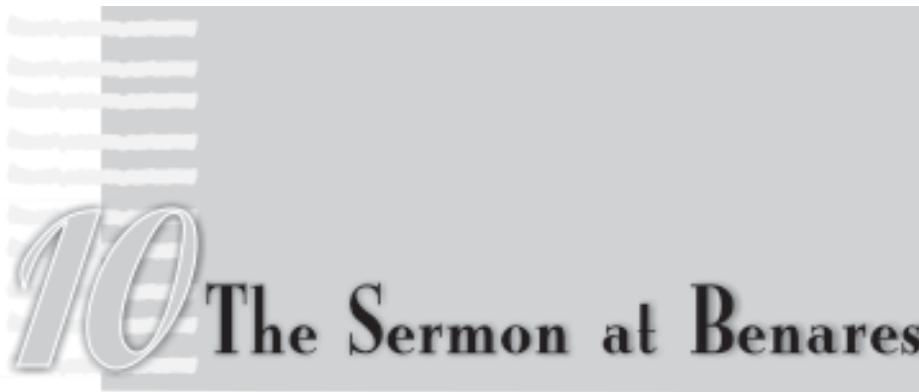


talk
to
me!

LET'S TALK EMPOWERMENT. LET'S TALK ENGLISH

First Flight



1. Watch and listen to the story

Click on the link below to watch a video of the story being read. Note the pronunciations of the words and read along using the subtitles.

[\(2\) The Sermon at Benares - YouTube](#)

2. Summary

The Sermon at Benares is a short story sourced from Value and Voice – A College Reader written in 1975 by Betty Renstaw. It narrates the story of Siddhartha Gautama who was born as a prince in northern India. Till the age of twenty-five, he had lived happily and had not seen the sufferings of the world. When he finally saw a sick man, ageing, death and a begging monk, he renounced his worldly life and went out to seek enlightenment. Upon achieving enlightenment under the Bo Tree, he became known as the Buddha (Awakened and Enlightened). He preached his first sermon at the city of Benares. The sermon is in the form of the story of Kisa Gotami who had lost her son and came to Buddha to revive him. Buddha asked her to fetch a handful of mustard seeds from a house untouched by death. When she could not find such a house, she realized that the experience of death was common to all mortals. Buddha explained that to be blessed one must be free from sorrow.

To learn about the life of Gautama Buddha click on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uajX2cSTMll>

To know more about Buddha's first sermon and about Sarnath where it was delivered, click on the link below. Sarnath is about 12 kilometres from Varanasi (Benares).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdU7ee_tiVE

Click on the link below to see an animation of the story of Kisa Gotami.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJ7kNfzXvJE&list=RDaJ7kNfzXvJE&start_radio=1&t=0

3. Vocabulary

1. **Sermon** – spiritual or moral talk

The Swami's **sermon** was highly appreciated.

2. **Lecture** – a formal talk given to a group of people in order to teach them about a subject; an angry or serious talk given to someone in order to criticize their behaviour

We are all going to attend the **lecture** on Modern Art at the museum.
My father gave me a long **lecture** last night on why I should study harder.

3. **Negative** – not having enthusiasm or positive opinions about something; a negative effect is bad and causes damage to something

The report only shows the **negative** points of the project.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a **negative** impact on our economy.

4. **Delivered** – took things such as letters, parcels, or goods to a person or place; here, gave a formal talk

She **delivered** the speech on the precautions to be taken against Covid-19 on TV.

5. **Sacred** – relating to a religion or considered to be holy

The Ganga is considered to be a **sacred** river by the Hindus.

6. **Scriptures** – the holy books of a religion
The Vedas are some of the sacred **scriptures** of the Hindu religion.
7. **Befitted** – suited, in keeping with
The king wore robes as **befitted** the occasion.
8. **Royalty** – the members of the royal family, i.e., the family of the king or queen
In England you have to bow before **royalty**.
9. **Heretofore** – before this point in time
Though she had done no housework, **heretofore**, she managed to wash the dishes very well.
10. **Shielded** – protected someone or something
When she switched on the lights in the room, I **shielded** my eyes with my hands against the glare.
11. **Sufferings** – physical or mental pains that a person or animal is feeling
It is unbearable to watch the **sufferings** of the people because of this war.
12. **Chanced upon** – came across by chance
I **chanced upon** a rare book in the Sunday book market.
13. **Funeral** – a (usually religious) ceremony for burying or burning the body of a dead person
A huge crowd of people came out to watch the **funeral** procession of the famous film star.
14. **Procession** – a line of people, vehicles, or objects moving forward in an organized manner, especially as part of a ceremony
A wedding **procession** blocked the road and we were late for the meeting.
15. **Monk** – a man who is a member of a group of religious men who live a simple life apart from general society, usually in a monastery
The Buddhist **monk** was going from door to door begging for food.

16. **Alms** – money, food or clothes given to poor people
When the car stops at a red light beggar children run towards it to ask for **alms**.
17. **So moved him** – he had strong feelings of sadness or sympathy, because of something someone has said or done
The sad story of our teacher's death **so moved him** that tears came into his eyes.
18. **Seek** – to find or get something
She went to the nearest town to **seek** work.
19. **Enlightenment** – a state of high spiritual knowledge
The Buddha received **enlightenment** under the Bodhi tree in Gaya.
20. **Concerning** – about
If you have any information **concerning** the robbery please contact the police.
21. **Witnessed** – saw something happen
I **witnessed** the fight between the neighbours over parking space.
22. **Wandered** – walked around slowly in a relaxed way or without any clear purpose or direction
I **wandered** in the beautiful garden looking at the flowers.
23. **Wisdom** – the ability to use your knowledge and experience to make good decisions and judgments
We all hope to gain **wisdom** as we grow older.
24. **Understandings** – knowledge about some things or situations
His **understanding** of human nature and behaviour was very deep.
25. **Preached** – gave a religious speech
He **preached** about kindness towards all living things – humans or animals.
26. **Dipping places** – bathing places related to religion
Har ki Pauri in Haridwar is a **dipping place** for pilgrims.

27. **Preserved** – to keep something as it is and safe
I have **preserved** all my grandfather's books and letters.
28. **Reflects** – shows, expresses, or is a sign of something; if a surface reflects light, heat, sound, or an image, it sends the light, etc. back and does not absorb it
The story **reflects** the concern he has for the poor people of our country.
The water of the lake **reflects** the sunlight into the house.
29. **Inscrutable** – something which cannot be understood
Her face was **inscrutable** when she was being questioned by the police.
30. **Physician** – a medical doctor
We took our uncle to a famous **physician**, but he could not cure him.
31. **Repaired** – went to (a stylistic use)
We all **repaired** to the dining room to have lunch.
32. **Procure** – to get something
I will **procure** a compass before I leave for the trek.
33. **Pitied** – felt sadness or sympathy for someone's unhappiness or bad situation
I **pitied** the poor mother who had to work so hard to feed her children.
34. **Weary** – very tired, especially after working hard for a long time
At the end of the day he was very **weary** from all the hard work.
35. **Hopeless** – without hope
They searched for survivors in the collapsed building, but it was **hopeless**.
36. **Flickered** – to shine with a light that is sometimes bright and sometimes weak
The candle **flickered** when a strong wind blew in from the window.

37. **Extinguished** – to stop a fire or light burning
The fire fighters **extinguished** the fire very fast.
38. **Reigned** – ruled
The king has **reigned** over this country for many years.
39. **Valley of desolation** – an area filled with deep sorrow, a state of ruin
He was filled with **desolation** when the floods destroyed all the crops.
40. **Immortality** – the ability to live forever, eternal life
The devtas and asuras churned the ocean to find the nectar of **immortality**.
Roger Federer has attained **immortality** in the world of tennis.
41. **Surrendered** – gave up something; stopped fighting and admitted defeat
The dacoits **surrendered** their weapons before the chief minister.
The Pakistani army **surrendered** to the Indian army in Dacca on the 16th of December 1971.
42. **Selfishness** – thinking only about yourself
She showed her **selfishness** when she refused to share her books with any of her classmates.
43. **Mortals** – those that are going to die
All living things are **mortal** and are going to die one day.
44. **Brief** – short in time or said in a few words
We stayed at the party for a **brief** time and then returned home.
The Principal gave a **brief** farewell speech at the school assembly.
45. **Combined** – added together
When they **combined** red and blue paint they got violet coloured paint.
46. **Earthen** – made of baked or fired clay
The small **earthen** lamps look very beautiful when lit on Diwali.

- 47. Vessels** – containers that hold something; large boats or ships; tubes that carry liquid like blood through our body
The copper **vessels** in the kitchen were clean and shining bright.
Before the storm broke out a warning was sent to all fishing **vessels** in that area.
A heart attack is caused when the blood **vessels** supplying blood to the heart get blocked.
- 48. Potter** – a person who makes dishes, plates, and other objects from clay, usually by hand on a special wheel
The **potter** had made beautiful diyas and was selling them on the roadside.
- 49. Are subject to** – affected by, have or suffer from something
All who are employed with this agency will **be subject to** its rules and laws.
- 50. Overcome** – to defeat or succeed in dealing with something; to prevent someone from being able to act or think in the usual way
I was finally able to **overcome** my shyness and make friends in class.
She was so **overcome** by grief that she could not speak for some time.
- 51. Depart** – to go away or leave from a place
They were going to **depart** by an earlier train but missed it due to the traffic jam.
- 52. Kinsmen** – men belonging to the family
All the **kinsmen** gathered around the king to protect him.
- 53. Relations** – members of the family; connections or similarities; friendship
All the **relations** came to attend the wedding.
There is no **relation** between the book and the movie.
India enjoys friendly **relations** with all her neighbours.
- 54. Slaughter** – the act of killing many people unfairly or cruelly, also used for killing animals
They will **slaughter** many goats and chickens for the wedding party.

55. **Afflicted with** – affected by suffering grief or pain
His whole family is **afflicted with** the Corona virus.
56. **Decay** – to gradually become damaged, worse or less
Since the apples were not plucked in time they have begun to **decay**.
57. **Grieve** – to feel or express great sadness, especially when someone dies
The children still continue to **grieve** for their mother even though she died more than a year ago.
58. **Contrary** – the opposite
Everyone said that the film was very exciting; on the **contrary** I found it so boring that I fell asleep.
59. **Lamentation** – expression of grief or sorrow, weeping
The **lamentation** at his sudden death could be heard till the next street.
60. **Arrow** – a long, thin stick, pointed at one end, that can be shot from a bow; a sign (→), which points in a particular direction; here it refers to suffering
The king shot the **arrow** straight into his enemy's eye.
I followed the **arrow** to the theatre where the movie was being shown.
61. **Complaint** – saying when something is wrong or not good enough; an illness
I made a **complaint** to the police about the noise from the wedding party in the hall nearby
She had a stomach **complaint** and could not go to school.
62. **Composed** – having one's feelings and emotions in control, be calm
Please **be composed** when you sit for the interview.
63. **Blessed** – holy; bringing happiness, luck or something you need
The **blessed** image of Durga was installed in the temple.
We were **blessed** with good weather during our picnic.
64. **Systematically** – according to a system or plan
The dictator **systematically** destroyed democracy in the state.

65. Wallow – to indulge in a situation or emotion without change
If you **wallow** in self-pity, you will become depressive.

4. Questions

1. When her son dies, Kisa Gotami goes from house to house. What does she ask for? Does she get it? Why not?
2. Kisa Gotami again goes from house to house after she speaks with the Buddha. What does she ask for, the second time around? Does she get it? Why not?
3. What does Kisa Gotami understand the second time that she failed to understand the first time? Was this what the Buddha wanted her to understand?
4. Why do you think Kisa Gotami understood this only the second time? In what way did the Buddha change her understanding?
5. How do you usually understand the idea of ‘selfishness’? Do you agree with Kisa Gotami that she was being ‘selfish in her grief’?

5. Grammar

Thinking about Language

I. This text is written in an old-fashioned style, for it reports an incident more than two millennia old. Look for the following words and phrases in the text, and try to rephrase them in more current language, based on how you understand them.

- give *thee* medicine for *thy* child
- *Pray tell me*

- Kisa repaired to the Buddha
 - there was no house but someone had died in it
 - kinsmen
 - **Mark!**
- II. You know that we can combine sentences using words like *and*, *or*, *but*, *yet* and *then*. But sometimes no such word seems appropriate. In such a case we can use a semicolon (;) or a dash (—) to combine two clauses.
- She has no interest in music; I doubt she will become a singer like her mother.
- The second clause here gives the speaker's opinion on the first clause.

Here is a sentence from the text that uses semicolons to combine clauses. Break up the sentence into three simple sentences. Can you then say which has a better rhythm when you read it, the single sentence using semicolons, or the three simple sentences?

For there is not any means by which those who have been born can avoid dying; after reaching old age there is death; of such a nature are living beings.

6. Speaking

The Buddha's sermon is over 2,500 years old. Given below are two recent texts on the topic of grief. Read the texts, comparing them with each other and with the Buddha's sermon. Do you think the Buddha's ideas and way of teaching continue to hold meaning for us? Or have we found better ways to deal with grief? Discuss this in groups or in class.

I. A Guide to Coping with the Death of a Loved One

Martha is having difficulty sleeping lately and no longer enjoys doing things with her friends. Martha lost her husband of 26 years to cancer a month ago.

Anya, age 17, doesn't feel like eating and spends the days in her room crying. Her grandmother recently died.

Both of these individuals are experiencing grief. **Grief is an emotion natural to all types of loss or significant change.**

Feelings of Grief

Although grief is unique and personal, a broad range of feelings and behaviours are commonly experienced after the death of a loved one.

- **Sadness.** This is the most common, and it is not necessarily manifested by crying.
- **Anger.** This is one of the most confusing feelings for a survivor. There may be frustration at not being able to prevent the death, and a sense of not being able to exist without the loved one.
- **Guilt and Self-reproach.** People may believe that they were not kind enough or caring enough to the person who died, or that the person should have seen the doctor sooner.
- **Anxiety.** An individual may fear that she/he won't be able to care for herself/himself.
- **Loneliness.** There are reminders throughout the day that a partner, family member or friend is gone. For example, meals are no longer prepared the same way, phone calls to share a special moment don't happen.
- **Fatigue.** There is an overall sense of feeling tired.
- **Disbelief.** This occurs particularly if it was a sudden death.

Helping Others Who Are Experiencing Grief

When a friend, loved one, or co-worker is experiencing grief—how can we help? It helps to understand that grief is expressed through a variety of behaviours.

Reach out to others in their grief, but understand that some may not want to accept help and will not share their grief. Others will want to talk about their thoughts and feelings or reminisce.

Be patient and let the grieving person know that you care and are there to support him or her.

II. Good Grief

AMITAI ETZIONI

Soon after my wife died — her car slid off an icy road in 1985 — a school psychologist warned me that my children and I were not mourning in the right way. We felt angry; the proper first stage, he said, is denial.

In late August this year, my 38-year-old son, Michael, died suddenly in his sleep, leaving behind a 2-year-old son and a wife expecting their next child.

There is no set form for grief, and no 'right' way to express it. There seems to be an expectation that, after a great loss, we will progress **systematically** through the well-known stages of grief. It is wrong, we are told, to jump to anger — or to **wallow** too long in this stage before moving towards acceptance.

But I was, and am, angry. To make parents bury their children is wrong; to have both my wife and son taken from me, for forever and a day, is cruel beyond words.

A relative from Jerusalem, who is a psychiatrist, brought some solace by citing the maxim — 'We are not to ask why, but what.' The 'what' is that which survivors in grief are bound to do for one another. Following that advice, my family, close friends and I keep busy, calling each other and giving long answers to simple questions like, "How did your day go today?" We try to avoid thinking about either the immediate past or the bereft future. We take turns playing with Max, Michael's two-year-old son. Friends spend nights with the young widow, and will be among those holding her hand when the baby is born.

Focusing on what we do for one another is the only consolation we can find.

7. Writing

Write a page (about three paragraphs) on one of the following topics. You can think about the ideas in the text that are relevant to these topics, and add your own ideas and experiences to them.

- 1. Teaching someone to understand a new or difficult idea**
- 2. Helping each other to get over difficult times**
- 3. Thinking about oneself as unique, or as one among billions of other**



In this Lesson

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Narrated the story of the Buddha, and the advice he gave to the grief-stricken woman.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Read and discuss the following extract from Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* with the students.

Joy and Sorrow

Then a woman said, "Speak to us of Joy and Sorrow." And he answered:

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.

And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.

And how else can it be?

The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain. Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?

And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed out with knives?

When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.

When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.

Some of you say, "Joy is greater than sorrow," and others say, "Nay, sorrow is the greater."

But I say unto you, they are inseparable.

Together they come, and when one sits alone with you at your board, remember that the other is asleep upon your bed.

2. Help students to read and memorise the following extract from Tagore.

Say not in grief that she is no more but say
in thankfulness that she was.



**A death is not the extinguishing of a light, but
the putting out of the
lamp because the dawn has come.**