On the Face of it by Susan Hill

1. The play is about the friendship between an old man and a young boy who is withdrawn and defiant.
2. The child is very disturbed because of his scarred face and feels that people do not want to associate with him.
3. He drifts into a garden which looks very inviting but panics when he meets the old man.
4. The latter tries to make him feel at ease and advises him to accept life as it comes.
5. Mr Lamb’s philosophy is to celebrate life in all its forms.
6. To him, difference is a part of life - a flower and a weed are the same, both signs of life, of growth.
7. Having an artificial leg (tin leg), he has had to cope with the cruelty of others but has taken it in his stride.
8. He has a positive and optimistic attitude to life.
9. He tells Derry to live life to the full and to avoid bitterness which can be more corrosive than the acid that destroyed his face.
10. He advises Derry to accept life without any pre-conceived notions.
11. The power of choosing what one wants lies in one’s hands.
12. Derry is extremely sensitive about his scarred face and has a fixed opinion that he is repulsive and ugly.
13. He locks himself in a world of his own and avoids contact with others.
14. But in spite of his sceptical attitude, he is moved by the old man’s spirit. This is evident from the fact that he defies his mother and returns to the garden, though sadly a little too late.
15. Derry’s face is scarred while Mr Lamb’s leg is an artificial one, a ‘tin leg’ as he calls it.
16. Both have to cope with the cruelty of others. While Derry withdraws into his shell, Mr Lamb takes it into his stride.
17. One gets glimpses of the loneliness the old man faces in spite of his outward bravado in the scene when he talks to the bees.
18. From Derry’s point of view also it is sad that when he finally makes an effort to come out of his shell, he is confronted by the loss (death) of the only person who had befriended him (Mr Lamb).

Short Answer Questions
1. Who is Derry? What self-opinion does he hold?
2. How does Lamb try to remove the baseless fears of Derry?

3. What did Derry’s mother think of Mr. Lamb?

OR

Why did Derry’s mother stop him from going to Mr. Lamb?

4. ‘I am not afraid, people are afraid of me’, why does Derry say so?

5. Why does Derry go back to Mr. Lamb in the end?

6. Comment on the moral of the play.

7. Mr. Lamb says to Derry; ‘It’s all relative, beauty and the beast’, what essentially does he mean by that?

Sample Answers (short answers)

1. also called Derry – a small boy of 14 – one side of his face totally burnt – acid ate his face-up – a victim of inferiority complex.

2. Mr. Lamb influences Derry – his optimistic philosophy – advises him not to pay attention to
other’s comments – try to be internally pure and strong – eliminate the negativity of life.

3. Derry’s mother does not hold good opinion about Mr. Lamb – has heard many things about the old man – too protective of her own son, therefore stops Derry to visit Mr. Lamb.

4. Derry lives in a cocoon due to his complexes – his burnt face – isolates himself – doesn’t mix up – considers his burnt face ‘an unpleasant sight’ -

5. Actually Mr. Lamb teaches Derry, the most important lesson of life – makes him understand the joy of living – advises him not to care about his burnt face – therefore he returns back.

6. The moral – very loud and clear – physically disabled – should not be isolated, – we should help them expand their social interactions – help them fight loneliness, depression and disappointment.

7. Mr. Lamb tells Derry that it all depends upon people’s individual perceptions. a thing is a beauty for one while that beauty may be a beast for others.
Long Answer Questions.

1. Compare and contrast the characters of Derry and Mr. Lamb

2. What lesson of life does Mr. Lamb teach Derry when he comes to his garden? How has it affected him?

Sample Answer

Q.3. Both Mr. Lamb and Derry represent two serious aspects of life, though their origin can be called the same. Explain the statement.

A.3. Both Mr. Lamb and Derry are physically handicapped but view their lives differently. Derry has a scarred face. He develops an inferiority complex that people hate him or pity him for his ugly face. He intentionally distances himself from people and likes to live in solitude.

On the other hand Mr. Lamb is an optimist. He has a tin leg. Though children make fun of him but he takes it in his stride. He does not let his disability
affect his life. He believes in enjoying life in its glory. He enjoys sitting in the sun, accepts life without any bitter feeling. He keeps his house open for everyone.