



SECTION ONE

1.1 An Astrologer's Day

ICE BREAKERS

- Discuss with your partner and complete the activity.

What are your strengths ?

Strengths	Why do you feel so?	Dream career
painting and drawing	can visualise, express	commercial artist, cartoonist
.....
.....
.....

- The scene in a local market of a village/town/city is very attractive. People with different occupations sell their wares. Discuss with your partner the variety of activities at the local market.

1. selling flowers, selling grocery
2.
3.
4.
5.

- In a village /town /city it is quite a common sight to see an astrologer sitting by the roadside with his professional equipments.

Discuss with your partner and list the requirements for his trade.

1. parrot, cards etc.
2.
3.
4.
5.

- There are certain unreasonable beliefs among people living in our society.

Certain common events are linked with superstitions. List such events, discuss the superstitions linked with them and the means of their eradication.

1. A cat crossing your path
2.
3.
4.
5.

R. K. Narayan (1906 to 2001) Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer

Narayan is one of the best known novelists among Indian English writers. He is the author of fourteen novels, five volumes of short stories, and a number of travelogues, and has a collection of non-fiction to his credit. He also has written his memoir 'My Days' (1975). Narayan has created the imaginary town of Malgudi, where realistic characters in a typically Indian setting lived amid unpredictable events. His stories are grounded in compassionate humanism and celebrate the humour and energy of ordinary life. His stories are characterized by a simple style and subtle spirit.



Narayan was introduced to American readers in 1952 by the Michigan State University Press. These include, 'Swami and Friends', 'The Bachelor of Arts' (1937), 'The Dark Room' (1938), 'An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories' (1947), 'Mr Sampath' (1949), 'The Financial Expert' (1954), 'Waiting for the Mahatma' (1955), 'The Guide' (1958), and many other books.

His novel, 'The Guide', won him The Sahitya Akademi Award in 1961, the most coveted literary honour in India. His writing is distinguished by humour and unoffending irony, a unique Indianness and a simplicity which is utterly charming and authentic. Narayan typically portrays the peculiarities of human relationships and the paradoxes of Indian daily life. His style is graceful, marked by genial humour, elegance and simplicity.

An Astrologer's Day

cowrie : a sea animal

obscure : difficult to understand

mystic : Something that relates to supernatural powers and is not easily understood.

palmyra: a kind of palm

resplendent : bright, dazzling and impressive

enhanced: increased

Punctually at midday he opened his bag and spread out his professional equipment, which consisted of a dozen **cowrie** shells, a square piece of cloth with **obscure mystic** charts on it, a notebook, and a bundle of **palmyra** writing. His forehead was **resplendent** with sacred ash and vermilion, and his eyes sparkled with a sharp abnormal gleam which was really an outcome of a continual searching look for customers, but which his simple clients took to be a prophetic light and felt comforted. The power of his eyes was considerably **enhanced** by their position-placed as they were between the painted forehead and the dark whiskers which streamed down his cheeks : even a half-wit's eyes would sparkle in such a setting. To crown the effect he wound a saffron-coloured turban around his head. This colour scheme never failed. People were attracted to him as bees are attracted to cosmos or dahlia stalks. He sat under the boughs of a spreading tamarind tree which flanked a path running through the Town Hall Park. It was a remarkable place in many ways. A surging

crowd was always moving up and down this narrow road from morning till night. A variety of trades and occupations was represented all along its way : medicine sellers, sellers of stolen hardware and junk, magicians, and above all, an auctioneer of cheap cloth, who created enough din all day to attract the whole town. Next to him in **vociferousness** came a vendor of fried groundnut, who gave his ware a fancy name each day, calling it “Bombay Ice Cream” one day and on the next “Delhi Almond,” and on the third “Raja’s Delicacy,” and so on and so forth, and people flocked to him. A considerable portion of this crowd **dallied** before the astrologer too. The astrologer transacted his business by the light of a flare which crackled and smoked up above the groundnut heap nearby. Half the **enchantment** of the place was due to the fact that it did not have the benefit of municipal lighting. The place was lit up by shop lights. One or two had hissing gaslights, some had naked flares stuck on poles, some were lit up by old cycle lamps, and one or two, like the astrologer, managed without lights of their own. It was a **bewildering** crisscross of light rays and moving shadows. This suited the astrologer very well, for the simple reason that he had not in the least intended to be an astrologer when he began life; and he knew no more of what was going to happen to others than he knew what was going to happen to himself next minute. He was as much a stranger to the stars as were his innocent customers. Yet he said things which pleased and astonished everyone : that was more a matter of study, practice, and **shrewd** guesswork. All the same, it was as much an honest man’s labour as any other, and he deserved the wages he carried home at the end of a day.

He had left his village without any previous thought or plan. If he had continued there he would have carried on the work of his forefathers – namely, tilling the land, living, marrying, and ripening in his cornfield and ancestral home. But that was not to be. He had to leave home without telling anyone, and he could not rest till he left it behind a couple of hundred miles. To a villager it is a great deal, as if an ocean flowed between.

He had a working analysis of mankind’s troubles: marriage, money, and the tangles of human ties. Long practice had sharpened his perception. Within five minutes he understood what was wrong. He charged three **pies** per

vociferousness : being loud and noisy

dallied : wasted time just hanging around

enchantment : magical effect or charm

bewildering : confusing, baffling

shrewd : good at judging people, clever

If the astrologer had stayed in the village then he would have carried on

The astrologer could understand the problem in five minutes. How?

Guess the meaning :
• pies

How could the astrologer tell the person about his life ?

impetuous : impulsive
endeared : made likeable

paraphernalia : a large number of small articles used in a particular activity or personal possession

piqued : irritated, annoyed or resented

Guess the meaning :

- tilting
- bluffing

question, never opened his mouth till the other had spoken for at least ten minutes, which provided him enough stuff for a dozen answers and advices. When he told the person before him, gazing at his palm, "In many ways you are not getting the fullest results for your efforts," nine out of ten were disposed to agree with him. Or he questioned "Is there any woman in your family, maybe even a distant relative who is not well disposed towards you?" Or he gave an analysis of character: "Most of your troubles are due to your nature. How can you be otherwise with Saturn where he is? You have an **impetuous** nature and a rough exterior." This **endeared** him to their hearts immediately, for even the mildest of us loves to think that he has a forbidding exterior.

The nuts vendor blew out his flare and rose to go home. This was a signal for the astrologer to bundle up too, since it left him in darkness except for a little shaft of green light which strayed in from somewhere and touched the ground before him. He picked up his cowrie shells and **paraphernalia** and was putting them back into his bag when the green shaft of light was blotted out. He looked up and saw a man standing before him. He sensed a possible client and said: "You look so careworn. It will do you good to sit down for a while and chat with me." The other grumbled some reply vaguely. The astrologer pressed his invitation; whereupon the other thrust his palm under his nose, saying: "You call yourself an astrologer?" The astrologer felt challenged and said, **tilting** the other's palm towards the green shaft of light: "Yours is a nature..." "Oh, stop that," the other said. "Tell me something worthwhile..." Our friend felt **piqued**. I charge only three *pies* per question, and what you get ought to be good enough for your money..." At this the other withdrew his arm, took out an *anna*, and flung it out to him, saying "I have some questions to ask. If I prove you are **bluffing**, you must return that *anna* to me with interest."

"If you find my answers satisfactory, will you give me five rupees?"

"No."

"Or will you give me eight *annas*?"

"All right, provided you give me twice as much if you are wrong," said the stranger. This pact was accepted after a little further argument. The astrologer sent up a



prayer to heaven as the other lit a **cheroot**. The astrologer caught a **glimpse** of his face by the matchlight. There was a pause as cars hooted on the road, **jutka** drivers swore at their horses, and the babble of the crowd agitated the semidarkness of the park. The other sat down, sucking his **cheroot**, puffing out, sat there ruthlessly. The astrologer felt very uncomfortable. "Here, take your *anna* back. I am not used to such challenges. It is late for me today"... He made preparations to bundle up. The other held his wrist and said "You can't get out of it now. You dragged me in while I was passing." The astrologer shivered in his grip and his voice shook and became faint. "Leave me today. I will speak to you tomorrow." The other thrust his palm in his face and said: "Challenge is challenge. Go on." The astrologer proceeded with his throat drying up: "There is a woman..."

"Stop," said the other. "I don't want all that. Shall I succeed in my present search or not? Answer this and go. Otherwise I will not let you go till you **disgorge** all your coins." The astrologer muttered a few **incantations** and replied: "All right. I will speak. But will you give me a rupee if what I say is convincing? Otherwise I will not open my mouth, and you may do what you like." After a good deal of **haggling**, the other agreed. The astrologer said: "You were left for dead. Am I right?"

"Ah, tell me more."

"A knife has passed through you once?" said the astrologer.

"Good fellow!" He bared his chest to show the scar. "What else?"

cheroot : a cigar

Guess the meaning of :

• glimpse

jutka : horse-driven cart

disgorge : yield or surrender under pressure
incantations : supposedly magical words

haggling : bargaining

*The man was left
for dead because*

Guess the meaning :

- passer-by
- peep
- overwhelmed
- groaned

gratified : pleased, satisfied

“And then you were pushed into a well nearby in the field. You were left for dead.”

“I should have been dead if some **passer-by** had not chanced to **peep** into the well,” exclaimed the other, **overwhelmed** by enthusiasm.

“When shall I get at him?” he asked, clenching his fist.

“In the next world,” answered the astrologer. “He died four months ago in a far-off town. You will never see any more of him.” The other **groaned** on hearing it. The astrologer proceeded :

“Guru Nayak—”

“You know my name!” the other said, taken aback.

“As I know all other things. Guru Nayak, listen carefully to what I have to say. Your village is two days’ journey due north of this town. Take the next train and be gone. I see once again great danger to your life if you go from home.” He took out a pinch of sacred ash and held it to him. “Rub it on your forehead and go home. Never travel southward again, and you will live to be a hundred.”

“Why should I leave home again?” the other said reflectively. “I was only going away now and then to look for him and to choke out his life if I met him.” He shook his head regretfully. “He has escaped my hands. I hope at least he died as he deserved.” “Yes,” said the astrologer. “He was crushed under a lorry.” The other looked **gratified** to hear it.

The place was deserted by the time the astrologer picked up his articles and put them into his bag. The green shaft was also gone, leaving the place in darkness and silence. The stranger had gone off into the night, after giving the astrologer a handful of coins.

It was nearly midnight when the astrologer reached home. His wife was waiting for him at the door and demanded an explanation. He flung the coins at her and said “Count them. One man gave all that.”

“Twelve and a half *annas*,” she said, counting. She was overjoyed. “I can buy some jaggery and coconut tomorrow. The child has been asking for sweets for so many days now. I will prepare some nice stuff for her.”

“The swine has cheated me! He promised me a rupee,” said the astrologer. She looked up at him. “You look worried. What is wrong?”

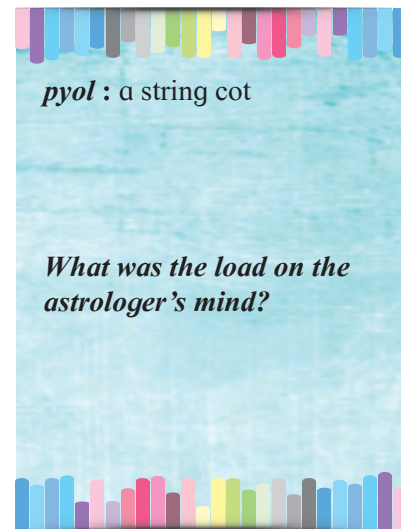
“Nothing.”

After dinner, sitting on the *pyol*, he told her “Do you know a great load is gone from me today? I thought I had the blood of a man on my hands all these years. That was the reason why I ran away from home, settled here, and married you. He is alive.”

She gasped. “You tried to kill him!”

“Yes, in our village, when I was a silly youngster. We drank, gambled, and quarreled badly one day – why think of it now? Time to sleep,” he said, yawning, and stretched himself on the *pyol*.

- R. K. Narayan



BRAINSTORMING

(A1) (i) Given below are some descriptions. Discuss them with your partner and find out one word for each of them. An example is given for you.

(a) The scientific study of the universe and the objects in it, including stars, planets, nebulae and galaxies

- **Astronomy**

(b) The study of the movements of the planets, Sun, Moon, and Stars in the belief that these movements can have an influence on people's lives

.....

(c) A prediction of what will happen in the future

.....

(d) Scientific discipline that studies mental states and processes and behaviour in humans and other animals

.....

(ii) In the story we are told that the Town Hall Park was a remarkable place in many ways for the astrologer to build his business. Discuss it in a group and list the exceptional qualities of the place.

A surging crowd

.....

.....

.....

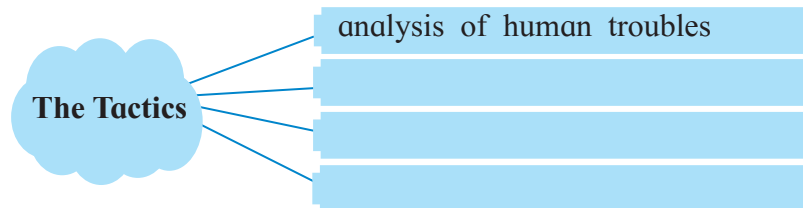
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(iii) The astrologer never opened his mouth till the other had spoken for at least ten minutes. Discuss the reasons behind his act.

- (a) He is good at reading the people.
- (b)
- (c)
- (d)

(A2) (i) The tactics used by the astrologer to earn his wages are...



(ii) An astrologer's appearance helps to create an impression on his clients. Complete the following.

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The turban on his head (b) (c) (d) |
|---|

(iii) Read the following sentences and choose the correct one.

- (a) The astrologer says that if Nayak does not leave his village again, he would –
 - (1) return the money
 - (2) not face danger
 - (3) go back home and stop looking for the man who tried to kill him
 - (4) not find the killer.
- (b) According to the narrator the astrologer's success in his profession is primarily due to –
 - (1) luck
 - (2) the bargains he drives
 - (3) his appearance
 - (4) his understanding of people.
- (c) The story suggests that the astrologer's comments and observations please people by –
 - (1) promising them success and good fortune
 - (2) proving, as time passes, to have been true
 - (3) flattering them or supporting their own views
 - (4) helping them to learn to solve their own problems.

- (d) Guru Nayak consults the astrologer because he wants to –
- (1) understand the past
 - (2) find out who the astrologer is
 - (3) make some money through a bet
 - (4) get the answer to a specific question.
- (e) Guru Nayak is looking for the man who tried to kill him –
- (1) to take revenge
 - (2) to get an apology
 - (3) to demand an explanation
 - (4) to prove that the man was unsuccessful.
- (f) The astrologer's remark makes Guru Nayak feel all of the following except–
- (1) relieved
 - (2) suspicious
 - (3) impressed
 - (4) disappointed.
- (g) Reactions of the astrologer's wife to his news suggest that she –
- (1) was unaware of his past
 - (2) has been worried about his safety
 - (3) has known him since he was young
 - (4) is concerned about her future with him.

(iv) Read the following sentences and find out True and False sentences. Correct the False sentences.

- (a) The astrologer gave a correct prediction to the client about his past that he was stabbed, thrown into a well and left for dead.
- (b) When the astrologer came to know that the man whom he killed is alive he felt that he was relieved of his guilt.
- (c) The astrologer tried to back out of the deal and talked about the client's past.
- (d) The astrologer rescued himself from Guru Nayak's revenge.
- (e) The moral of the story is that we must be responsible about what we have done and should not run away from our mistakes.

(v) The astrologer has changed his appearance and his persona when he arrived in the city. Give specific reasons.

(vi) 'The darkness load that was inside the astrologer has disappeared'. Through this sentence, explain the significance of the title 'An Astrologer's Day'.

- (vii) The astrologer feels relieved to know that Guru is not dead as it reduces a great burden from him. Critically justify the statement and explain it.
- (viii) The astrologer wins/gets the sympathy of criticism of the reader in the end. Express your opinion with the support of the main story.
- (ix) If we have to eradicate the superstitions and other ill practices from our society, what steps would you like to suggest?
- (x) In the story, astrologer has a great listening power. Listening helps in developing good relations with people. Express your opinion.
- (A3) (i) In the story, the following characters reveal their qualities through words and actions. Pick out the words that describe them from the box and write in the appropriate columns.

shrewd	clever	suspicious	gullible
arrogant	demanding	antagonistic	quarrelsome
overconfident	manipulative	skeptical	mystical
smart	caring	protective	sharp
rational	mean	intuitive	aggressive
worried	cunning	humanistic	impetuous

Astrologer	Guru Nayak	Astrologer's wife
(1) shrewd	manipulative	caring
(2)
(3)
(4)

- (ii) Match the suffixes with the words and make nouns. One is done for you.

Word	Suffix	Noun
auction	able	auctioneer
enchant	ure	
know	ment	
prepare	eer	
proceed	ance	
appear	ledge	
remark	tion	

- (iii) 'An Astrologer's Day' has ironic elements where the astrologer pretends to have 'supernatural knowledge' that coincidentally turns out to be the truth. Irony means a situation or statement characterized by a significant difference between what is expected and what actually happens, or between what is understood and what is meant.

Find out the examples of irony from the story and write them down. One has been done for you.

- (a) He knew no more of what was going to happen to others than he knew what was going to happen to himself the next minute.
- (b)
- (c)
- (d)

(iv) In the story, many Indian words are used.

- ‘Cowrie shells’. This is an example of **code-mixing**.

Find out other such words from the story and write them down.

.....

.....

.....

(v) There are some phrases where the word crown is used with different shades of meaning. Use the following phrases to complete the sentences meaningfully. One is done for you.

crowning achievement, To crown the effect, crown of thorns, crowning glory, to crown it all

To crown the effect, he wound a saffron-coloured turban around his head.

- (a) The works of Shakespeare are the of English drama.
- (b) Amitabh has given us awesome movies throughout five decades. But his is his performance in the movie ‘Black’.
- (c) In her pursuit of success, Radha has distanced herself from her family. Her fame has become a real
- (d) They threw a wonderful party for me with costumes, games and my favourite kind of ice cream.
- (e) Medical science has great inventions, but organ transplantation is definitely a for human beings.

(A4) (i) Word Usage

Use the words given in the brackets and rewrite the sentences.

- (a) The power of his eyes was considerably enhanced. (enhancement)
- (b) He had a working analysis of mankind’s troubles. (worked)
- (c) He knew what was going to happen to himself next minute.(happening)
- (d) If you find my answers satisfactory, will you give me five rupees? (satisfaction)
- (e) He shook his head regretfully. (regret)

- (f) It was a bewildering crisscross of light rays. (bewildered)
- (g) “I should have been dead if some passer-by had not chanced to peep into the well,” exclaimed the other, overwhelmed by enthusiasm. (enthusiastically)
- (h) You tried to kill him. (killing)
- (i) I will prepare some nice stuff for her. (preparation)
- (j) The other groaned on hearing it. (heard)

(A5) (i) Prepare a speech on Science and Superstitions.

(ii) Read the following proverbs. Share your views and expand the ideas.

- (a) Actions speak louder than words.
- (b) The face is the index of the mind.
- (c) Speech is silver and silence is golden.
- (d) Argument is the worst kind of communication.
- (e) Attitudes are the real figures of speech.
- (f) The wise man has long ears and a short tongue.

(A6) (i) Bill Naughton has written a collection of wonderful stories which you can read in his book ‘The Goal Keepers Revenge and Other Stories’. Read all the stories and discuss their theme/s with your partner.

(ii) Read R.K. Narayan’s humorous collections of short stories and novels. Here are some titles you can read.

- (a) ‘Under The Banyan Tree’
- (b) ‘The Doctor’s Word’
- (c) ‘Lawley Road’
- (d) ‘A Horse and Two Goats’
- (e) ‘Gateman’s Gift’

(A7) Surf the internet and find out the career opportunities in Astronomy.

