

Freedom

Class 12 English Supplementary
Kaleidoscope Chapter 14, G. B. Shaw

freedom = real choice + fair work

Flow: definition > limits > labour > justice *

Central question

Shaw asks what a perfectly free person would look like and answers that such a person cannot exist.

Human beings must sleep, eat, wash, move, work and live with others, so some limits are natural.

Exam cue

Do not write that freedom means doing anything at any time.

G. B. Shaw

Writer profile

George Bernard Shaw was an Irish dramatist, critic and public thinker.

NCERT notes that his criticism is fearless but often sugar-coated with a light tone.

Tone of essay

The essay sounds witty, direct and argumentative.

Shaw uses sharp examples instead of abstract slogans.

Opening Definition

Flow: wish > need > limit > society

Perfect freedom

A perfectly free person would do what he likes, when he likes and where he likes.

Shaw immediately says no such person exists and no such person can exist.

Why impossible

We spend a large part of life on sleep, eating, dressing and travel.

These duties exist for kings as well as poor labourers.

Natural Necessity

Nature's demands

Natural jobs include sleeping, eating, drinking, dressing and moving from place to place.

Shaw calls these a kind of slavery because we cannot avoid them.

Pleasant side

Nature makes many necessities pleasant, such as eating, sleeping and family life.

That is why people sing about home and comfort instead of hating every natural duty.

Food, House and Clothes

Flow: need > labour > property > control

From need to labour

Since we must eat, we must produce or obtain food.

Since we must sleep, we need houses, bedding, fireplaces and fuel.

Shaw's turn

These things can be produced by human labour.

Once produced, they can also be stolen or controlled.

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Exploitation Examples

Bees and Horses

Shaw gives the honey example:
Humans let bees work and then take
the honey.

He gives the horse example: a lazy
person may use a horse instead of
walking.

Human slavery

Force, fraud, trickery and false
religious teaching can put one
person under another.

The powerful shift their share of
hardship onto weaker shoulders.

Government's Honest Job

Flow: law > state > worker > master

Ideal role

The object of an honest government should be to stop people from being imposed upon.

Law should prevent one class from pushing its burden onto another class.

Actual role

Shaw says most actual governments enforce slavery and call it freedom.

They may regulate greed, but they do not end the underlying exploitation.

Chattel and Wage Slavery

Chattel slavery

Chattel slavery means owning people as property.

Shaw says it may be abolished when it costs more than wage slavery.

Wage slavery

Wage slavery leaves a worker free only to choose one master instead of another.

This choice does not reduce the worker's hours or basic dependence.

Vote and Democracy

Flow: vote > choice > paper > work

The vote promise

When workers complain, they are told that they govern the country through elections.

They receive a vote and choose between candidates placed before them.

Main criticism

A vote is useful, but it does not automatically shorten labour hours.

Newspapers may praise the voter as free, but the worker's daily life may remain unchanged.

Natural vs Human Slavery

Nature

Nature forces us to eat and sleep
but makes these actions pleasant.

People often overeat or oversleep
because satisfaction itself feels
good.

Man over man

Human slavery is hateful to the
body and the spirit.

It creates resentment, cruelty and
a war between classes.

Class War

Flow: masters > workers > law > peace

Shaw's terms

Shaw describes continual civil war between workers and masters.

Workers organise as trade unions, while employers organise as federations.

Marx and More

Shaw calls Marx a great Jewish prophet who exposed the cruelty of unchecked exploitation.

He also refers to Thomas More's ideal of everyone doing a fair share of work.

Schools and Newspapers

Manufactured pride

The master class uses parliaments, schools and newspapers to hide slavery.

People are taught that their country is already the land of the free.

Why Shaw lists events

Magna Carta, the Armada, the Bill of Rights and Waterloo are named as examples.

The long list sounds impressive, but Shaw uses it satirically.

Factory Acts and Tax Claims

Flow: acts > rent > hours > life

Official reply

- When people grumble, they are told that they already have votes, Factory Acts and education.

They are also reminded that the rich pay taxes.

Poor person's reality

The poor may pay much of their wages as rent.

They may also work ^{*}twice as long as freedom would require.

Famous Protesters

Names in essay

Shaw names Voltaire, Rousseau, Tom Paine, Cobbett, Shelley, Marx, Lassalle, Lenin and Trotsky.

These figures protested against the false order of freedom and slavery.

Power's method

Opponents of the system are labelled immoral, violent or dangerous.

Their books may be attacked or restricted.

Revolution and Response

Flow: revolt > abuse > power > dinner

After revolution

Shaw says England has often fought revolutionaries or helped others fight them.

If a revolution fails, the victory is advertised as another triumph for freedom.

Point to remember

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This section exposes political hypocrisy.

Shaw is less interested in ceremony than in who controls labour, property and time.

Meaning of Freedom

Not a slogan

Freedom is not just a national label, a speech or a patriotic memory.

It is not proved by saying that ancestors won famous political rights.

Positive meaning

Real freedom means fair work, security, law against exploitation and enough time to live.

It also means seeing through propaganda that calls dependence liberty.

Important Contrasts

Flow: natural > human > legal > real

Contrast one

Natural slavery is unavoidable,
shared by all and often pleasant
in satisfaction.

Human slavery is avoidable,
unequal and hateful.

Contrast two

Legal freedom gives a vote and a
choice of employer.

Real freedom reduces exploitation
and the hours stolen by another
class.

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Tone and Style

Satire

Shaw often sounds light, but the attack is serious.

He uses comic exaggeration to expose serious social injustice.

Examples

The bees, horse, vote, newspapers and dinner invitation make abstract ideas concrete.

The list of historical events creates rhythm and mock grandeur.

NCERT Answer Pointers

Perfectly free person

Start with Shaw's definition: one who does what he likes, when and where he likes.

Then write that such freedom is impossible because natural needs limit everyone.

Natural slavery

Name sleep, food, clothing and movement.

Explain that these duties are unavoidable but often pleasant.

More Answer Pointers

Flow: question > point > evidence > close

Vote question

Say Shaw does not reject voting completely.

He rejects the claim that voting alone makes a worker truly free.

Government question

An honest government should stop exploitation.

Actual governments often protect the existing master class.

Common Mistakes

Avoid these

Do not define freedom only as political independence.

Do not say Shaw is against all law or all government.

Better answer habit

Use concrete examples from the essay.

Write balanced paragraphs with a topic sentence and one quoted phrase.

Quick Recall

Flow: needs > labour > vote > real freedom

Memory chain

Perfect freedom is impossible
because life has unavoidable
needs.

Natural needs require labour, and
labour can be stolen by stronger
groups.

Last line

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Shaw's essay is a warning against
being satisfied with the name of
freedom.

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He asks students to look at hours
of work, rent, hunger and power.