

# English exam notes

***This PDF covers all the poems and prose prescribed for tomorrow's exam.***

\*Each lesson is simplified to its core idea so you clearly understand the theme, meaning, and intent — making it easier to ***extend answers in your own words without stress.***

***Grammar notes will be uploaded on this site by 10 AM tomorrow.***

*Bookmark this website and revisit it for exam-focused notes and summaries for upcoming subjects.*

## Unit - 1

### "Sonnet 30" by William Shakespeare (Poem)

One quiet afternoon, a man sits alone, letting his thoughts wander into the past. As he remembers his life, he begins to feel a heavy sadness. He thinks about all the things he wanted but never got, the time he wasted, and the "precious friends" who have died and are now hidden in "death's dateless night". He begins to cry, feeling the old pain as if it is happening for the first time. He keeps a "sad account" of his griefs, paying for them over and over with new tears. However, just as he is about to be overwhelmed by his sorrows, he thinks of his "dear friend" who is still alive. Suddenly, all the darkness vanishes; his losses are restored, and his heart is filled with joy once again.

### "The Apology of Socrates" by Plato (Prose)

In ancient Athens, an old philosopher named Socrates stands before a large jury. He is being accused of not respecting the gods and corrupting the city's youth. Socrates tells a story about how a god once declared him the wisest man alive. Puzzled, because he believed he knew nothing, he went around questioning famous leaders and artists. He discovered that while they acted wise, they were actually ignorant. He realized he was wise only because he admitted his own ignorance. He tells the jury he is like a "gadfly" sent to sting the "sluggish horse" of Athens to wake it up to virtue. Even when they sentence him to death, he remains calm, refusing to fear the unknown and insisting that a good man can never truly be harmed.

## Unit - 2

## **"The Solitary Reaper" by William Wordsworth (Poem)**

A traveler is walking through the quiet hills of Scotland when he sees a young girl alone in a field. She is busy cutting grain, but she is also singing a song so beautiful and sad that it fills the entire valley with sound. The traveler doesn't understand her language, but the music feels like it is about old battles or "familiar matter of to-day". He thinks her voice is more thrilling than a nightingale in the desert or a cuckoo bird in spring. He stands still, watching her work and listen, and even after he walks away over the hill, the melody stays tucked away in his heart long after the sound is gone.

## **"The Old Tiger and the Traveller" from Hitopadesha (Prose)**

On the edge of a pond in a southern forest, a toothless old tiger sits holding a bunch of sacred grass. He calls out to a passing traveler, offering him a beautiful golden bracelet for free. The traveler is frightened because he knows tigers are dangerous, but he is also very greedy. The tiger tells a convincing lie: he claims he has changed his ways, turned religious, and now practices charity to repent for his past sins. He tells the man to take a ritual bath in the pond before accepting the gift. Blinded by wealth, the man steps into the water and gets stuck in deep mud. The tiger pretends to help, but as soon as he is close enough, he reveals his true nature and eats the foolish traveler.

## **Unit - 3**

### **"Frost at Midnight" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Poem)**

It is a freezing midnight, and the world is so quiet that the frost performs its "secret ministry" in total silence. A father sits by his sleeping baby, watching the fire and thinking about his own childhood. He remembers being a lonely boy in a dark, "dim" city school, where he felt trapped and spent his time daydreaming of home. He looks at his sleeping son and makes a beautiful promise: his child will not be confined to a city. Instead, the boy will grow up in the mountains and by the lakes, wandering freely like a breeze and learning the "eternal language" of God through the beauty of the seasons.

### **"Mr. Sherlock Holmes" by Arthur Conan Doyle (Prose)**

Dr. Watson returns to London after being wounded in the Afghan war; he is poor, lonely, and looking for a cheap place to live. He meets an old friend, Stamford, who tells him about a strange man named Sherlock Holmes who is also looking for a roommate. They go to a laboratory, where they find Holmes shouting with joy. He has just invented a chemical test that can identify a tiny drop of blood even if it is

very old. Holmes is an energetic and eccentric man who deduces things about people instantly—he knows Watson has been in Afghanistan the moment he sees him. Intrigued by Holmes's genius and odd habits, Watson agrees to share a flat with him.

## **Unit - 4**

### **"I Taste a Liquor Never Brewed" by Emily Dickinson (Poem)**

A woman steps outside on a perfect summer morning and feels a wild, overwhelming happiness. She describes this feeling as being "drunk," but not on real wine. She is an "inebriate of air" and a "debauchee of dew," intoxicated by the beauty of nature. She imagines the blue summer sky as a giant inn and flowers as taverns where bees and butterflies drink. She is so filled with joy that even the angels (seraphs) and saints in heaven run to their windows to watch her "leaning against the sun" in total delight.

### **"To Build a Fire" by Jack London (Prose)**

A man travels alone through the Yukon wilderness, where it is seventy-five degrees below zero. He is overconfident and ignores an old-timer's warning never to travel alone in such cold. While walking, he accidentally steps into a hidden spring and wets his feet. He knows he must build a fire to dry off or he will freeze. Just as he gets a small fire going, a heavy load of snow falls from a tree branch and puts it out. His hands are too frozen to start another one. He tries to run to stay warm, but his body fails. As he dies in the snow, his dog looks at him, realizes there will be no fire, and uses its natural instinct to find the warm camp on its own.

## **Unit - 5**

### **"Where the Mind Is Without Fear" by Rabindranath Tagore (Poem)**

A poet looks at his country and prays for it to become a "heaven of freedom". He imagines a nation where people walk with their heads held high because they are not afraid, and where knowledge is free for everyone. In this world, there are no "narrow domestic walls" of religion or caste dividing people. He wants people to speak only the truth and to work tirelessly toward perfection. He hopes that reason will act like a "clear stream," preventing people from getting lost in the "dreary desert sand of dead habit" or blind tradition. He prays for God to guide the nation into a future of progressive thought and action.

### **"The Overcoat" by Nikolai Gogol (Prose)**

Akakiy is a poor, quiet copying clerk in St. Petersburg who is constantly mocked by his colleagues. His old coat is falling apart, so he lives very frugally for months—skipping tea and candles—to save enough money for a new one. When he finally gets the new coat, his life changes; people treat him with respect and invite him to a party. However, on his way home, thieves steal his coat. He goes to an "important personage" for help, but the man only screams at him to show off his power. Akakiy dies of a broken heart and fever. Soon after, a ghost begins haunting the city, ripping overcoats off the backs of wealthy people—eventually stealing the coat of the man who refused to help him—to achieve the justice he never got in life.