

**ENGLISH LITERATURE**  
**CLASS IX**  
**PROSE: OLD MAN AT THE BRIDGE**  
**EXPLANATION AND ASSIGNMENT**

1. Appropriateness (Apt) of the Title.

-> The title is apt as the story deals with an old man sitting near the bridge for a long time and then the bridge also symbolizes the final bridge between life and death for the old man.

2. Themes of the story.

-> (a) Sense of duty.

(b) Suffering of common people in war.

(c) Love for one's family.

(d) Love for one's native place.

3. Protagonist/Central Character

-> the Protagonist of the story is a 76 year old man - a man without politics - a man from San Carlos.

4. The story is narrated in first person narrative technique where the speaker tells the story from his angle.

5. Setting of the story

-> The place is a war zone at a pontoon bridge across the Ebro river during the Spanish Civil war in 1938- the time is Easter Sunday.

6. Symbolism in the story.

-> (a) The old man- The old man symbolizes war's destructive impact on all innocent lives of people and animals who are displaced by the horrific realities of war that they do not understand.

(b) Cat- Cats are often associated of having 9 lives and therefore a cat is seen as the survivor. A cat can fend or take care of itself. The old man need not worry about his cat.

(c) Pigeons/doves- They are birds that can fly to a safer place and escape the war. Dove is associated with peace and hope. The old man need not worry about the pigeons/doves as they can fly to a safer place.

(d) Goats- Symbolizes helplessness - the one that cannot escape. The old man is worried about his goats because goats cannot take care of themselves. The old man himself is a goat figure here because he is one of those innocent victims who are sacrificed to the war like a goat that is sacrificial animal.

(e) Easter Sunday- The day of celebration of the resurrection, a time of rebirth and renewal whereas for the old man and his animals it is an ironic contrast because it is a time of inevitable death.

(f) 4 repetitions of the old man's word: "I was only taking care of animals"- Is a symbolic expression of all those voiceless innocent men, women and children who are victims of wars.

(g) Bridge- That final bridge between life and death.

## **ASSIGNMENT**

After you have listened to the explanation, read your text thoroughly, read the notes that is given to you and attempt the following questions.

- Q1. What does the bridge symbolize?
- Q2. What does the old man symbolize?
- Q3. What is the theme of the story?
- Q4. What is the significance of Easter Sunday?
- Q5. Who were the family of the old man?