

Subject Name & Code:

ENGLISH FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION- BE02R00021

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PBL Assignment 11:

Audiobook 1: *THE RED RICE GRANARY* by Sudha Murthy

Q.1 Summarise the central theme of the story.

The central theme of *The Red Rice Granary* is the stark contrast between **materialistic greed** and **inherent honesty**, and the ultimate triumph of simple, virtuous living over deceptive wealth. It tells the story of a greedy landlord who cheats his poor, honest tenants out of their harvest. Through a twist of fate involving a humble offering of red rice, the tenants' integrity is rewarded, and the landlord faces the consequences of his avarice. The story underscores the value of contentment, fairness, and the idea that true wealth lies in character, not possessions.

Q.2 Identify:

1. **Narrative Style:** The story is narrated in a **third-person omniscient style**. The narrator knows the thoughts and feelings of both the landlord and the tenants, providing a moral commentary on their actions. The style is simple, linear, and parable-like, characteristic of Sudha Murthy's didactic storytelling aimed at conveying a clear ethical lesson.
2. **Communication Tone:** The tone is predominantly **moralistic and reflective**, with undercurrents of **sympathy for the oppressed tenants** and **disapproval towards the landlord's exploitation**. It is calm, descriptive, and ultimately delivers a sense of poetic justice.

Q.3 Explain how the author uses language to convey emotions.

Sudha Murthy uses simple yet evocative language to convey emotions. The **tenants' despair and helplessness** are shown through descriptions of their physical state ("hungry children," "tired faces") and their silent acceptance. The **landlord's greed and cunning** are conveyed through his calculated dialogue and actions ("he smiled a cunning smile"). The **climax of justice** is emphasized through contrasting imagery—the landlord's empty granary versus the tenants' unexpected bounty. Key verbs and adjectives ("cheated," "generous," "humbled") directly label the moral and emotional states of the characters, leaving no ambiguity about the intended emotional response.

Q.4 Write a brief reflection on what the story teaches about human communication.

The story highlights that **effective and ethical communication is rooted in honesty and transparency**. The landlord's failure stems from manipulative and one-sided communication designed to deceive. In contrast, the tenants' quiet dignity and their act of sharing the red rice—a simple, honest gesture—become a powerful non-verbal communication of their character that fate rewards. It teaches that in human interactions, especially those involving power imbalances, truthful communication fosters trust and long-term well-being, while deceitful communication inevitably leads to breakdown and loss. True communication is not just about words but about aligning actions with integrity.

Audiobook 2: *THE LADY OR THE TIGER* by Frank R. Stockton

Q.1 Summarise the central theme of the story.

The central theme of *The Lady or the Tiger* is the **irrational and powerful nature of human emotions—specifically jealousy, love, and savagery—and the ambiguity of choice**. The story presents a paradox: a princess must signal her lover, who is on trial in a barbaric arena, to choose between two doors—one hiding a lady (reward) and the other a tiger (punishment). Having discovered which is which, and consumed by jealous passion for the lover she might lose to another woman, the princess gives him a signal. The story famously ends without revealing what was behind the chosen door, leaving the reader to grapple with the conflict between the princess's love and her ferocious jealousy. The theme explores the dark complexities of the human heart and the torment of decisive, morally ambiguous choices.

Q.2 Identify:

1. **Narrative Style:** The story employs a **third-person narrative with an intrusive, philosophical narrator**. The narrator not only describes events but also directly addresses the reader, pondering the princess's internal conflict and the implications of the choice. This style creates a fable-like, yet psychologically probing, tone that focuses on dilemma over plot resolution.
2. **Communication Tone:** The tone is **suspenseful, ironic, and psychologically analytical**. It is formal and somewhat detached, like a historian recounting a barbaric custom, yet it becomes intensely focused on the passionate and brutal emotions simmering beneath the surface, especially in the princess. The ending is deliberately unresolved, creating a tone of provocative ambiguity.

Q.3 Explain how the author uses language to convey emotions.

Stockton uses stark, contrasting language to convey intense emotion. The **princess's "soul at a white heat"** of jealousy is portrayed through metaphors of fire and barbarism. Her love is described in terms of "fervor" and "passion," but these are immediately juxtaposed with images of the "blood-thirsty tiger" and her "semi-barbaric" nature. The narrator's analytical language ("Which came out of the opened door – the lady, or the tiger?") frames the emotional turmoil as an unsolvable puzzle. The lack of a concrete resolution is itself a linguistic device that forces the reader to emotionally engage with the princess's impossible conflict, making the reader feel the weight of her decision.

Q.4 Write a brief reflection on what the story teaches about human communication.

This story teaches that **human communication can be rendered utterly ambiguous and potent by underlying emotion**. The princess's single, crucial signal—a flick of her hand—is a perfect, tense moment of communication. Its meaning is entirely dependent on the unspoken, violent conflict within her own heart. The story illustrates that what is *communicated* (the signal) and what is *intended* (the outcome she truly desires) can be catastrophically at odds when driven by powerful, conflicting feelings like love and jealousy. It underscores that in moments of high stakes, communication is not just about transmitting information but is a reflection of our deepest, often contradictory, selves, and can leave the recipient (and the reader) in a state of profound uncertainty.

Audiobook 3: *THE GIFT OF THE MAGI* by O. Henry

Q.1 Summarise the central theme of the story.

The central theme of *The Gift of the Magi* is **selfless love and the profound personal sacrifice it entails**. The story follows a young, impoverished couple, Jim and Della, who each secretly sell their most prized possession to buy a Christmas gift for the other. Della sells her beautiful hair to buy a chain for Jim's heirloom pocket watch, while Jim sells his watch to buy ornate combs for Della's hair. The ironic twist—that their gifts are now useless—only serves to highlight the story's deeper message: the true value of a gift lies not in its material worth, but in the depth of love and sacrifice it represents. The story concludes by comparing them to the biblical Magi, affirming that their foolish, loving generosity makes them the wisest of all.

Q.2 Identify:

1. **Narrative Style:** The story is told through a **third-person omniscient narrator** with a distinct, **conversational and sometimes directly addressive voice**. The narrator guides the reader through the characters' thoughts and feelings, and famously interjects with philosophical commentary, particularly in the concluding paragraph. The style is rich in descriptive detail and employs O. Henry's signature use of situational irony.
2. **Communication Tone:** The overall tone is **warm, compassionate, and gently ironic**. It is deeply sympathetic towards the couple's poverty and their loving intentions. While tinged with melancholy for their situation, the tone ultimately becomes uplifting and wise, celebrating their sacrifice as the highest form of love and wisdom.

Q.3 Explain how the author uses language to convey emotions.

O. Henry uses vivid, empathetic language to convey the characters' emotions. Della's **anxiety and despair** are shown through physical descriptions ("She stood by the window and looked out dully") and the counted pennies. The **love and devotion** each feels is conveyed through their internal monologues focused solely on the other's happiness. The climactic moment of mutual revelation is handled with poignant simplicity, emphasizing their shock not through melodrama, but through quiet, understated reaction. The famous final paragraph uses elevated, almost biblical language ("of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest") to translate their personal sadness into universal, emotional triumph.

Q.4 Write a brief reflection on what the story teaches about human communication.

The Gift of the Magi teaches that the most powerful communication between people is often **non-verbal and enacted through sacrifice**. Jim and Della's primary "conversation" is not of words but of deeds—each giving up their sole treasure for the other. The misaligned gifts are not a failure of communication, but its ultimate success: they perfectly communicate the depth of their love. The story highlights that in meaningful relationships, communication transcends practical utility. It shows that true understanding and connection come from intuitively grasping the other's values and acting upon that knowledge with selfless generosity, even if the outcome is ironically impractical. Their love is communicated more clearly through their "foolish" sacrifices than any words could express.