

A House in the Country

Context

Sri Lanka - Background Reading

The story is set in Sri Lanka. Following are 9 extracts from texts about the country. The extracts are taken from the following sources:

- *Introduction to University prospectus*
- *A holiday brochure*
- *A report on Human Rights*
- *A specialist guide book*
- *A report from a sporting body*
- *A technical report*
- *An introduction to a general travel guide*
- *A newspaper article*
- *A report on a new business venture*

Decide which extract comes from which source.

1

Introduction Sri Lanka

Background: The Sinhalese arrived in Sri Lanka late in the 6th century B.C., probably from northern India. Buddhism was introduced beginning in about the mid-3rd century B.C. and a great civilization developed at such cities as Anuradhapura (kingdom from c. 200 B.C. to c. 1000 A.D.) and Polonnaruwa (c. 1070 to 1200). In the 14th century, a south Indian dynasty seized power in the north and established a Tamil kingdom. Occupied by the Portuguese in the 16th century and by the Dutch in the 17th century, the island was ceded to the British in 1796 and became a crown colony in 1802. As Ceylon it became independent in 1948; its name was changed in 1972. Tensions between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil separatists erupted in violence in the mid-1980s. Tens of thousands have died in an ethnic war that continues to fester.

Geography Sri Lanka

Location: Southern Asia, island in the Indian Ocean, south of India
 Geographic coordinates: 7 00 N, 81 00 E
 Map references: Asia
 Area: total: 65,610 sq km
 water: 870 sq km
 land: 64,740 sq km
 Area - comparative: slightly larger than West Virginia
 Land boundaries: 0 km
 Coastline: 1,340 km
 Maritime claims: contiguous zone: 24 NM
 territorial sea: 12 NM
 exclusive economic zone: 200 NM
 continental shelf: 200 NM or to the edge of the continental margin
 Climate: tropical monsoon; northeast monsoon (December to March); southwest monsoon (June to October)
 Terrain: mostly low, flat to rolling plain; mountains in south-central interior



2

Marco Polo considered Sri Lanka the finest island of its size in all the world, and you'll likely agree after exploring the country's fabled delights. What takes your fancy? Beaches? The coastal stretch south of Colombo offers palm-lined sandy expanses as far as the eye can see. Culture? Try the Kandyan dances, a procession of elephants or the masked devil dances. Ruins? You'll find enough ancient and inspiring architecture in the cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa to satisfy that inner archaeologist, we promise. And then there's the natural wealth for which Sri Lanka is rightly renowned. Head for the hill country to escape the heat of the plains, where the coast fades away to reveal gorgeous rolling hills often carpeted with tea plantations. The entire island is teeming with bird life and exotics like elephants and leopards are not uncommon. To top it all off, the people are friendly, the food is delicious and costs are low.

3

398 km. from Colombo, Jaffna has an austere kind of beauty that is vastly different from the rest of the island. Its virgin beaches and coraline coast, off shore islets, and the peninsula's very distinctive way of life can be an enigmatic experience for the individual traveller. Not to be missed are the sand dunes of Manalkadu - a miniscule desert whose sheer wildness will impress you. Casuarina Beach is situated at Karainagar and there are good beaches also at Santhakulam and Thondaimannar.

4



The abundance of Sri Lanka's birdlife makes it an ornithologist's paradise. Of the 431 recorded species 251 are resident and no less than 21 are endemic to the island. Most of the endemic birds are restricted to the wet zone, e.g. the Ceylon Grackle or to the hill - country, e.g. the Ceylon Whistling Thrush, the Yellow-eared Bulbul etc. Some, such as the striking Redfaced Malkoha and the shy brown-capped Babbler can be found through out the island although confined to small areas of forests, National Parks and Forest Reserves. Among the best areas for these birds are the

Sinharaja Forest Reserve and the Peak Wilderness Sanctuary. Around mid August the first flocks of the species begin to arrive with large numbers of sandpipers, stilts, plovers, terns, etc. coming from Siberia, Scandinavia and Western Europe. In the forested areas migratory tree warblers, thrushes, cuckoos etc. can be seen. The large 'tanks' (reservoirs) in the dry zone attract numerous types of ducks, while the large water birds - the storks, herons and egrets - can be easily spotted in the National Parks. The Kumana Bird Sanctuary in the Eastern Province and Bundala, Kalametiya and Wirawila in the south, abound in these aquatic birds. Bundala is especially famous for its flocks of visiting flamingoes.

5

Whereas the old calculations were based on simple series win/draw/loss points, the new Championship relies on a complex weighting system, and each Test will count rather than just the series result.

"The original ICC Test Championship was launched in May 2001 and we stated at the time that we would monitor its application," Malcolm Speed, president of the ICC told reporters at Lord's for the relaunch. "That process has now been completed and the revised points system provides a fair reflection of the achievements of all ten full members."

6

A suitable land for the exchange was obtained through the good offices of the Divisional Secretary. A special feature of this project is that the entire establishment of the new exchange was undertaken solely by the staff belonging to the Uva Province. Ministers Ranjith Madduma Bandara and Suranimala Rajapakse graced the occasion.

7

Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer arrived in Sri Lanka last afternoon on his way back from the Middle East and was received at the Katunayake International Airport by Minister Assisting Foreign Affairs, Lal Dharmapriya Gamage. Downer, met Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe at Temple Trees last evening.

8

Well known is the case of Sarathammal of Pungudutivu who was raped and murdered on 28th December 1999 by four personnel from the local naval detachment. The Navy denied responsibility and the judicial process appears to be stymied. Some of the indiscipline in Mannar comes from corrupt practices to do with smuggling to the LTTE controlled area. On 28th February, the Navy at 10.00 PM detained Kandiah Uthayakumar (42), father of seven, of Chavatkadu, Mannar, strangled him to death in the presence of his daughter, and delivered his body to Mannar Hospital at 3.00 AM.

9

As the name indicates, the department consists of an unusual combination of two disciplines covering engineering mathematics and the philosophy of engineering, of which the latter is broadly defined to include most of the issues, related to the impact of science and technology on human society and the biosphere.

This department primarily conducts various courses for the more traditional departments such as Mechanical, Electrical, Computer, and Civil, in their undergraduate diploma and degree programs. In addition it has consistently contributed to all major research undertaken in the faculty by bringing an interdisciplinary approach to these efforts

Now answer these questions

1. What did the 'Divisional Secretary' help with?
2. What are the two disciplines which are considered to be 'unusual'?
3. Who was strangled?
4. Where is the desert?
5. What was relaunched in May 2001?
6. Who were the three European occupying powers of Sri Lanka before independence?
7. Where will you find impressive architecture?
8. In terms of size, which US state is Sri Lanka compared with?
9. Who did Lal Dharmapriya Gamage meet?

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English from the Indian Sub-Continent

1. In general, the English spoken in the Indian sub-continent (including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka) is so distinct that it is recognised as a dialect of English in its own right. However, it is a myth to think that English is the national language. Hindi is the national language of India, while Urdu is the national language for Pakistan, Sinhala in Sri Lanka and Bengali (Bangla) in Bangladesh. There are more than 150 indigenous languages spoken on the sub-continent, and in some places English is a safer language to use because of ethnic and religious divides: everyone despises 'the English' equally, while attitudes towards the government in New Delhi can vary!



2. The education system is a relic of British colonialism and largely (especially at tertiary or Higher Education levels) given in English. So if you are college educated you will be literate in English. English is therefore something of a symbol of being well-educated and having good prospects, making it a highly desirable commodity.

Advertising in English - inventing new verbs!

3. It can be difficult to understand what people from South Asia are saying when they speak English quickly because the way they speak is with 'syllabic rhythm' (like the Japanese, Spanish and Italian languages) rather than 'stress-timed' (as in German, Portuguese and English).

4. The grammar of Indian English can vary considerably from British English.

a) **For example, there are variations in noun number and determiners. Complete the following by writing the British English equivalent of the Indian.** (Note: 'charity' in British English is an uncountable noun)

Indian English: "He performed many charities"

British English: _____

Indian: "She loves to pull your legs"

British: _____

b) Prepositions can change.

Indian: "Pay attention on your teacher"

British: _____

Indian: "I want you to discuss about the poem"

British: _____

Indian: "Please convey him my greetings"

British: _____

c) Question tags can also be different:

Indian: "You're going, isn't it?"

British: _____

Indian: "She's here, no?"

British: _____

d) In some cases, even the word order is different.

Indian: "Who you have come for?"

British _____

Indian: "They're late always"

British: _____

Indian: "My all friends are waiting"

British: _____

e) Yes and No agree to the form of the question, not just its content:

Indian: "You didn't come on the bus? "Yes, I didn't."

British: _____

Indian: "You haven't eaten yet?" "Yes, I haven't".

British: _____

- f) One of the most obvious differences is in the use of verbs that in British English are 'stative' verbs (verbs that don't take the continuous or 'ing' forms).

Indian: "I am understanding what you are saying"

British: _____

Indian: "She is knowing the answer to all the questions"

British: _____

5. There are also some vocabulary differences, for example 'lakhe' means one hundred thousand, and clearly does not have its roots in English. However, some English derived words have taken a direction of their own. Can you match these English derived words in box A with the words in British English in Box B?

A

cousin-brother Eve-teasing

godown Himalayan blunder

opticals hotel bearer

freeship cent percent eartops

B

restaurant serious mistake

male cousin harassment of women

earrings scholarship waiter

100 percent eyeglasses warehouse

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English in Sri Lanka - a Poem

Your chance to show your rhyming skills! This anonymous poem from Sri Lanka has the last word of every second line missing. The word missing rhymes with the last word of the line before it. Can you choose the most suitable rhyme from the box? Work in pairs.

English Teachers

Everyday when papers looki'n, I am very sad,
They are telling in Sri Lanka, English very _____,
Is this all a humbug mister, sometimes very true,
So I want to tell and give you, exactly what to _____.

Olden times when we were children, in the village school,
Pappa tole muss learn the English, otherwise you _____,
Those days teachers taking trouble, taught the English well,
If I do not do the homework, they are playing the _____.

Nowadays have Shermadana, in the sun muss dig,
Other times too much torking, classes very _____,
Principal is absent always, teachers putting part,
Boys are taking O/L, but only pass in _____.

You must tell our Minister, soon to put a rule,
Give the English Education, nicely in the _____,
Then the children will improve, learning very well you see,
Getting jobs and easy money, happy just like _____.

Now I am an English teacher, I can now enjoy,
So I am doing better job, than any other _____,
I am engaged to Burgher lady, torking English well,
How to twist and do the Cha Cha, she is going to _____.

Pappa putting sarong only, simply village clerk,
now I am putting trousers and walking in the _____,
So I'm telling without English, useless you will be,
Like a buffalo in the village, married to a _____.

school
big
bad
park
tell
do
hell
tree
boy
art
me
fool

Notes on reading this poem:

1. the strange spelling of some words is because it is supposed to reflect the way that English is spoken in Sri Lanka by some people. Try saying the words out loud and hearing what familiar English words they sound like. For example 'Pappa tole..'. We know that 'tole' must be a verb, but which verb? Out loud it sounds like 'told' with the 'd' sound left off. This is precisely the word it is, so 'Pappa tole muss learn the English...' means 'Papa told (me I) must learn English...'
2. O/L reference to state school exams ('O' or 'Ordinary' level, taken usually at the age of 16)
3. 'Burgher lady' a woman of higher social standing (from the Dutch word)
4. The word 'clerk' is pronounced the British English not the American English, so sounds like 'Clark' as in 'Clarke Kent'

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Civil War

Read this review about a Sri Lankan film, and then answer the questions which follow.

Film Review:

In the Name of Buddha (2003)

Reviewed by [Nev Pierce](#)

A raging and ragged polemic, "In the Name of Buddha" tackles very __1__ subject matter.

Since 1983, ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka has led - according to UN figures - to 60,000 deaths and hundreds of thousands of people running __2__ from the island.

Many of these end up in Britain, much to the Daily Mail's irritation. One such refugee is Siva (Shiju), who arrives at Heathrow Airport and is stuck explaining himself to an __3__ officer.

Flashing back to his point of origin, we're shown the relentless persecution and violence his family has suffered, as the freedom fighters/terrorists of the Tamil Tigers fight for independence against the Sri Lankan army.

Unsparring in its depiction of the __4__ of Sri Lankan life, Rajesh Touchriver's film has caused controversy, with accusations that it has an anti-Buddhist, pro-Tamil agenda.

However, it takes great pains to damn universally, with a particularly negative portrayal of a Tamil military leader, whose "ends justifies the means" attitude is appalling.

A more valid criticism is that, while Touchriver tries to inform, he does __5__ to entertain.

Siva is little more than a mouthpiece for the writer-director's political monologues, with the young student telling anyone who'll listen his "war is bad" message.

The dialogue is sometimes embarrassingly uneven (although this may be down to poor subtitle translation), and the production values low. (The Heathrow scenes were clearly __6__ unrehearsed, with members of the public peering at the camera and children waving at it.) The combat sequences, meanwhile, would be regarded as __7__ in a Hollywood production.

An exercise in celluloid pamphleteering, it lacks the lyricism or subtlety of the similarly themed "The Terrorist", but is partly redeemed by a __8__ quality.

Angry and amateurish, it is also wildly ambitious - the closing caption reads: "May this film bring peace to the island."

In Tamil with English subtitles.

1. Choose the best words to fill the gaps and complete the text above.

- | | | | |
|----|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. | A worth | B worthy | C worthwhile |
| 2. | A out | B off | C away |
| 3. | A immigration | B emigration | C immigrant |
| 4. | A brutality | B brute | C brutish |
| 5. | A small | B few | C little |
| 6. | A posed | B shot | C set |
| 7. | A laughing | B laughable | C laughter |
| 8. | A heartening | B hearty | C heartfelt |

2. 1. What positive things did the reviewer have to say about the film?
 2. What negative things did the reviewer have to say about the film?
 3. What, according to the reviewer, drove the film maker to produce the film?
 4. In which ways could it be said that the film was amateur?
 5. As a result of this review, would you go and see this film?

3. "Many of these end up in Britain, much to the Daily Mail's irritation." Why would the Daily Mail (a British 'tabloid' newspaper) be irritated by the arrival of refugees from the war from Sri Lanka in Britain?

Discussion:

Whose is responsible for the refugees of civil conflict? Do neighbouring countries have a duty to look after them?



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Biography



Complete the following biography of writer Romesh Gunsekera by choosing the best word (A, B or C) from the choice given, and then answer the questions.

Romesh Gunsekera was born in Sri Lanka in 1954, moving to London in 1972. He grew up __1__ both English and Sinhala. Gunsekera __2__ the Liverpool College Poetry Prize in 1972, the Rathborne Prize in Philosophy in 1976, and the first prize in the Peterloo Open Poetry Competition in 1988. Gunsekera's first book, 'Monkfish Moon', was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year while his first novel, 'Reef', was shortlisted for the 1994 Booker Prize.

'Monkfish Moon' is a collection of stories that tell about the political __3__ in Sri Lanka. The first story, "A House in the Country," follows Ray, who returns to Sri Lanka from England, and Siri, Ray's houseboy. Ray returns to Sri Lanka at a very confusing period in Sri Lanka's history. In 'Batik,' a husband and wife find themselves struggling to keep their marriage intact. Because Nalini is Sinhalese and her husband, Tiru, is Tamil, they have __4__ to London where Nalini finds her partner becoming increasingly distant as the violence at home continues to __5__. In the title story, Peter, a wealthy Sri Lankan businessman, begins to show exactly how far off course his life has moved during an uncomfortable dinner party with family and friends. Other stories include "Captives," "Ullswater," "Storm Petrel," "Ranvali," "Carapace," and "Straw Hurts."

'Reef', Gunsekera's first novel, describes the __6__ and adolescence of Triton, a restaurateur from Sri Lanka. Triton, a young boy, finds himself a servant to Mr. Salgado, a wealthy marine biologist. In the service of Mr. Salgado, Triton __7__, becomes an expert chef, and witnesses the destruction of his country.

Although Gunsekera's writings may seem to require that the reader should have some __8__ knowledge of the history, culture and politics of Sri Lanka, Gunsekera believes that the reader can appreciate his stories with or without such knowledge. Gunsekera had this to say about his __9__ audience: "The kind of writing that I'm interested in doesn't really demarcate the world in terms of this kind of reader or that kind of reader. The __10__ division you have, I think, is between people who read and people who don't read, for lots of reasons. At the same time I do know that people who are readers also have a background and also have a physical __11__, and they have a set of experiences and they bring all of those to a book. People who, for example, know nothing about the __12__, the setting of a story or a book, say, Sri Lanka, get something very different out of the book; perhaps a discovery of something unfamiliar. If they already know the place they get something else. They also get a sense of discovery, but it's a sense of discovery of the familiar, perhaps"

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. | A talking | B speaking | C articulating |
| 2. | A won | B gained | C obtained |
| 3. | A upset | B consternation | C upheaval |
| 4. | A revisited | B removed | C relocated |
| 5. | A scale | B escape | C escalate |
| 6. | A childishness | B childhood | C children |
| 7. | A grows up | B gets up | C sets up |
| 8. | A background | B scenic | C scenery |
| 9. | A intentional | B intent | C intended |
| 10. | A longest | B biggest | C smallest |
| 11. | A realism | B reality | C realty |
| 12. | A location | B locality | C local |

Comprehension check:

- How many prizes did Romesh win – 3, 4 or 5?
- What is the name of the collection of short stories?
- Which character in one of his stories appears to be lost?
- What is Triton's occupation as an adult?
- What do readers gain if a) they are familiar with the background to Sri Lanka and b) they are not familiar with the background to Sri Lanka.

