who have suffered physical disabilities but have very different attitudes towards their conditions. The story revolves around Derry, a young boy whose face has been disfigured by an acid attack, and Mr. Lamb, an older man who has lost a leg in a blast. Through their interaction, the play highlights themes of acceptance, hope, and the importance of looking beyond physical appearances.

### Key Elements

- **Characters:** Derry and Mr. Lamb
- **Theme:** Overcoming physical disabilities and societal prejudices
- **Message:** Encouragement to focus on inner strength and acceptance
- **Title Meaning:** "On the Face of It" suggests that initial impressions can be misleading and deeper understanding changes perceptions.

### Textual Evidence

Mr. Lamb tells Derry, "The gate is always open," symbolizing openness and acceptance. Derry's statement, "No one will ever kiss me," reflects his despair and self-pity.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- Who are the two main characters in the play?
- What physical disabilities do Derry and Mr. Lamb have?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Explain the significance of the title "On the Face of It."
- How does Mr. Lamb's attitude differ from Derry's?

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Discuss how the play addresses the theme of societal prejudice against disabled people.
- Analyze the symbolic meaning of the garden in the play.

## Answer Key

- Derry is a young boy with a burnt face; Mr. Lamb is an old man with a tin leg.
- The title means that first impressions can be deceptive and deeper understanding reveals the truth.
- Mr. Lamb is optimistic and accepts life as it is, while Derry is self-pitying and withdrawn.
- The play shows that society often judges disabled people unfairly, causing them loneliness and pain.
- The garden symbolizes a place of acceptance, growth, and openness.

## Quick Reference

- "The gate is always open" – symbol of acceptance
- Physical disabilities do not define a person's worth
- Hope and courage can overcome loneliness

## Glossary

- **Disfigured:** Having the appearance spoiled.
- **Prejudice:** Preconceived opinion not based on reason.
- **Optimistic:** Hopeful and confident about the future.
- **Alienation:** Feeling isolated from others.

## Summary of On the Face of It

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Derry cautiously enters Mr. Lamb's garden, startled when Mr. Lamb speaks to him. Mr. Lamb welcomes him warmly, assuring Derry that the garden gate is always open and he is free to stay. Derry reveals that people are afraid of his burnt face caused by an acid attack. Mr. Lamb, who has a tin leg, compares their disabilities and points out that life includes both weeds and flowers, symbolizing diversity and acceptance.

Derry expresses his sadness that no one will ever love or kiss him because of his appearance. Mr. Lamb encourages him to look beyond his physical scars and appreciate the world's beauty. He tells Derry that hatred is more harmful than acid and advises him not to isolate himself. Mr. Lamb shares a story about a man who locked himself away from the world and died, emphasizing the importance of facing life bravely.

Derry promises to return to the garden. However, when he does, Mr. Lamb falls from a ladder and dies. Derry mourns deeply, showing the impact of their brief but meaningful friendship.

## Key Elements

- **Plot:** Meeting of two disabled individuals and their contrasting outlooks
- **Characters:** Derry (acid attack victim), Mr. Lamb (old man with tin leg)

- **Setting:** Mr. Lamb's garden
- **Conflict:** Derry's self-pity vs. Mr. Lamb's acceptance
- **Climax:** Mr. Lamb's accidental death

## Textual Evidence

Mr. Lamb says, "The gate is always open," symbolizing acceptance. Derry's lament, "I will still only have half a face," shows his despair.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- Where does Derry meet Mr. Lamb?
- What does Mr. Lamb say about the garden gate?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Describe the difference in attitude between Derry and Mr. Lamb.
- What story does Mr. Lamb tell to encourage Derry?

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Analyze the significance of Mr. Lamb's death in the play.
- How does the play portray the theme of loneliness?

## Answer Key

- Derry meets Mr. Lamb in his garden.
- Mr. Lamb says the garden gate is always open to everyone.

- Derry is self-pitying and withdrawn; Mr. Lamb is optimistic and accepting.
- Mr. Lamb tells a story of a man who locked himself away and died, warning against isolation.
- Mr. Lamb's death symbolizes the fragility of life and the importance of cherishing relationships.
- The play shows loneliness as a result of physical disability and societal rejection.

## Quick Reference

- Garden as a symbol of openness
- Contrast between despair and hope
- Importance of human connection

## Glossary

- **Climax:** The most intense point in a story.
- **Self-pity:** Feeling sorry for oneself.
- **Isolation:** Being separated from others.
- **Fragility:** Being easily broken or damaged.

## Themes in On the Face of It

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The play explores several important themes related to physical disability and human emotions.

### Key Themes

- **Acceptance:** Emphasizes accepting oneself and others despite physical imperfections.
- **Loneliness and Alienation:** Disabled individuals often feel isolated due to societal attitudes.
- **Hope and Optimism:** Mr. Lamb's positive outlook encourages overcoming difficulties.
- **Prejudice and Appearance:** The play critiques judging people based on looks.

- **Human Connection:** Friendship and understanding can heal emotional wounds.

## Textual Evidence

Derry's feeling that "no one will ever kiss me" shows loneliness. Mr. Lamb's statement, "Hatred is more harmful than a bottle of acid," highlights the destructive nature of prejudice.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- What is one major theme of the play?
- How does Mr. Lamb view life?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- Explain how prejudice affects Derry.
- What message does the play give about physical disabilities?

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Discuss how the theme of hope is developed through Mr. Lamb's character.
- Analyze the impact of loneliness on Derry's personality.

## Answer Key

- Acceptance is a major theme.
- Mr. Lamb views life with optimism and openness.
- Prejudice causes Derry to feel isolated and hurt.

- The play encourages focusing on abilities rather than disabilities.
- Mr. Lamb's hope inspires Derry to change his outlook.
- Loneliness makes Derry withdrawn and fearful of others.

## Quick Reference

- Acceptance over appearance
- Hope conquers despair
- Prejudice causes alienation

## Glossary

- **Alienation:** Feeling isolated from society.
- **Prejudice:** Unfair judgment based on appearance.
- **Optimism:** Positive attitude towards life.
- **Empathy:** Understanding others' feelings.

## Character Sketches in On the Face of It

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The play features two main characters whose contrasting personalities drive the narrative.

### Derry

Derry is a young boy who has suffered an acid attack that has disfigured half of his face. He is sensitive, self-conscious, and deeply affected by the way society treats him. Derry feels isolated and believes that no one will ever love or accept him because of his appearance. His attitude is marked by fear, sadness, and self-pity.

### Mr. Lamb

Mr. Lamb is an older man who has lost a leg in a blast and uses a tin leg. Despite his physical disability, he is cheerful, optimistic, and welcoming. He enjoys life and encourages others to look beyond physical imperfections. Mr. Lamb is wise and compassionate, offering Derry hope and a new perspective on life.

## Practice Set

### Level 1 – Easy

- Describe Derry's physical condition.
- What is Mr. Lamb's attitude towards life?

### Level 2 – Moderate

- How does Derry's personality change during the play?
- What qualities make Mr. Lamb a positive influence on Derry?

### Level 3 – Challenging

- Compare and contrast the characters of Derry and Mr. Lamb.
- Explain how Mr. Lamb's character helps convey the play's message.

## Answer Key

- Derry has a burnt face due to an acid attack.
- Mr. Lamb is optimistic and enjoys life despite his disability.
- Derry becomes more hopeful and willing to face the world.
- Mr. Lamb's kindness and wisdom inspire Derry.
- Derry is fearful and withdrawn; Mr. Lamb is confident and accepting.
- Mr. Lamb's character shows that attitude matters more than physical appearance.

## Quick Reference

- Derry – sensitive, insecure
- Mr. Lamb – optimistic, wise
- Contrast highlights theme of acceptance

## Glossary

- **Disfigured:** Spoiled appearance.
- **Optimistic:** Hopeful and positive.
- **Compassionate:** Showing concern for others.
- **Self-conscious:** Aware of oneself, often uncomfortably.

## Literary Devices in On the Face of It

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The play uses various literary devices to enhance its themes and character development.

### Key Devices

- **Symbolism:** The garden symbolizes openness, acceptance, and life's diversity.
- **Contrast:** Between Derry's despair and Mr. Lamb's optimism.
- **Dialogue:** Used to reveal characters' thoughts and feelings.
- **Metaphor:** Mr. Lamb compares hatred to acid, showing its destructive power.
- **Irony:** Despite physical disabilities, Mr. Lamb enjoys life more than others.

### Examples

Mr. Lamb says, "Hatred is more harmful than a bottle of acid," using metaphor to emphasize emotional pain. The open garden gate symbolizes acceptance and freedom.

### Practice Set

## Level 1 – Easy

- What does the garden symbolize?
- Give an example of contrast in the play.

## Level 2 – Moderate

- Explain the metaphor used by Mr. Lamb about hatred.
- How does dialogue help develop the characters?

## Level 3 – Challenging

- Analyze the use of irony in the play.
- Discuss how symbolism supports the play's message.

## Answer Key

- The garden symbolizes acceptance and life.
- Contrast between Derry's sadness and Mr. Lamb's happiness.
- Hatred is compared to acid to show it destroys the soul.
- Dialogue reveals inner feelings and changes in attitude.
- Irony lies in Mr. Lamb's joy despite his disability.
- Symbolism reinforces themes of hope and acceptance.

## Quick Reference

- Garden = acceptance
- Metaphor = hatred as acid
- Contrast = despair vs hope

## Glossary

- **Symbolism:** Using symbols to represent ideas.
- **Metaphor:** A figure of speech comparing two things.
- **Irony:** When the opposite of what is expected happens.
- **Dialogue:** Conversation between characters.

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