

## GENERAL ENGLISH CLASS

### POEM

6th English: Term 1 - Unit 3

#### 1. I Dream of Spices

- Raj Arumugam

Ouch! My mother would say:

“Little boy Raj...

Go to Muthu’s

and get some

cinnamon, betel leaves

and ginger and garlic.”

And so I go to the shops  
singing all the way  
and when Muthu asks me  
what I’d want

I rattle off a list:

“Sesame seeds, onions  
tomatoes and pickles”

And back home,  
Mother twists my ears  
Ouch!

#### Glossary:

<b>Cinnamon</b>	The bark of a tree that gives a delicious flavour to food
<b>Garlic</b>	A small bulb with a strong taste used in cooking
<b>Rattle off</b>	Recite
<b>Sesame seeds</b>	Gingelly seeds
<b>Ouch</b>	Sound that expresses pain

How doth the little crocodile  
 Improve his shining tail,  
 And pour the water of the Nile  
 On every golden scale!  
 How cheerful he seems to grin,  
 How neatly spreads his claws,  
 And welcomes little fishes in,  
 With gently smiling jaws!

**Glossary:**

<b>Doth</b>	An expression of old English for 'does'
<b>Improve</b>	To become better than before
<b>Cheerful</b>	Happy
<b>Gently</b>	Softly, mildly
<b>Scale</b>	Thin horny things on the skin of crocodile
<b>Grin</b>	Smile meaninglessly showing the teeth

**PROSE****1. His First Flight**

- Liam O' Flaherty

The young seagull was alone on his ledge. His two brothers and his sister had already flown away the day before. He had been afraid to fly with them. Somehow, when he had taken a little run forward to the brink of the ledge and attempted to flap his wings, he became afraid. The great expanse of sea stretched down beneath, and it was such a long way down – miles down. He felt certain that his wings would never support him; so he bent his head and ran away back to the little hole under the ledge where he slept at night.

Even when each of his brothers and his little sister, whose wings were far shorter than his own, ran to the brink, flapped their wings, and flew away, he failed to muster up courage to take that plunge which appeared to him so desperate. His father and mother had come around calling to him shrilly, scolding him, threatening to let him starve on his ledge, unless he flew away. But for the life of him, he could not move.

That was twenty-four hours ago. Since then, nobody had come near him. The day before, all day long, he had watched his parents flying about with his brothers and sister, perfecting them in the art of flight, teaching them how to skim the waves and how to dive for fish. He had, infact, seen his older brother catch his first herring and devour it, standing on a rock, while his parents circled around raising a proud cackle. And all the morning, the whole family had walked about on the big plateau midway down the opposite cliff, laughing at his cowardice.

The sun was now ascending the sky, blazing warmly on his ledge that faced the south. He felt the heat because he had not eaten since the previous nightfall. Then, he had found a dried piece of mackerel's tail at the far end of his ledge. Now, there was not a single scrap of food left. He had searched every inch, rooting among the rough, dirt-caked straw nest where he and his brothers and sister had been hatched. He even gnawed at the dried pieces of eggshell. It was like eating a part of himself.

He then trotted back and forth from one end of the ledge to the other, his long gray legs stepping daintily, trying to find some means of reaching his parents without having to fly. But on each side of him, the ledge ended in a sheer fall of precipice, with the sea beneath. And between him and his parents, there was a deep, wide crack. Surely he could reach them without flying if he could only move northwards along the cliff face? But then, on what could he walk? There was no ledge, and he was not a fly. And above him, he could see nothing. The precipice was sheer, and the top of it was, perhaps, farther away than the sea beneath him.

He stepped slowly out to the brink of the ledge, and, standing on one leg with the other leg hidden under his wing, he closed one eye, then the other, and pretended to be falling asleep. Still, they took no notice of him. He saw his two brothers and his sister lying on the plateau dozing, with their heads sunk into their necks. His father was preening the feathers on his white back. Only his mother was looking at him.

She was standing on a little high hump on the plateau, her white breast thrust forward. Now and again, she tore at a piece of fish that lay at her feet, and then scraped each side of her beak on the rock. The sight of the food maddened him. How he loved to tear food that way, scraping his beak now and again to whet it! He uttered a low cackle. His mother cackled too, and looked at him.

'Ga, ga, ga,' he cried, begging her to bring him over some food. 'Gawl-ool-ah,' she screamed back mockingly. But he kept calling plaintively, and after a minute or so, he uttered a joyful scream. His mother had picked up a piece of fish and was flying across to him with it. He leaned out eagerly, tapping the rock with his feet, trying to get nearer to her as she flew across. But when she was just opposite to him, abreast of the ledge, she halted, her legs hanging limp, her wings motionless, the piece of fish in her beak almost within reach of his beak.

He waited a moment in surprise, wondering why she did not come nearer, and then maddened by hunger, he dived at the fish. With a loud scream, he fell outwards and downwards into space. His mother had swooped upwards. As he passed beneath her, he heard the swish of her wings.

Then a monstrous terror seized him and his heart stood still. He could hear nothing. But it only lasted a moment. The next moment, he felt his wings spread outwards. The wind rushed against his breast feathers, then under his stomach and against his wings. He could feel the tips of his wings cutting through the air.

He was not falling headlong now. He was soaring gradually, downwards and outwards. He was no longer afraid. He just felt a bit dizzy. Then, he flapped his wings once and he soared upwards. He uttered a joyous scream and flapped them again. He soared higher. He raised his breast and banked against the wind. 'Ga, ga, ga. Ga, ga, ga.' 'Gawl-ool-ah.' His mother swooped past him, her wings making a loud noise. He answered her with another scream. Then, his father flew over him screaming. Then, he saw his two brothers and sister flying around him, soaring and diving.

Then, he completely forgot that he had not always been able to fly, and commenced to dive and soar, shrieking shrilly.

He was near the sea now, flying straight over it, facing out over the ocean. He saw a vast green sea beneath him, with little ridges moving over it; he turned his beak sideways and crowed amusedly. His parents and his brothers and sister had landed on this green floor in front of him. They were beckoning to him, calling shrilly. He dropped his legs to stand on the green sea. His legs sank into it. He screamed with fright and attempted to rise again, flapping his wings. But he was tired and weak with hunger and he could not rise exhausted by the strange exercise. His feet sank into the green sea, and then his belly touched it and he sank no farther.

He was floating on it. And around him, his family was screaming, praising him, and their beaks were offering him scraps of dog-fish.

He had made his first flight.

## Glossary

<b>Ledge(n)</b>	- A ledge is a piece of rock on the side of a cliff or mountain, which is in the shape of a narrow shelf
<b>Shrilly(adv.)</b>	- producing a high-pitched and piercing voice or sound
<b>Herring(n)</b>	- a long silver fish that swims in large groups in the sea
<b>Devour(v)</b>	- to eat something eagerly and in large amounts, so that nothing is left
<b>Cackle (n)</b>	- a sharp, broken noise or cry of a hen, goose or seagull
<b>Mackerel(n)</b>	- a sea fish with a strong taste, often used as food
<b>Gnaw(v)</b>	- to bite or chew something repeatedly
<b>Trot(v)</b>	- to run at a moderate pace with short steps
<b>Precipice(n)</b>	- a very steep side of a cliff or a mountain
<b>Whet(v)</b>	- to sharpen
<b>Preening (v)</b>	- cleaning feathers with beak
<b>Plaintively(adv.)</b>	- sadly, calling in a sad way
<b>Swoop(v)</b>	- to move very quickly and easily through the air
<b>Beckoning(v)</b>	- making a gesture with the hand or head to encourage someone to approach or follow.

## The Night the Ghost Got In

The ghost that got into our house on the night of November 17, 1915, raised such a hullabaloo of misunderstandings that I am sorry I didn't just let it keep on walking, and go to bed. Its advent caused my mother to throw a shoe through a window of the house next door and ended up with my grandfather shooting a patrolman. I am sorry, therefore, as I have said that I ever paid any attention to the footsteps.

They began about a quarter past one o'clock in the morning, a rhythmic, quickcadenced walking around the diningroom table. My mother was asleep in one room upstairs, my brother-Herman in another, grandfather was in the attic, in the old walnut bed which, as you will remember, once fell on my father. I had just stepped out of the bathtub and was busily rubbing myself with a towel when I heard the steps. They were the steps of a man walking rapidly around the dining-table downstairs. The light from the bathroom shone down the back-steps, which dropped directly into the dining-room; I could see the faint shine of plates on the plate-rail; I couldn't see the table. The steps kept going round and round the table; at regular intervals a board creaked, when it was trod upon. I supposed at first that it was my father or my brother Roy, who had gone to Indianapolis but were expected home at any time. I suspected next that it was a burglar. It did not enter my mind until later that it was a ghost.



After the walking had gone on for perhaps three minutes, I tiptoed to Herman's room. 'Psst!' I hissed, in the dark, shaking him. 'Awp', he said, in the low, hopeless tone of a despondent beagle – he always half suspected that something would 'get him' in the night. I told him who I was. 'There's something downstairs!' I said. He got up and followed me to the head of the back staircase. The steps had ceased. Herman looked at me in some alarm: I had only the bath towel around my waist. He wanted to go back to bed, I gripped his arm.

'There's something down there!' I said. Instantly the steps began again, circled the dining-room table like a man running, and started up the stairs towards us, heavily, two at a time. The light still shone palely down the stairs; we saw nothing coming; we only heard the steps. Herman rushed to his room and slammed the door. I slammed shut the door at the stairs top and held my knee against it.

After a long minute, I slowly opened it again. There was nothing there. There was no sound. None of us ever heard the ghost again. The slamming of the doors had aroused mother: she peered out of her room. 'What on earth are you boys doing?' she demanded. Herman ventured out of his room. 'Nothing,' he said, gruffly, but he was, in colour, a light green. 'What was all that running around downstairs?' said mother. So she had heard the steps, too! We just looked at her. 'Burglars!' she shouted, intuitively. I tried to quieten her by starting lightly downstairs.

'Come on, Herman,' I said.

'I'll stay with mother,' he said. 'She's all excited.'

I stepped back onto the landing.

'Don't either of you go a step,' said mother. 'We'll call the police.' Since the phone was downstairs, I didn't see how we were going to call the police -- nor did I want the police – but mother made one of her quick, incomparable decisions. She flung up a window of her bedroom which faced the bedroom windows of the house of a neighbour, picked up a shoe, and whammed it through a pane of glass across the narrow space that separated the two houses. Glass tinkled into the bedroom occupied by a retired engraver named Bodwell and his wife. Bodwell had been for some years in rather a bad way and was subject to mild 'attacks'. Almost everybody we knew or lived near had some kind of attacks.

It was now about two o'clock of a moonless night; clouds hung black and low. Bodwell was at the window in a minute, shouting frothing a little, shaking his fist. 'We'll sell the house and go back to Peoria,' we could hear Mrs. Bodwell saying. It was some time before mother 'got through' to Bodwell. 'Burglars!' she shouted. 'Burglars in the house!' Herman and I hadn't dared to tell her that it was not burglars but ghosts, for she was even more afraid of ghosts than of burglars. Bodwell at first thought that she meant there were burglars in his house, but finally he quieted down and called the police for us over an extension phone by his bed. After he had disappeared from the window, mother suddenly made as if to throw another shoe, not because there was

further need of it but, as she later explained, because the thrill of heaving a shoe through a window glass had enormously taken her fancy. I prevented her.

The police were on hand in a commendably short time: a Ford sedan full of them, two on motorcycles, and a patrol wagon with about eight in it and a few reporters. They began banging at our front door. Flashlights shot streaks of gleam up and down the walls, across the yard, down the walk between our house and Bodwell's. 'Open up!' cried a hoarse voice. 'We're men from Headquarters!' I wanted to go down and let them in, since there they were, but mother wouldn't hear of it. 'You haven't a stitch on,' she pointed out. 'You'd catch your death.' I wound the towel around me again. Finally the cops put their shoulders to our big heavy front door with its thick bevelled glass and broke it in: I could hear a rending of wood and a splash of glass on the floor of the hall. Their lights played all over the livingroom and crisscrossed nervously in the dining-room, stabbed into hallways, shot up the front stairs and finally up the back. They caught me standing in my towel at the top. A heavy policeman bounded up the steps. 'Who are you?' he demanded. 'I live here,' I said.

The officer in charge reported to mother. 'No sign of nobody, lady,' he said. 'Musta got away - what'd he like?' 'There were two or three of them,' mother said, 'whooping and carrying on slamming doors.' 'Funny,' said the cop. 'All ya windows and door was locked on the inside tight as a tick.'

Downstairs, we could hear the tromping of the other police. Police were all over the place; doors were yanked open, drawers were yanked e. How did the Bodwells react, when a shoe was thrown into their house? f. What did the Bodwells think when they heard the mother shout? open, windows were shot up and pulled down, furniture fell with dull thumps. A half-dozen policemen emerged out of the darkness of the front hallway upstairs. They began to ransack the floor; pulled beds away from walls, tore clothes off hooks in the closets, pulled suitcase and boxes off shelves. One of them found an old zither that Roy had won in a pool tournament. 'Looky here, Joe,' he said, strumming it with a big paw. The cop named Joe took it and turned it over. 'What is it?' he asked me. 'It's an old zither our guinea pig used to sleep on,' I said. It was true that a pet guinea pig we once had would never sleep anywhere except on the zither, but I should never have said so. Joe and the other cop looked at me a long time. They put the zither back on a shelf.

'No sign o' nothing', said the cop who had first spoken to mother, 'The lady seems hysterical.' They all nodded, but said nothing; just looked at me. In the small silence we all heard a creaking in the attic. Grandfather was turning over in bed. 'What's that?' snapped Joe. Five or six cops sprang for the attic door before I could intervene or explain. I realized that it would be bad if they burst in on grandfather unannounced, or even announced. He was going through a phase in which he believed

that General Meade's men, under steady hammering by Stonewall Jackson, were beginning to retreat and even desert.

When I got to the attic, things were pretty confused. Grandfather had evidently jumped to the conclusion that the police were deserters from Meade's army, trying to hide away in his attic. He bounded out of bed wearing a long flannel nightgown over long woolen pants, a nightcap, and a leather jacket around his chest. The cops must have realized at once that the indignant white-haired old man belonged to the house, but they had no chance to say so. 'Back, ye cowardly dog!' roared grandfather. 'Back t' the lines ye goodaam Lily-livered cattle!' With that, he fetched the officer who found the zither a flat - handed smack alongside his head that sent him sprawling. The others beat a retreat, but not enough; grandfather grabbed zither's gun from its holster and let fly. The report seemed to crack the rafters; smoke filled the attic. A cop cursed and shot his hand to his shoulder. Somehow, we all finally got downstairs again and locked the door against the old gentleman. He fired once or twice more in the darkness and then went back to bed. 'That was grandfather', I explained to Joe, out of breath. 'He thinks you're deserter.' 'I'll say he does,' said Joe.

The cops were reluctant to leave without getting their hand on somebody besides grandfather; the night had been distinctly a defeat for them. Furthermore, they obviously didn't like the 'layout'; something looked - and I can see their viewpoint - phony. They began to poke into things again. A reporter, a thin-faced, wispy man, came up to me. I had put on one of mother's dress, not being able to find anything else. The reporter looked at me with mingled suspicion and interest. 'Just what the hell is the real lowdown here, Bud?' he asked. I decided to be frank g. What was the grandfather wearing? h. What conclusions did grandfather jump to when he saw the cops? with him. 'We had ghosts,' I said. He gazed at me a long time as if I were a slot machine into which he had, without results, dropped a coin. Then he walked away. The cops followed him, the one grandfather shot holding his nowbandaged arm, cursing and blaspheming. 'I'm gonna get my gun back from that old bird,' said the zither-cop. 'Yeh,' said Joe, 'You - and who else?' I told them I would bring it to the station house the next day.

'What was the matter with that one policeman?' mother asked, after they had gone. 'Grandfather shot him,' I said. 'What for?' she demanded. I told her he was a deserter. 'Of all things!' said mother. 'He was such a nice-looking young man'.

Grandfather was fresh as a daisy and full of jokes at breakfast next morning. We thought at first he had forgotten all about what had happened, but he hadn't. Over his third cup of coffee, he glared at Herman and me. 'What was the idea of all the cops tarryhootin' around the house last night?' he demanded. 'None of you bothered to leave a bottle of water beside my bed. Do you ever realize what it cost for a thirsty man to look for water in the dining room last night?', he complained. He had us there.

## Glossary



<b>Hullabaloo (v)</b>	- lot of loud noise made by people who are excited.
<b>Patrolman(n)</b>	- a patrolling police officer.
<b>Attic(n)</b>	- a space or room inside or partly inside the roof of a building
<b>Slammed(v)</b>	- shut a door or window forcefully and loudly.
<b>Gruffly(adv.)</b>	-sadly intuitively(adv.) - without conscious reasoning, instinctively
<b>Whammed(v)</b>	- struck something forcefully
<b>Bevelled(v)</b>	- reduced to a slopping edge
<b>Rending(v)</b>	- tearing to pieces
<b>Yanked(v)</b>	- pulled with a jerk
<b>Zither(n)</b>	- a musical instrument consisting of a flat wooden sound box with numerous strings stretched across it, placed horizontally and played with fingers guinea
<b>Pig(n)</b>	- a domesticated tailless South American rodent originally raised for food
<b>Hysterical(adj.)</b>	- affected by wildly uncontrolled emotion
<b>Creaking(v)</b>	- making a squeaking sound when being moved
<b>Indignant(adj.)</b>	- feeling or showing anger or annoyance at what is perceived as unfair treatment
<b>Holster(n)</b>	- a holder made of leather for carrying handgun
<b>Rafter(n)</b>	- a beam forming part of the internal framework of a roof
<b>Deserter(n)</b>	- a person who leaves the armed force without permission.

