

Paper 2

Q: Some literary texts, although set in a particular place or time, convey ideas that are universal.

In what ways is this true in two of the works you have studied?

Yes, it is true that writers, through their works, portray ideas that are universal and immortal. In *The Guide* by RK Narayan, and *Hedda Gabler*, by Henrik Ibsen, the authors use strong characters, varying points of view, conversations and dialogues, and many more techniques to convey universal ideas like mental health, unhappy marriages, class distinction, etc. Although both authors use varying techniques and writing styles, they are united by the common strand of universal ideas and messages, which they convey to a great degree of effectiveness.

The Guide uses braided narration with a third and first person point of view to depict ideas of deception, guidance, and class distinction while in *Hedda Gabler*, conversations and dialogues are used to expose the various points of view that bring out the ideas of mental health, patriarchy and class distinction. In *The Guide*, Narayan successfully uses first person, anecdotal narration to give the reader an insight into the mind of the protagonist, Raju, which helps us realise his internal conflict, and the irony of him guiding others, in spite of being in the need of guidance himself as he struggles to find his identity (which is a universal idea, prevalent timelessly), showing the various identities like 'Railway Raju' and "Prisoner Raju" taken up by him through his life, through anecdotal and episodic narration, giving the reader a more personal idea of what the protagonist was going through. On the other hand, in *Hedda Gabler*, Ibsen uses conversations and dialogues to give the audience an idea of the various individual perspectives of all the characters, which convey universal ideas through their thoughts. Hedda's conversations with her husband, Thea etc. give the audience a clear understanding of her mental health and the façade she puts on, of pretending to be tough and dominating in spite of being scared on the inside, which is something societal pressure compels individuals across times and spaces to do. *The Guide* also uses dialogues similar to *Hedda Gabler* to show the perspectives of the various characters which convey the authors' thoughts and ideas. For example, through Velan's conversation with Raju, Velan's perspective and the fact that he looks up to Raju becomes clear, which works in synergy with Narayan's first person narration, which tells us that Velan's image of Raju is not true and Raju is not what Velan thinks he is, demonstrating the universal idea of appearance vs reality. Both authors use dialogues to give the readers and audiences an insight into the characters' thoughts and perspectives, however, Narayan gives us a better insight because of how his dialogues in the third person narration compliment his first person episodic stories, which complement each other very well.

Both texts, though using various techniques, depict the idea of unhappy marriages using different techniques. In both, *The Guide* and *Hedda Gabler*, the idea of unhappy marriages is brought out using characterization and moreover, dialogues and conversations to show the individual perspectives of each character. For example, in *The Guide*, characters like Rosie and Marco, described by Narayan's anecdotal narration, give the reader an insight on their unhappy and toxic marriage, which later becomes integral to the protagonist Raju's life as it gave him one of his many identities. However, in *Hedda Gabler*, the idea of unhappy marriages is brought out through the protagonist, Hedda's perspective on her own marriage. Through her dialogues and conversations with other people, the reader understands her perspective on her own marriage very well. It becomes evident that she is unhappy and does not reciprocate the love her husband, Tesman has for her. Although both authors explore this same universal idea of unhappy marriages, which is immortal and is prevalent even today, they both show it through different perspectives. Narayan does this through the protagonist, Raju's perspective and he is not one of the two people involved in

the unhappy marriage, therefore making the reader realise how explicit and clear the faults in their marriage were, such that a third person could notice them. In Hedda Gabler however, the perspective on the unhappy marriage is brought out through Hedda, who is one of the two people involved in the marriage, making the issue more implicit and personal. The two authors, thus bring out the same idea, in contrasting, yet equally effective ways.

Both texts have strong, deep, and complex characters, particularly the protagonists, to make their desired messages hit the readers hard and to make sure the universal ideas conveyed resonate in their minds. In *The Guide*, the protagonist Raju is a complex amiable rogue. He has had several identities in the past, described by the author's braided narration. The complex layers to his character are explored ironically as he is a guide, who is in need of guidance. The appeal and complexity to this character is most emphasised when he undergoes a complete moral transformation towards the end of the play which conveys the idea of transformation and evolution, which is an immortal one. Through these techniques, the author makes Raju amiable and gets the readers hooked onto and engaged into his character, through which he brings out themes of guidance, appearance vs reality, and transformation, all of which are universal. Similarly, in Hedda Gabler, the protagonist Hedda is also complex and layered. Through her conversations, the readers get insights into her mental health, and her desire for power. The complexity of her character is brought out, when in the rising action of the play, the reader realises the powerful façade she puts on for society. The complexity to her character gives the reader an idea of the position of women in that particular society, and with the use of props and symbols, Ibsen also subtly, yet effectively shows her mental health, which is a prevalent issue today. Thus, through their powerful protagonists, both the authors successfully engage the reader and help them understand their ideas by making the characters relatable and engaging. Although both characters contrast in several ways, they're both effectively used to convey the authors' ideas and have the desired effect on the reader.

In conclusion, both authors effectively convey several ideas that are universal and immortal. The techniques used by both authors are mainly contrasting, as they are different forms of texts even though they have some common elements. However, both texts are effective in engaging the reader and causing the message to resonate in their minds.