

# KULTUSMINISTERIUM DES LANDES SACHSEN-ANHALT



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Thema 1

Water: Not A Drop To Drink

Thema 2

The Blind Assassin

**Thema 1: Textaufgabe****Water: Not A Drop To Drink**

**Nearly a billion people in 50 countries live with severe shortages. What can the world do?**

by Pranay Gupte

An earnest Swede, armed with his freshly minted graduate degree in development studies and a nice consultancy from a U.N. agency, traveled to a drought-afflicted African country to help villagers install water pumps. In a "model" village, he was fêted at a colorful ceremony during which water pumps – manufactured in Sweden –  
5 were turned over to the local headman. Then the developmentalist went home. Several months later he returned to the village to check up on his mission's success. Sure enough, the gleaming pumps had been installed exactly where he'd recommended. But the villagers were still drawing their water from a distant well, and women were still fetching it in leaky tin buckets. "What's the problem?" the expert  
10 asked. The headman shrugged and said, "Many pumps, no water."

That may be an apocryphal story, but it captures the essence of the donor community's failed efforts to provide the most basic of provisions to poor societies. Last week – when the U.N.-sponsored World Water Day was observed – there were  
15 startling reminders that despite more than \$3 trillion in development expenditure over the past five decades, nearly a billion people in 50 countries live with severe water shortages every day of their lives. Germany's Klaus Toepfer, head of the U.N. Environment Program (UNEP), told *Newsweek* last week that women and girls in developing countries spend more than 10 million person-years in the aggregate each  
20 year fetching water from distant, and frequently polluted, sources.

The World Bank calculates that 3.3 billion people in the 127 countries of the developing world suffer from water-related diseases [...]. And the deaths from water-related diseases? Almost 6 million each year. Here are more statistics – compiled by the United Nations University in Tokyo – about the gathering global water crisis:

- Every 8 seconds, a child dies from a water-related disease.
- More than 50 percent of people in developing countries suffer from one or  
25 more water-related diseases.
- 80 percent of diseases in the developing world are caused by contaminated water.

- 50 percent of people on earth lack adequate sanitation.
- 30 • 20 percent of freshwater fish species have been pushed to the edge of extinction as a result of contaminated water.

Unfortunately, such statistics don't seem to be persuasive enough for world leaders to act expeditiously, or meaningfully, on water-management issues. "Everyone lives downstream," was last week's catchy slogan marking World Water  
35 Day, but few in the tightly knit world of development aid actually do much about the state of the stream itself in poor nations.

The glaring lack of attention to water issues seems especially puzzling in light of the fact that the estimated cost to provide safe water in rural areas is \$50 per person per year and about \$100 per person in cities, according to U.N. estimates. In a report  
40 released last week, the United Nations estimates the overall price to bring low-cost safe water and sanitation to all those who need it at around \$25 billion annually over the next decade. Current world investment in water-related development projects is \$8 billion per year, or a shortfall of \$17 billion – an amount roughly equal to annual pet food purchases in Europe and the United States, notes Toepfer.

45 The hapless Swedish developmentalist who neglected to ascertain whether there was indeed water available in his African village may not have been entirely naive. Developing countries do indeed need low-cost technologies such as hand pumps and gravity-fed rainwater collection systems. But these devices can hardly work effectively unless aid agencies coordinate their efforts better (the Swede had  
50 neglected to consult local hydrologists). Sophisticated indoor plumbing may not be practical for existing hovels in poverty-stricken neighborhoods; resources could be more effectively channeled into building new homes for growing populations. That is why, as development mandarins fashion their strategies for the new millennium, water-management issues must be considered in tandem with housing, health and  
55 social development.

As much of the developing world becomes urbanized, its water crisis will deepen. Large cities already bursting at the seams – Mexico City, Lagos, Dhaka and Cairo – rely largely on ground water, but aquifers<sup>1</sup> take decades to recharge while the  
60 population growth in such cities is exponential. By next year, 20 cities in the developing world will have populations exceeding 10 million. And as urban demands

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<sup>1</sup> aquifer

a layer of rock or soil that can absorb and hold water

for water increase, supply for the developing world's already water-starved agricultural areas will be further affected, thereby creating a potentially monumental food-security crisis.

65 All of this suggests that in an increasingly globalized world, a more coherent strategy for economic and social development is urgently needed. Hydrologists say that the world's water supply is finite – less than a million cubic kilometers that, according to the United Nations, is not sufficient for today's global population, which is growing at the unsustainable rate of 100 million people annually. UNEP's Toepfer wasn't engaging in hyperbole last week when he told *Newsweek*: "My fear is that  
70 we're headed for a period of water wars between nations. Can we afford that in a world of globalization and tribalization where conflicts over natural resources and the numbers of environmental refugees are already growing?" Chilling words, scary scenario, terrifying prospect.

from: *Newsweek*, March 29, 1999

## **Water: Not A Drop To Drink**

### **Assignments**

#### **A Language/Form**

1. Analyze the function of the headlines.
2. Explain the meaning of the slogan: "Everyone lives downstream" (line 34).
3. Examine the author's use of quotations and statistics.

#### **B Comprehension** (Use your own words as far as possible.)

1. State the intention of the Swede mentioned in the article and explain why his project misfired.
2. Outline the improvements that need to be made for more successful water management.

#### **C Text Production** (Choose one of the topics.)

1. "Chilling words, scary scenario, terrifying prospect." (lines 72 – 73)  
Is it too late to save the world?  
Give your opinion.
2. Could you imagine going to a foreign country as a development aid worker? What kind of help could you offer?  
Present your thoughts.
3. Discuss the problems connected with megacities.

**Thema 2: Textaufgabe****The Blind Assassin**

by Margaret Atwood

Ten days after the war ended, my sister Laura drove a car off a bridge. The bridge was being repaired: she went right through the Danger sign. The car fell a hundred feet into the ravine, smashing through the treetops feathery with new leaves, then burst into flames and rolled down into the shallow creek at the bottom. Chunks of the  
5 bridge fell on top of it. Nothing much was left of her but charred smithereens.

I was informed of the accident by a policeman: the car was mine, and they'd traced the licence. His tone was respectful: no doubt he recognized Richard's name. He said the tires may have caught on a streetcar track or the brakes may have failed, but he also felt bound to inform me that two witnesses – a retired lawyer and a bank  
10 teller, dependable people – had claimed to have seen the whole thing. They'd said Laura had turned the car sharply and deliberately, and had plunged off the bridge with no more fuss than stepping off a curb. They'd noticed her hands on the wheel because of the white gloves she'd been wearing.

It wasn't the brakes, I thought. She had her reasons. Not that they were ever the  
15 same as anybody else's reasons. She was completely ruthless in that way.

"I suppose you want someone to identify her," I said. "I'll come down as soon as I can." I could hear the calmness of my own voice, as if from a distance. In reality I could barely get the words out; my mouth was numb, my entire face was rigid with pain. I felt as if I'd been to the dentist. I was furious with Laura for what she'd done,  
20 but also with the policeman for implying that she'd done it. A hot wind was blowing around my head, the strands of my hair lifting and swirling in it, like ink spilled in water.

"I'm afraid there will be an inquest, Mrs. Griffen," he said.

"Naturally," I said. "But it was an accident. My sister was never a good driver."

I could picture the smooth oval of Laura's face, her neatly pinned chignon, the  
25 dress she would have been wearing: a shirtwaist with a small rounded collar, in a sober colour – navy blue or steel grey or hospital-corridor green. Penitential colours – less like something she'd chosen to put on than like something she'd been locked up

in. Her solemn half-smile; the amazed lift of her eyebrows, as if she were admiring  
30 the view.

The white gloves: a Pontius Pilate gesture. She was washing her hands of me. Of  
all of us.

What had she been thinking of as the car sailed off the bridge, then hung  
suspended in the afternoon sunlight, glinting like a dragonfly for that one instant of  
35 held breath before the plummet? Of Alex, of Richard, of bad faith, of our father and  
his wreckage; of God, perhaps, and her fatal, triangular bargain. Or of the stack of  
cheap school exercise books that she must have hidden that very morning, in the  
bureau drawer where I kept my stockings, knowing I would be the one to find them.

When the policeman had gone I went upstairs to change. To visit the morgue I  
40 would need gloves, and a hat with a veil. Something to cover the eyes. There might  
be reporters. I would have to call a taxi. Also I ought to warn Richard, at his office: he  
would wish to have a statement of grief prepared. I went into my dressing room: I  
would need black, and a handkerchief.

I opened the drawer, I saw the notebooks. I undid the crisscross of kitchen string  
45 that tied them together. I noticed that my teeth were chattering, and that I was cold all  
over. I must be in shock, I decided.

What I remembered then was Reenie, from when we were little. It was Reenie  
who'd done the bandaging, of scrapes and cuts and minor injuries: Mother might be  
resting, or doing good deeds elsewhere, but Reenie was always there. She'd scoop  
50 us up and sit us on the white enamel kitchen table, alongside the pie dough she was  
rolling out or the chicken she was cutting up or the fish she was gutting, and give us  
a lump of brown sugar to get us to close our mouths. *Tell me where it hurts*, she'd  
say. *Stop howling. Just calm down and show me where.*

But some people can't tell where it hurts. They can't calm down. They can't ever  
55 stop howling.

from: Virago Press,  
London 2001,  
pp. 3 – 5

## The Blind Assassin

### Assignments

#### A Language/Form

1. Define the narrative perspective used here and explain its effect on the reader.
2. Give examples of two different stylistic devices from this text and explain their function.
3. Explain the **use** of the underlined verb forms: "When the policeman had gone I went upstairs to change. To visit the morgue I would need gloves, and a hat with a veil. Something to cover the eyes. There might be reporters." (lines 39 – 41)

#### B Comprehension (Use your own words as far as possible.)

1. Formulate the factual information about Laura's accident.
2. What do we get to know about Mrs. Griffen's life?
3. What image does she convey of her sister Laura?

#### C Text Production (Choose one of the topics.)

1. "... some people can't tell where it hurts." (line 54)  
Does sharing problems with other people help?  
Give your opinion.
2. Based on the information given in the text, invent the interview between Mrs. Griffen and the police officer investigating Laura's death.
3. Nowadays the media provide people with a daily diet of sensationalism and the suffering of private individuals.  
Discuss.