

Neighbours by Tim Winton
Summary, Questions and Answers
Class 12 English

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Summary

The story is about a young married couple who move into a new neighbourhood. Most of the people living there are immigrants from different European countries.

At first, the couple feels uncomfortable with their neighbours. Their behaviour, sounds, and customs seem strange to the young couple. However, as they spend more time around them, they gradually become familiar with their neighbours and develop friendly relationships.

The couple starts a vegetable garden, and their neighbours help them by giving advice about gardening. They also build a chicken coop, but it falls down. Their Polish neighbour helps them repair it.

As time passes, the relationship between the couple and their neighbours becomes warmer. They share food and gifts and become more connected with one another.

Later, the wife unexpectedly becomes pregnant. Although the pregnancy was not planned, the couple prepares for the arrival of their baby. The neighbours show interest and concern by giving gifts, suggesting names, and knitting a baby suit.

Finally, the wife gives birth to a baby boy at home with the help of a

midwife. The husband sees the neighbours cheering and celebrating in their yards. He becomes emotional because he realizes that his neighbours genuinely care about him and his family.

Overall, the story shows how people can overcome cultural differences and develop strong relationships through kindness, cooperation, and shared experiences.

Important Themes

Human relationships

The story shows that people can form strong relationships despite differences in language, culture, and background. The young couple gradually becomes close to their neighbours through everyday interactions and mutual support.

Multiculturalism

The neighbourhood is made up of people from different European backgrounds. Their different cultures and customs initially create distance, but these differences become less important as the characters develop understanding and friendship.

Community and cooperation

The neighbours regularly help the young couple. They give gardening advice, help repair the chicken coop, give gifts, and celebrate the birth of the baby. Their actions show the importance of cooperation within a community.

Breaking stereotypes

The young couple initially forms negative opinions about their neighbours because their behaviour and customs are unfamiliar. As they get to know

them better, they realize that their first impressions were not accurate.

Kindness and support

The neighbours show kindness and support throughout the story. Their concern during the wife's pregnancy and their celebration of the baby's birth show how caring relationships can develop within a community.

Character Information

The young man

The young man is one of the main characters in the story. He is a university student working on his thesis and spends much of his time at home. At first, he feels uncomfortable with his neighbours and does not understand their behaviour. Later, he recognizes their kindness and support. His emotional reaction at the end shows how much his attitude towards them has changed.

The young woman

The young woman is the wife of the young man. She works while her husband stays at home working on his thesis. She unexpectedly becomes pregnant and later gives birth to a baby boy. Her pregnancy brings her closer to the neighbours because they show concern for her and support her.

The neighbours

The neighbours come from different European backgrounds and have different languages and customs. At first, the young couple considers them strange and difficult to understand. Gradually, the neighbours show themselves to be helpful, caring, and supportive. They help with the garden, repair the chicken coop, give gifts, and celebrate the birth of the baby.

The Polish neighbour

The Polish neighbour helps the young couple when their chicken coop collapses. His assistance represents the practical support that the neighbours provide to the couple.

Important Events

The young couple moves into the neighbourhood

The couple moves into a neighbourhood where most of the residents are immigrants from different European countries.

The couple feels uncomfortable with the neighbours

The strange sounds, behaviour, and customs of the neighbours make the couple feel that they are different from the people around them.

The couple starts a vegetable garden

They plant a kitchen garden and gradually receive advice and help from their neighbours.

The chicken coop collapses

The couple builds a chicken coop, but it falls down. Their Polish neighbour helps them repair it.

The relationship between the couple and their neighbours improves

Through sharing food, gifts, advice, and everyday experiences, the couple becomes closer to their neighbours.

The wife becomes pregnant

The pregnancy is unexpected, but the couple begins preparing for their baby.

The neighbours support the pregnant woman

The neighbours show their happiness and concern by giving gifts, suggesting baby names, and knitting a baby suit.

The baby is born

The woman gives birth to a baby boy at home with the help of a midwife.

The neighbours celebrate the birth

The neighbours cheer and celebrate from their yards. The young man becomes emotional when he realizes how much they care about his family.

Difficult Vocabulary

Immigrants: People who move from one country to another to live there.

Neighborhood: An area where people live close to one another.

Customs: Traditional ways of behaving or doing things in a particular culture.

Mulching: Covering the soil around plants with materials to protect the soil and plants.

Hilling: Making a small mound of soil around a plant.

Thesis: A long piece of academic writing based on research, usually prepared by a university student.

Midwife: A trained person who helps a woman during pregnancy, labour,

and childbirth.

Multiculturalism: The presence and interaction of different cultures within the same society.

Universality: The quality of being applicable or relevant to people generally.

Anonymity: The condition of having an unknown or undisclosed identity.

Key Message and Main Idea

The main idea of the story is that genuine human relationships can overcome differences in language, culture, and background.

The young couple initially judges their neighbours because their customs and behaviour are unfamiliar. However, their experiences gradually change their understanding. They discover that their neighbours are caring, helpful, and supportive people.

The story teaches us not to judge people simply because they are different from us. Understanding, cooperation, kindness, and shared experiences can bring people closer and create a strong sense of community.

Textbook Exercise and Answers

Understanding the Text

a. Describe how the young couple's house looked like.

The young couple's house was small, but it had high ceilings and paned windows, which gave it the appearance of an elegant cottage.

b. How did the young couple recognize their neighbours in the beginning of their arrival?

The young couple recognized their neighbours at the beginning because their behaviour seemed strange and noisy to them. The neighbours often shouted, argued, and made loud noises. They also appeared to have poor hygiene and complained about the couple's dog. These things created a negative impression of the neighbourhood when the couple first arrived.

c. How did the neighbours assist the young couple in the kitchen garden?

The neighbours helped the young couple with their kitchen garden through advice and practical assistance. They gave suggestions about planting and gardening methods, including spacing, hilling, and mulching. They also provided the couple with some vegetable seeds and plants.

d. Why were the people in the neighbourhood shocked at the role of the young man and his wife in their family?

The people in the neighbourhood were surprised by the roles of the young man and his wife because they did not follow the traditional roles expected in a family. The young man stayed at home to write his thesis while his wife worked, which was unusual for the people in the neighbourhood at that time.

e. How did the neighbours respond when they learned about the woman's pregnancy?

The neighbours reacted warmly when they learned about the woman's pregnancy. They smiled at the young couple, gave them gifts, and suggested possible names for the baby. They even knitted a baby suit for the expected child.

f. Why did the young man begin to cry at the end of the story?

The young man began to cry at the end of the story because he realized that his neighbours truly cared about him and his family. Seeing their happiness and applause when his baby was born touched him deeply. Earlier, he had been annoyed by their involvement in his life, but he eventually understood that they were expressing their kindness, love, and concern. His feelings towards them had changed, and he cried out of gratitude for their support.

g. Why did the author not characterize the persons in the story with proper names?

The author may have chosen not to give the characters proper names to create a sense of universality and anonymity. This allows readers to relate to them as ordinary people and emphasizes the ideas of community and human connection rather than focusing on their individual identities.

Reference to the Context

a. The story depicts that linguistic and cultural barriers do not create any obstacles in human relationships. Explain with some examples from this story where the neighbours have transcended such barriers.

In the story, differences in language and culture do not prevent people from developing human relationships. There are several examples of the neighbours overcoming these linguistic and cultural differences.

The neighbours give the young couple gardening advice and even provide them with garlic cloves to plant. Their shared interest in gardening helps them connect despite their differences. They also knit a baby suit and support the woman during her pregnancy, showing care and friendship despite their different cultures. When the baby is born, the

neighbours cheer and celebrate together, showing that people from different cultural backgrounds can share happiness and important human experiences.

b. The last sentence of the story says The twentieth century novel had not prepared him for this. In your view, what differences did the young man find between twentieth century novels and human relations?

The last sentence of the story suggests that the young man realized that what he had learned from books had not fully prepared him for real life. He understood that the depth and complexity of human relationships could not be completely understood simply through reading books. This was especially true of the unexpected joy and connection he experienced with his neighbours when his child was born.

At first, he had a particular view of immigrants based partly on what he had read in twentieth century novels. However, his real life experiences with his neighbours changed his perspective. He was surprised by their warmth and kindness and realized that real human relationships could be very different from what he had expected from books.

c. A Nepali proverb says Neighbors are the companions for the wedding procession as well as for the funeral procession. Does this proverb apply in the story? Justify.

The Nepali proverb reflects the strong sense of social harmony and community relationships in Nepali society.

In our culture, when someone has a wedding, neighbours not only take part in the celebration but also actively help with the preparations. It is difficult to carry out such ceremonies without the support of neighbours, except when events are held at places such as party palaces or hotels.

Similarly, when a family faces an unexpected or sorrowful situation, the community is ready to share their grief and provide support.

This proverb also applies to the story. When the young couple began gardening, their neighbours provided useful suggestions, materials, and seeds for different vegetables. They shared their knowledge about how to cultivate a successful garden. This shows how the neighbours came forward to help the couple when they needed assistance.

Furthermore, the neighbours also joined the couple in their moments of happiness and celebration, especially when their baby was born. This reflects the meaning of the Nepali proverb and shows that neighbours can be companions not only during sorrow but also during moments of happiness and celebration.

d. The author has dealt with an issue of multiculturalism in the story. Why do you think multiculturalism has become a major issue in the present world?

Multiculturalism refers to the coexistence or mixture of different cultures. Having people from different cultures living together can be beneficial, but it can also create certain challenges.

People may speak different languages, which can make communication and understanding difficult. Such language differences can sometimes lead to misunderstandings.

Cultural differences may also cause disagreements when people have different beliefs and traditions. These social tensions need to be addressed through communication and cultural understanding.

Some groups may prefer to interact only with people from their own culture. This can create divisions in society and may cause some individuals or groups to feel isolated.

Workplaces with people from different cultural backgrounds can also experience challenges such as conflicts, misunderstandings, and unfair judgments. Employers therefore need to encourage inclusion and equal treatment.

Although cultural diversity can enrich our lives and broaden our thinking, it can also create challenges. These challenges can be addressed through education, respectful discussion between different groups, and rules that treat everyone equally and fairly. Proper management of cultural diversity can help create a better and more harmonious community.

Reference Beyond the Text

a. Write an essay on Celebration of Childbirth in my Community.

In my culture, the birth of a new baby is celebrated through an event called Nwaran. This ceremony takes place nine days after the birth. Family members and people from the community gather together to share their happiness.

The arrival of a new baby brings great joy to the whole family. Relatives and guests visit to congratulate the parents and see the newborn. Everyone is excited to welcome the new member of the family.

During Nwaran, the baby receives its name. It is a community celebration as well as a family occasion. Neighbours may also attend and wish the parents and baby well. People spend time together, enjoy good food, and celebrate the occasion.

Unlike some other cultures, we do not traditionally have baby showers before the birth. Our culture has its own traditions for celebrating the birth of a child. However, outside customs have also influenced some practices in our society.

b. Do the people in your community respond with similar reactions upon the pregnancy and childbirth as depicted in the story? Give a couple of examples.

Yes, they do. People in our community are generally helpful and supportive of one another. They share both happy and difficult moments together, which helps strengthen relationships between neighbours.

Our culture places great importance on pregnancy and motherhood. When a baby is expected, family members and people around the mother provide care, advice, and support. Pregnant women are treated with respect, and family members and friends may pray for the health and safety of both the mother and baby. The expecting mother may also receive gifts and useful advice from her loved ones.

The birth of a baby is an important event for the whole community. People become excited when a new child arrives. Relatives and guests visit to congratulate the parents and celebrate the baby's birth. The new mother and baby are welcomed and cared for by the extended family.

Simple Question Explanations

Why does the story focus so much on the neighbours?

The neighbours are important because they help the young couple understand the value of community. At first, the couple feels uncomfortable around them, but their experiences gradually reveal the neighbours' kindness and support.

Why is the birth of the baby important in the story?

The birth of the baby is important because it brings the young couple and their neighbours even closer. The neighbours celebrate the birth together, and the young man finally understands how much they care about his family.

Why does the young man's attitude towards the neighbours change?

His attitude changes because he experiences their kindness and support directly. He realizes that his earlier negative impression of them was unfair and that they genuinely care about him and his family.

Important Lines and Passages

The twentieth century novel had not prepared him for this.

This line is important because it shows the young man's realization at the end of the story. His real experience with his neighbours is different from what he had expected from books. He discovers a kind of human connection that he had not anticipated.

The neighbours cheering after the baby is born

This moment is important because it represents the strong bond that has developed between the young couple and their neighbours. Their celebration shows that the couple is no longer isolated from the community.

Exam Focused Questions

1. How does the relationship between the young couple and their neighbours change throughout the story?

The relationship begins with discomfort and misunderstanding. The young couple initially finds their neighbours strange and unpleasant. Gradually, through gardening, sharing, helping, and supporting one

another, they develop a friendly relationship. By the end, the neighbours become an important part of the couple's life.

2. How does the story present the importance of community?

The story presents community as a source of support, friendship, and happiness. The neighbours help the young couple with gardening, repair their chicken coop, support the woman during pregnancy, and celebrate the birth of the baby. These actions show the importance of caring for people around us.

3. How does multiculturalism influence the story?

Multiculturalism is central to the story because the neighbourhood consists of people from different cultural backgrounds. Their different languages and customs initially create distance, but the characters gradually overcome these differences through shared experiences and mutual support.

4. What change occurs in the young man's attitude towards his neighbours?

At first, the young man feels uncomfortable with his neighbours and does not fully understand their behaviour. Later, he discovers their kindness and realizes that they genuinely care about his family. His emotional reaction at the end shows how completely his attitude has changed.

5. What is the main message of Neighbours?

The story suggests that differences in culture, language, and background should not prevent people from forming meaningful relationships. Kindness, understanding, cooperation, and shared experiences can bring people together and create a strong community.

Commonly Confusing Points

1. Why are the neighbours initially seen negatively?

The young couple does not understand the neighbours' different customs and behaviour. Because these things are unfamiliar to them, they form negative impressions at first. These impressions change as they get to know the neighbours better.

2. Is the story only about immigrants?

No. Although the story includes immigrant neighbours from different European backgrounds, its larger focus is on human relationships, multiculturalism, community, and overcoming differences.

3. Why is the young man's crying important?

His crying shows his emotional realization that the neighbours genuinely care about him and his family. It also shows how much his feelings towards them have changed.

4. Why is the ending important?

The ending brings the main idea of the story together. The neighbours celebrate the birth of the baby, showing that the young couple has become part of the community. The young man's emotional response confirms the change in his attitude towards them.

Quick Revision

Story: Neighbours by Tim Winton is about a young married couple who move into a neighbourhood where most of the residents are immigrants from different European countries.

Beginning: The couple initially feels uncomfortable because the neighbours have unfamiliar customs and behaviour.

Development: The couple starts a vegetable garden and receives help and advice from the neighbours. Their Polish neighbour also helps repair their chicken coop.

Relationship: Through sharing food, gifts, advice, and everyday experiences, the couple becomes closer to their neighbours.

Pregnancy: The wife becomes unexpectedly pregnant. The neighbours show concern by giving gifts, suggesting baby names, and knitting a baby suit.

Climax: The woman gives birth to a baby boy at home with the help of a midwife.

Ending: The neighbours cheer and celebrate the baby's birth. The young man becomes emotional because he realizes that his neighbours genuinely care about his family.

Main idea: The story shows that people can overcome cultural and linguistic differences through kindness, understanding, cooperation, and shared human experiences.

Important themes: Human relationships, multiculturalism, community, kindness, support, and overcoming stereotypes.

Important lesson: We should not judge people simply because their culture, language, or behaviour is different from ours. Understanding and positive interaction can help create strong relationships and a supportive community.

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