

A Real Good Smile

Author : **Bill Naughton**

Summary

The narrator in the story is fourteen years old boy named Billy. He left the school at the age of fourteen. Leaving the school was a painful feeling for him. After he tries to find a job in his town. He wants a job in a mill like the boy in his age, but his parent are different, his parent want him to work in locomotive shed. His parent said to him that work in locomotives shed was a better job. He could start from dirt wiper, then a greaser, promoted to a fireman, by luck even can become an engine driver upto the age of fifty. But being a royal job considered in those days, it is so difficult to get there. However, they don't have influence there.

Alf Agar was his neighbour, he worked on the railway line. He knew Tom Petty who knew well Mr. Bidwell. Mr Bidwell was boss in locomotives shed. Alf Agar fixed up and told that Mr. Bidwell was a disciplined man. Alf Agar taught Billy how to act in front of Mr Bidwell. Alf told him about what Mr Bidwell's likes and dislikes. Everyday Billy learned about its. He learned on everywhere. Alf told that Mr Bidwell likes a lad who asks for himself. Mr Bidwell likes the lad with strait back, clear voice and a real good smile. Billy's father strictly warned him to follow the instructions.

Then Alf Agar emphasized to rehearse for the interview with real smile. Billy found it difficult to smile spontaneously. He practiced different smiles over the week end.

When the day came, Billy set out to meet Mr Bidwell. He longed for happy school days and felt afraid of the hard, uncertain future. In midway, he stopped at a red-brick building. He rehearsed himself crying out loudly, 'Good morning sir! I've come to see about a job. Please don't shake your head sir, for I will not take no for an answer.' The gardener from the building misjudged him and offered the job. On realizing this, Billy ran towards the loco works.

After getting inside the loco shed, Billy was conscious of the possible presence of Mr Bidwell. So he walked with straight back with smile. He met Tom Petty, a oiler and greaser. Tom Petty brought him to Mr Bidwell room. Tom Petty whispered to introduce Mr. Bidwell. Billy saw that Mr Bidwell had an enormous square jaw and narrow eyes and big, black, bushy eyebrows. In the first meeting, he forgot all thing he has been learned with Alf Agar, but he was not frightened to face Mr Bidwell. Mr. Bidwell roared enquiring his presence. Billy hesitatingly mumbled. Even Mr Bidwell could not get his words. He talked to Mr Bidwell like his real act and behaviour. Mr Bidwell ignored him at the time. Billy gathered courage and talked back that shook him.

Billy felt relieved for spoken his hearty words. He joined Taylor and Brown's Spinning Mill and started job that very day. Next morning, Alf Agar came to his house and brought a good news to him. Mr Bidwell likes him because he was honest boy and he spoke the truth. Finally, he worked at locomotive shed with Mr Bidwell.

The story is well instructive that teaches us to be an honest person. Being an honest person is more important than everything else like Mr Bidwell said in the story.

Questions:

A. Answer the following questions in about 75 words each:

1. What emotion did Billy have at the time of leaving the school? What was his parents' plan for his future?
2. How did Billy plan to be an engine driver, starting as a dirt-wiper?
3. What did Alf Agar tell Billy and his parents about Mr. Bidwell?
4. How did Alf Agar prepare Billy for the interview?
5. Narrate Billy's encounter with Mr. Bidwell.
6. Why did Billy join the spinning mill? What good news did Alf Agar bring for him?

B. Answer the following questions in one or two sentences each:

1. How old was Billy when he left school?
2. What did Billy's parents want him to work as?
3. What was Mr Bidwell dead against?
4. What kind of boys did Mr. Bidwell like?
5. What physical attributes of Mr. Bidwell are described by Billy?
6. What quality of Billy impressed Mr. Bidwell the most

2. What India Inc. Wants

As young academicians, we are madly in pursuit of academic degrees. It is paradox that we think only of employment but seldom about employability. The two articles listed below are by men who are in the serious business of recruitment industry. They provide the idea of the required skills the industry or corporate sector demands. They also point to the fact that there is more to life than just academic success.

1. Our muddled generation – Dinesh Kumar

Dinesh Kumar published the article in **The Hindu** on Sunday, 26 March 2006. He started with the line ‘Somewhere along the line, young people have started to mistake bad manners for confidence’.

The writer’s job was to interview young people for a management position in their company. There was a bright young person who appeared for the interview. His appearance was perfect like a model. The interviewers were amazingly ignorant of their background. Therefore, when asked about newspaper reading, opinion on freedom of the press. The interviewer’s answers were evasive. Their goal in life was to make a lot of life. They noticed that in the middle of the interview, the young person was uncomfortable. They were so irresponsible that they didn’t switch off their cell phone. The writer rejected appointment to those candidates in their company. And yet, most people whom they interviewed were clones, speaking the same things without any conviction in their voice. They wanted to do something for the country or for the poor but without having any idea as to what they would like to do for either the poor or for themselves.

Evasive and irresponsible:

Reports say that 80 per cent of the people coming out of India's colleges are unemployable. After interacting with the youth, the writer concluded that a good 90 per cent of the youngsters are unemployable simply because they are evasive and

irresponsible. It is observed that young people have started to mistake bad manners for confidence. They want make a lot of money without doing anything. It is not that they are useless: most speak good English and are confident of themselves. They are aware of the latest ring tones, movies and jokes. But when one goes a little beyond, they are blank at everything. They want to earn a "lot of money," but they do not have skills that will help them earn that kind of money. Their degrees are suspect: ask them a few questions on their graduation subjects and most young people flounder quickly. As for extra reading, nobody reads anything of consequence. But there are other questions also. Questions about ethics and behaviour, about what you are good at, about how you spend your spare time. And then, these confident young men and girls flocked to him with confused looks, "What should I answer to these questions?" It is no use of telling them that it is their life and they should tell about themselves, because they always want readymade answers, to say something that will help them get through. "If I practise it long enough, I will make it look true," they say. So overnight young people become avid readers, guitar players, star batsmen and even gardeners. The writer wonders if any interviewer is foolish enough to buy their half-baked stories.

Rolling stones

The writer opined that as India moves forward we have produced an unthinking generation whose sole objective is to live a good life without doing anything. It appears we are creating too many rolling stones, without a vision, without commitment or morals. Most youngsters want everything without responsibility.. These days the young do not have any passion towards any cause. Listening to the well-rehearsed answers of the generation, the writer understood that the new mantra is money. Anyone who talks of something more meaningful is outdated.

2. Employers look for potential employees not exam results: Manish Sabharwal

Manish Sabharwal published the article ‘Employers look for potential employees not exam results’ in India Today edition 18 July 2011. In this article, Manish Sabharwal pointed out sarcastically the striking changes in the educational values and growing percentage ratio.

He emphasized that the most important things employers look for in potential employees are not exam results. This hardly implies that good results are a guarantee for workplace failure. His experience working for a people-supply chain confirms that only hired 5 per cent of the total youngsters who came for a job. And many of these youngsters had degrees and high marks.

He further outlined that booming corporate India is hungry for workforce. Most jobs are available in hospitality, healthcare, education, financial services, it services and retail. If we look at them by function, most jobs will be in customer service and sales. India haven’t good job prospects for graduates. Then how do students get or prepare for these jobs? Concern about problem, Manish Sabbarwal proposed the following five ways that children can and should plan early to stand out in the job market :

1. First, get workplace exposure; one or more summer internships make a graduate resume stand out from the herd. Being in an office or factory, even if you spend the time photocopying, shifting inventory or juggling spreadsheets, is a useful resume advantage.
2. Second, acquire English fluency and digital literacy. English is not a language but like Windows, an operating system. Employment and interview outcomes-both in manufacturing and services-are 300 per cent more favourable for candidates fluent in English and computers because of labour mobility and changes in the world of work.
3. Third, do a vocational course. These courses, when carefully chosen, create specific skills that open doors and often change interview conversations.

4. Fourth, get soft skills-communication, teamwork, problem-solving, planning and organising, and grooming. Employers have also begun to expect a willingness and an ability to learn, a positive attitude and a sense of responsibility.
5. Finally, get a life outside academics. Employers look for individual achievement, community involvement and organisational ability, but these are hard to measure without a professional track record. But they can be signaled by music, drama, organising college festivals, sports, writing, and much else.

Always remember that what matters for college admissions is often irrelevant in life and the world of work. College teaches you to jump through a thousand scholastic hoops yet the most important decisions you will make are whom to marry, whom to be friends with, what to love, what to despise, and how to control impulses. What employers care about in the long run is whether you are persistent, bold and useful. So plan ahead.

Questions:

A. Answer the following questions in about 75 words each:-

1. What does Dinesh Kumar say about the behavior of the most youngster in their interviews?
2. Why does Dinesh Kumar think that most of the youngsters today are evasive or irresponsible?
3. Mention the five ways suggested by Sabharwal for someone to stand out in the job market.

B. Answer the following questions in about 75 words each:-

1. What do youngsters today want to do in life?
2. How, according to Dinesh Kumar, do most youngsters speak in an interview?
3. What do reports about college graduates suggest?
4. Why does Dinesh Kumar think that 90 per cent of the youngsters are unemployable?
5. What was Albert Einstein's opinion about education?
6. How does Sabharwal highlight the importance of English?
7. How can one enhance one's community involvement and organizational ability?
8. What qualities do employers care for in the long run?

The Thief

Author – **Ruskin Bond**

In the short story “The Thief” written by Ruskin Bond, the characters are the Thief and Arun. The thief, the narrator is only fifteen years old upon his first meeting with Arun, who is about twenty years old. Arun was a tall, lean, kind and simple. They meet at a wrestling match and the narrator tries to gain the friendship of Arun so as to eventually take advantage of him.

When Arun asks the thief what his name is, the thief replies, lying, that his name is Deepak. The two proceed to watch the wrestling match and Arun appears to have no further interest in the narrator. Arun leaves and the narrator follows him and says he wants to work for Arun.

The narrator thinks he can gain assets by locking onto Arun. Arun lets him know that he cannot afford to pay him. However, the he feels it is worth it to pursue Arun if Arun can feed him. Arun indicates that he can feed him if he can cook. He cannot. However, he lies again and says that he can cook. Nevertheless, his cooking is horrible and Arun is ready to throw him to the streets.

The narrator hung there in smiling to charm to prevent Arun from tossing him out. The trick worked and Arun just sat down on the bed laughing for five minutes.. Arun patted on his head and promised to teach him cooking as well as writing. This shows the underlying compassion that is part of Arun’s character.

The narrator enjoys being part of Arun’s life and cooking for him. Arun taught him to cook and to write his name. He also promised to teach whole sentences and calculations. The narrator made the tea in the morning and went out shopping the day’s supplies and managed to make a profit of about twenty five paise a day. The thief’s shrewd character is shown in how he manages to make a profit for himself:

“I would tell Arun that rice was fifty-six paise a pound (it generally was), but I would get it at fifty paise a pound.”

The narrator thought that Arun knew it but didn't mind it. He does want a better, more truthful life. He says that once he learns to write properly it might be an *“incentive to be honest.”* Therefore, there is somewhat of a moral compass within him. Arun's earning was not regular. Once, he earned enough, spent lavishly. One evening, Arun arrived home with wand of notes. He hid the bundles under his mattress. The narrator was not paid except little manipulation during shopping. The narrator had a key of the front door, so it was easy for him to rob the money. But Arun was the most trusting person he had ever met. So he could not determine to rob him.

The narrator explains his thinking about robbing different types of people. He says greedy man can be robbed easily because he deserves it. It is also affordable for rich man to be robbed. But it is difficult to rob a poor man. A rich or greedy or a careful man would not keep his money under a pillow or a mattress. He would lock it up in a safe place. Arun had put his money from where it is child's play to rob without his knowledge.

The narrator found it easy to rob Arun. But he hesitated first as Arun treated him with goodness and kindly. At last, he determined to rob anyway. When Arun was asleep. The narrator wrapped up round him as moonlight fell across the bed from the veranda. As there was quite a lot of money, he decided to leave the town for Amritsar that very night.

The narrator crept though the door. He saw Arun was fast asleep peacefully. He slid around under the mattress searching the notes. He found it and drew out without a crackle. As Arun turned his side towards the narrator, he frightened and crawled quickly out of the room. He ran down from bazaar to the station. He had notes at his waist held by the string of his pyjamas. He tempted to count the notes. He slowed down to a walk and counted hundred rupees in five. When he reached the station, he rushed to the

platform without ticket as he never in his life bought a ticket. He jumped on the footboard of the just moving Amritsar Express. But due to inexplicable reason he hesitated and left the train.

The narrator left the Amritsar Express because of unknown reason. He found alone on the deserted platform. The knowledge of stolen hundred rupees increased his feeling of isolation and loneliness. He had no idea where to spend the night. He had no friend and don't want be suspicious by staying at hotel. The only person he knew well was Arun whom he robbed.

He walked slowly through the bazaar pondering over the possible reactions of Arun. He sat on a bench on the maidan. It was cold night and soon heavy rain started adding to his discomfort. He walked back to the bazaar and sat down on the steps of the closed shop. The clock struck midnight. He reminded of the writing whole sentences. He wanted go back and urge Arun to teach him to write.

He confessed that affection, a sense of sympathy for Arun, mostly desire to learn to write drew him back to the room. He put back the money under the mattress. In the morning, he woke up late found that Arun had already made tea. Arun offered him five-rupee note. The narrator found that the note was still wet from the last night's rain. He found Arun knew everything well. But his philanthropic approach can be visible his ready forgiveness. The Thief wants to learn to be an educated man and turn his life around. By the end of the story he is taking the first steps to improve his lot in life.

Questions:

A) Answer the following questions in about 75 words each:

1. Why did narrator almost thrown out by Arun the first night? Why did Arun change his mind?
2. Describe the narrator's experience of staying with Arun.

3. What does the narrator say about robbing different types of people?
4. Describe the narrator's attempt to rob Arun.
5. Why did the narrator decide to return to Arun? What was Arun's attitude towards the narrator the next morning?

B) Answer the following questions in about one or two sentences each:

1. Where did the narrator meet Arun?
2. List the five names assumed by the narrator.
3. What did Arun do with the food cooked by the narrator on the first night?
4. Why did the narrator feel grateful to Arun?
5. Why did the narrator think it was easy to rob a rich man?
6. Where did the narrator rush to after stealing the money?