

The Man-Eater of Malgudi Study Guide

The Man-Eater of Malgudi by R. K. Narayan

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

The Man-Eater of Malgudi Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapter 1.....	4
Chapter 2.....	5
Chapter 3.....	6
Chapter 4.....	8
Chapter 5.....	10
Chapter 6.....	11
Chapter 7.....	13
Chapter 8.....	15
Chapter 9.....	17
Chapter 10.....	19
Chapter 11.....	21
Chapter 12.....	22
Characters.....	23
Objects/Places.....	25
Social Concerns And Themes.....	27
Techniques.....	28
Themes.....	29
Style.....	31
Quotes.....	33
Topics for Discussion.....	35
Copyright Information.....	36

Plot Summary

Nataraj is the owner of a small press in Malgudi. He leads a normal life...until a bull-headed taxidermist named Vasu enters his shop. Vasu is at first a normal customer. He employs Nataraj to print some business cards. However, as the weeks pass, Vasu becomes more and more familiar with Nataraj's press, and those who frequent the press, a poet and a journalist, learn to avoid the bullying taxidermist.

Vasu talks Nataraj into lending him the apartment above the press, which Vasu immediately turns into a taxidermy operation, complete with dead animals, skins and solvents. The taxidermist goes on a hunting spree, poaching animals in the forests of Mempi, a village outside of Malgudi. After complaints about the taxidermist, Nataraj asks Vasu to leave the premises, an order that is irreverently ignored by the egotistical taxidermist, who appears to be above the law.

The poet completes a long poem, and the journalist and Nataraj plan a celebration. The planning goes smoothly until Nataraj learns that Vasu intends to kill the temple elephant during the celebration procession. Nataraj attempts to stop Vasu, sneaking into his apartment the night of the procession. He finds the taxidermist at the window...dead. An investigation follows, but no murderer is found. Nataraj's assistant discovers that Vasu was killed by his own hand, when he slapped a mosquito on his forehead.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Nataraj, the owner of a small printing press, spends his days conversing with the individuals who lounge in the front room of his store, a poet and Sen, a journalist. The poet is translating Krishna's life into monosyllabic verse. Sen talks incessantly about the mistakes of the president, Nehru. Nataraj's only employee is an old and loyal typesetter named Sastri. One morning, like all mornings, Nataraj bathes and washes his clothes in the river. On his return trip from the river, Nataraj encounters several individuals with whom he is acquainted, including a cousin, who dislikes him, and a septuagenarian.

Nataraj is disliked by his extended family because of an incident that occurred after the passing of his grandmother. His extended family, which amounts to fifteen people, had at one time lived under the same roof. After his grandmother's death, the family had a falling out during a festival feast, and the contents of her house were divided between the children. Nataraj's father received the house, and his siblings resented him for it. Now, Nataraj, his son Babu and his wife are the only occupants of the house.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to normal life in Malgudi. Nataraj is a regular man with a regular job, who spends his days conversing with his clients and friends. The only conflict in his life is the general sort of squabbling that occurs in families. By setting up the book in this manner, Narayan gives the reader a basis for comparison. This is how life is supposed to be for Nataraj. Once it is determined how life is supposed to be, the contrast between normal and bizarre becomes much more palpable because we, as readers, have a point of reference.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

There is a problem with the printing press, and Nataraj, who is comfortable with the role of boss, takes on the role of handyman. He, however, feels comfortable acting as Sastri's handyman so long as he is behind the blue curtain that separates the front of his store from the press area. Nobody, not even the poet or the journalist, dares peek behind the blue curtain because it is off limits.

On this particular day, the poet peeks his head through the curtain and whispers that a man has come calling on Nataraj. Before Nataraj can tell him to tell the man to wait, the man is standing behind the blue curtain. Feeling somewhat uncomfortable with the intrusion, Nataraj escorts the man to his office in the front of the store.

The man asks for five hundred business cards labeled "H. Vasu, M.A., Taxidermist." Vasu is a powerful and aggressive man, and Nataraj is immediately intrigued. Vasu tells Nataraj about his background. He earned a master's degree in history, economics and literature at Presidency College. Afterwards, he joined a civil disobedience movement and was incarcerated for a short period. Then Vasu became apprentice to a strongman, who taught him how to snap chains and punch through walls. Vasu outgrew his master and, after his master called him an "ungrateful dog," struck his master down, leaving him "squirring on the floor."

Nataraj asks Vasu to return the next day in order to discuss business, but Vasu does not return for fifteen days. Vasu is irritated that his cards are not ready, but Nataraj, who is perfectly comfortable in his position as press operator, reminds Vasu that he missed their meeting and that he could not make the cards without Vasu's further assistance. Vasu chooses some business cards and reiterates that he needs five hundred letterheads.

Chapter 2 Analysis

The beginning of this chapter seems insignificant. Nataraj is ashamed to work for his employee, but he is comfortable behind the blue curtain. However, this is the reader's first introduction to the theme of pride. Nataraj prefers his position as the boss, and he is ashamed of humility. He cares how others view him, which is why he is comfortable behind the blue curtain, because others cannot see him when he is less than boss-like.

The blue curtain is a recurrent symbol throughout this book. It can be seen as Nataraj's pride. When the curtain is in place, Nataraj is in control. When it is removed, he is humbled. Vasu, the taxidermist, is the epitome of pride. He is bossy, irreverent and self-centered. He even killed his own master. Because they share the same flaw, Nataraj is immediately drawn to Vasu, who like himself, seems to enjoy a position of power.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Nataraj invites a waste paper buyer into his attic in order to sell the old papers that are stored there. After examining the paper, the old Moslem paper buyer states, "most of the paper is too old and is completely brown." Nataraj and the paper buyer are in the midst of their business transaction when Vasu pulls up to the front of the store in his jeep.

The Moslem purchases the papers for twenty-five rupees. Vasu is interested in the attic and asks, in a demanding way, if he might stay there for a while until he finds a place of his own. Nataraj agrees, and Vasu begins moving in immediately, returning the following day with assistants, who sweep and clean the floors.

Sen, the journalist, and the poet avoid the press for a while after Vasu's move, but they return, only to be confronted by Vasu's pugilistic personality. Nataraj is at first frightened that the arguments between Sen and Vasu will result in violence, but later he realizes that this is unlikely. The poet avoids Vasu all together and shifts from the Queen Anne chair, Vasu's favorite, to a lesser one each time the taxidermist approaches.

One day, Vasu brings a friend, whom he introduces as a forestry officer, to the press. He explains that the forestry officer is interested in publishing a book of "Golden Thoughts," which is a hodgepodge of philosophic ideas collected by the officer. Nataraj, who does not want to take on the project, instructs the forestry officer to make final revisions on "Golden Thoughts" and return when he is finished. A week later, Vasu receives a license in the mail that permits him to shoot duck and deer. "The swine," Vasu responds, "they think I want to go sightseeing in the forests and permit me to shoot duck and deer - as if I cared!"

Chapter 3 Analysis

In order to understand fully *The Man-eater of Malgudi* it is important for the reader to become familiar with the political and religious state of India during the mid-twentieth century. In 1947, the British, who had occupied India for many years, leave the country. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League, immediately sets into action the division of the Muslim and Islamic religions. Jinnah divides Pakistan into east and west, and the followers of each religion migrate to their designated side. In response to the violence that emerges, Mahatma Gandhi vows to bring a peaceful end to violence. Gandhi is assassinated in 1948 by a Hindu fanatic and replaced by his right hand man, Nehru, who becomes India's first Prime Minister. Nehru is succeeded by Shastri.

When viewed in a certain light, *The Man-eater of Malgudi* becomes a history of twentieth-century India. Many key individuals who are involved in India's changes during the twentieth century are manifested as characters or political concepts in this book.



Sen and the poet represent politics and pacifism respectively. Sen is obsessed with the actions of Nehru, the Prime Minister (who is the Prime Minister of India in 1961, when this book is written). However, his obsession does not necessarily qualify him as a political individual; his readiness to argue does. He is the only individual who verbally confronts Vasu. Although he constantly second-guesses Nehru's actions, Sen is not opposed to Nehru's rule. He is, though, highly interested in the Prime Minister's actions. Sen is Nehru's biggest fan. He is passionately involved in Nehru's affairs because he believes that Nehru can rule *better*.

The poet, on the other hand, avoids confrontation at all cost. He is a pacifist, willing to surrender his chair to Vasu in order to quell the pugilistic taxidermist. He represents Gandhi. Vasu represents the British Empire, who is at odds with the Congress party, of which Nehru and Gandhi are prominent members. He, much like the British, does not care where he is supposed to be and what he is allowed to do. He simply does what he likes. The clear comparison here is between hunting in the forest without a permit and occupying a country without a reason.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Vasu insists that Nataraj join him on a ten-minute jeep ride. Nataraj says he does not have ten minutes because he is preparing wedding invitations for the adjournment lawyer, who is waiting in the front room of the press. Vasu says that the ride will take only five minutes, and Nataraj submits, realizing he will not win the argument. He tells the lawyer he will return shortly. They drive to the village of Mempi and visit a teashop. Vasu inquires about recent news and learns that a tiger has visited the village. After several more inquiries, Vasu instructs Nataraj to remain in the teashop and speeds off in his jeep.

Nataraj, who is stranded in the town, learns from the shop owner that a bus headed to Malgudi will arrive in Mempi at two o'clock. The owner is planning a tribute to the village shrine and would like Nataraj's assistance in printing pamphlets announcing a procession, which will include music and the temple elephant, Kumar. Nataraj agrees to this project and asks if he can start a tab with the owner, because he does not have any money. The owner agrees and gives him buns and tea. When the bus arrives, the teashop owner speaks to the conductor, who, after discussing cars with Nataraj, allows him to travel on credit, assuming he will pay when they reach Malgudi.

The Circle, who is a criminal investigator for the region, sits next to Nataraj on the bus. "This is a difficult circle," he says, "offenders often disappear into the jungles of Mempi, and sometimes one has to camp for days on end in the forests." After the Circle exits the bus, the bus driver picks up numerous unticketed riders and charges them for a ticket, then pockets the money. The bus arrives in Malgudi at 11:00 p.m. The following morning, Sastri says that the adjournment lawyer waited all day for Nataraj and that he became "very bitter" when Nataraj did not return.

The adjournment lawyer returns in the morning and asks for the original copy of the invitation, saying that he will take his business elsewhere. After a brief, heart-felt conversation with Nataraj, the lawyer decides to stay with Nataraj's press. Vasu returns in the evening and insists that Nataraj inspect his jeep. Nataraj is at first leery that Vasu will grab him and take him on another "five minute drive," but he approaches the vehicle anyway and sees the giant head of a tiger.

Nataraj is escorted to Vasu's apartment. The carcasses of squirrels and jungle birds fill the room. Nataraj realizes that the indiscernible stench that has been filling the press emanates from Vasu's apartment. A stuffed crow, a golden eagle and a cat, which Nataraj recognizes as his own, are on Vasu's workbench.

The crow, Vasu explains, is "to serve as a warning to other crows to let Vasu's skins alone." The cat was used as a pre-tiger taxidermy study. Vasu shot the eagle when it



was wheeling over the roof. Nataraj attempts to explain that these creatures are sacred. Vasu does not appear to hear him.

Chapter 4 Analysis

This chapter introduces the reader to the only setting outside of Malgudi, Mempi, and serves to lay the foundation for later incidents in the book. We learn about Vasu's other occupation, poaching. Vasu demonstrates his prideful irreverence by disrespecting the creatures of the forest. He does not care if they are sacred. He only cares if he can profit from them. Remember that Vasu represents the British Empire. Therefore, the profits he earns from poaching are similar to profits that the Empire made off its occupation and exploitation of India. The reader is introduced to Kumar, the elephant, who will come to represent sacred India.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Vasu's killing spree continues, and each day Nataraj watches as the taxidermist removes dead carcasses from his jeep and carries them to his upstairs apartment. Nataraj reflects on his youth, when he lived in a peaceful house where killing even the smallest creature was looked down upon. His granduncle used to give him money each day in order to purchase sugar to feed the ants that lived in the family house. Nataraj cannot think of a manner in which to evict Vasu, so he asks Sen for his advice. The journalist says that he should ask Vasu to leave. Kavi, the poet, and Nataraj's wife have the same advice.

Nataraj waits for the proper time to address Vasu about this issue, and he pins a note to Vasu's door, asking to see him. When Vasu arrives, Nataraj tells him that he must vacate the room because someone else is coming and wishes to stay in the attic. Vasu is angered and does not respect Nataraj's wishes. The relationship between Vasu and Nataraj worsens as they stop speaking to and making eye contact with one another.

A letter from the House Rent Controller arrives. It is a court summons instigated by Vasu, who has complained that Nataraj is an irresponsible landlord. Nataraj does not know what to do, and he spends the days before his court case in utter despair. However, one morning on the way back from his bath, Nataraj encounters the adjournment lawyer. The lawyer initially thinks Nataraj is looking for his money for the unpaid wedding invitations, but Nataraj insists that he needs the lawyer's help and agrees to meet the lawyer at his office later that day.

The lawyer's office is located above a cotton shop. Nataraj, who is allergic to cotton, sneezes relentlessly as he explains his situation to the lawyer. "He is not a tenant...but a friend," he states in reference to Vasu. The lawyer agrees to take the case, under the condition that Nataraj pay him small amounts when required. Nataraj asks that the lawyer's bill be taken out of the money still owed for the wedding invitations, but the lawyer insists the accounts be kept separate.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Tensions between Nataraj and Vasu rise. If Vasu is to be the British Empire, then Nataraj must represent the Congress Party, of which Gandhi (the poet) and Nehru (the journalist) were members. During the mid-twentieth century, tensions between the Congress Party and the British Empire rose to a point where members of the Congress, including Gandhi and Nehru, were jailed for disobedience.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Fifteen days later, another envelope arrives. It is a joint petition from Nataraj's neighbors asking that he move his tanning business to another location, because the smell is offensive and is attracting scavengers. Nataraj, who has nothing to do with Vasu's tanning business, agrees to move the operation elsewhere. The old septuagenarian arrives one morning and asks to speak with Nataraj. He says that his grandson's dog was shot and found dead on the streets that morning. Nataraj says nothing of Vasu's possible involvement.

Sastri, who passes the old man's house on the way to work, appears from behind the curtain and asks the septuagenarian about the commotion in the morning. The old man explains the situation, and Sastri immediately points to Vasu as a possible suspect in the murder. Because Nataraj held back Vasu's possible involvement, the old man becomes angry with him. Nataraj, who feels guilty, agrees to get a new dog. Vasu's efficient taxidermy continues without end, and Nataraj respects his work ethic.

The forest officer, who is no longer concerned with "Golden Thoughts," enters the store one morning and asks to see Vasu, implying that he suspects him of poaching. Nataraj refuses to get involved and sends the officer to Vasu's apartment. The officer knocks on the apartment door, and Vasu asks who it is. He tells the officer to wait by his jeep. As the officer descends the stairway from Vasu's apartment, he notices the stuffed hyena that sits at the bottom.

When Vasu comes to his jeep a half-hour later, the forest officer confronts him about recent poaching in the Mempu forest region. Vasu denies any involvement. The officer asks where the hyena was killed, and Vasu says it was killed in the street where they are standing. As Vasu is getting ready to drive away in his jeep, he challenges the officer, saying, "I've got some tiger-skins. Are they yours? Claim them if you can."

Two days later, Vasu calls to Nataraj from his jeep. Nataraj refuses to leave the shop, and then Vasu accuses him of sacking the forest officer on him. "So that's your move; you want to know what I'll do next?" Vasu says before driving away in his jeep. Nataraj is concerned about this veiled threat and begins suspecting that Vasu will abduct his son and ask for ransom money. Nataraj's wife panics at this thought, but his son, Babu, revels in the fact that the giant who killed Ramu's dog is hunting him.

One day, Babu comes to the press accompanied by Ramu, who says, "my grandfather asked me to see you." The visit is a request for the dog that Nataraj promised he'd deliver. Nataraj must turn him away. Each day the boy returns and says the same thing, and each day Nataraj must turn him away. One evening, while curled up in bed, Babu asks Nataraj to get him a puppy when he gets one for Ramu. Nataraj agrees.



Rangi is seen descending the stairs of Vasu's apartment in the morning. Nataraj does not know who she is, and Sastri explains that she is a woman of ill repute. Each morning, Rangi, by herself or with another woman, descends the stairs from Vasu's apartment. Nataraj believes that due to increased pressure from the forest officer, Vasu has switched his interest from poaching to women.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Vasu is becoming increasingly impudent, now daring authorities to challenge him. His pride and ego are on the rise. Conversely, Nataraj's ego is on the fall. Vasu's presence has done nothing but complicate his life, and everything the press owner does to strengthen his ego seems to backfire and reduce it.

Nataraj appears as a family man for the first time in this chapter. He is fearful of what Vasu will do to his son, Babu, and speaks with his wife about this problem. The reader is reminded that Nataraj is both father and husband, as well as press operator. Rangi is an important character because she can exploit the major weakness of Vasu, vanity. She will ultimately bring about his demise.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Muthu, the teashop owner from Mempi, visits Nataraj at his press. Nataraj attempts to pay his tea debt, but Muthu is insulted, stating that he has come on more important business. The business is in regards to Kumar, the temple elephant, who has become sick and is no longer walking or eating. Muthu says that he has heard of a government animal hospital and that he would like Nataraj to procure the assistance of a veterinarian. Nataraj has not heard of this hospital, but he promises to investigate.

The following day, Nataraj visits Sen, the journalist, at his house. Sen, who is startled by the visit, is anxious about playing the role of host rather than guest. Nataraj states the purpose of his visit, to determine the truth about the animal hospital. Sen recalls an article and presents it to Nataraj.

Nataraj visits the hospital, which is located in Neppalla's Grove, and speaks with the doctor. Dr. Joshi is the only resident of the hospital because he and the equipment are the only things funded by the founding grant. After hearing about the situation, Dr. Joshi says that he cannot visit the elephant because all the necessary equipment for examination is at the hospital. The elephant must be brought there.

The Mempi village elders gather to discuss moving the elephant. The town tailor, who is obstinate and constantly speaks against Nataraj, suggests that the doctor come to Mempi. Nataraj explains that the elephant must be taken to Malgudi, but the tailor refuses to accept this claim, saying, "The doctor must come here...how can a sick animal tramp fifty miles?"

Nataraj is relieved when the tailor is called away to remove a "trouble maker," and he convinces the council that the elephant must walk to Malgudi. When the issue of getting the elephant to sit up is raised, a young urchin suggests that they place a frog under the elephant. When the frog jumps, the elephant will jump as well. The council debates between this solution and one involving a crowbar until the mahout (animal trainer), who had been summoned four days prior, arrives and takes control of the situation.

The mahout caresses the elephant with a green switch, which he claims is irresistible to all animals, and asks for a cracked coconut and some bamboo. While waiting for these items, the mahout regales the council with the story of how he met his wife. When the items arrive, the mahout attempts to feed the bamboo to Kumar, who proceeds to throw the bamboo across the yard. "He is not hungry, that is all," says the mahout. The mahout mounts the elephant and flicks his switch. Kumar rises to his feet and begins walking.

As the mahout is riding Kumar out of town, the tailor returns and demands to know what is happening. He is quelled by Muthu, who invites him into his shop for a cup of tea.



Nataraj tells the mahout to meet him at the gates of Malgudi. Vasu's jeep pulls up to the front of the teashop, and Vasu invites Nataraj to ride with him back to Malgudi. Nataraj refuses, stating that a bus will be along shortly to take him home. "Your bus has broken down at the tenth mile up, axle gone," Vasu says. Realizing that this is an opportunity to reestablish contact with Vasu, Nataraj agrees to the ride.

Vasu asks about the poet, and Nataraj explains that he is finishing his book *Radha Kalyan*, which is about the marriage of Krishna to Radha. Vasu is mildly interested and asks about Sen, who Nataraj says is planning to open his own newssheet. Vasu asks if Nataraj will publish his book, which he has been composing for several weeks. The book is a monograph on wildlife, and Vasu wants it to be published before a certain conference on wildlife preservation. "My book is about better methods of preserving wild life. This cannot be achieved by refusing game licenses to honest folk, or by running behind animals with cries of sympathy."

Chapter 7 Analysis

The focus of the novel shifts to Kumar the temple elephant. This will remain the focus for the remainder of the novel. The reader is introduced to Dr. Joshi, a character who plays a minor role in this novel. We also meet the tailor and the mahout, two more minor characters. Narayan's subtle humor can be seen when the urchin suggests placing a frog beneath the elephant so that when the frog hops, the elephant will as well. In addition, there is a subtle irony in the fact that Vasu wants to present his book on wildlife preservation (i.e. taxidermy) to a conference on wildlife preservation (i.e. conservation).



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

The poet completes his book, and Sastri, Sen and Nataraj decide to hold a celebration in honor of this accomplishment. Nataraj neglects his job to prepare for the celebration. One day, K.J., the owner of a fruit juice company, storms into the press and demands to know the status of his fruit juice labels. Nataraj tells K.J. that the labels are not ready because they have been preparing for the poet's celebration, and he asks if the wealthy juice maker is willing to contribute to the cause. K.J. does not know what to say and abruptly exits the press.

An astrologer determines three possible dates for the celebration: one good, one not so good and one half-good. The good day is in five months, and Sastri and Nataraj reject the half-good day. They decide to hold the celebration on the not so good day, which, according to the astrologer, may result in a slight setback. Because he is busy preparing for the celebration, Nataraj sends many of his customers next door to the Heidelberg, which his neighbor, the Star press, owns. They print appeals for donations, which Sen composed, and distribute them throughout Malgudi.

Nataraj encounters Vasu at the press late one evening. Vasu shows him an appeal for donations and asks why he was not directly notified about the event. Nataraj dodges the accusation, saying that he was going to ask Vasu for one hundred rupees, an amount that Vasu finds preposterous considering the poor state of his business, which is a result of increased security around Mempi forests.

Vasu wants to know how much money Nataraj has raised for the celebration, and Nataraj claims that he has "fifty donors of the hundred rupee class." They argue over the value of money. Vasu states that it is "like the air, common to mankind." Nataraj retorts by saying, "then why not let me take your purse?" Vasu drops his pocketbook-sized purse on Nataraj's desk and drives away in his jeep.

Three days pass before Vasu returns for his purse. "How much money do you expect to collect?" Vasu asks as he snatches a list of donors from Nataraj's hands. Nataraj responds by revealing the contents of a green folder, which he uses to save the receipts and cash for the fundraiser. "Give it here...I will double it for you." Vasu takes the folder and drives away. Vasu returns to the press a week later. He does not tell Nataraj how much he has earned, but Nataraj assumes, from what he has heard, that the persistent salesperson has raised a lot of money.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The astrologer predicts a "minor setback" on the celebration day. This is foreshadowing of the difficulties that Nataraj encounters on the festival day. This is also mildly ironic, because the difficulties he encounters are far from "minor," and involve an elephant,

which is hardly a minor problem. However major Vasu's meddling may seem, it is irrelevant in the end, and the celebration goes off with only a minor setback, a delay due to the elephant's head ornament.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

The poet, Sastri and Nataraj work all evening in order to finish printing the poet's book before the festival the following day. Because the poet uses too many Ks and Rs in his verse, they run out of Ks and Rs while setting the print and must replace these letters with stars. Nataraj assures the poet that they will add a footnote explaining the stars later, or they will remedy the problem in some other way.

The poet proof-corrects the type while Nataraj takes a nap. Sastri awakens Nataraj and tells him that it is time for Nataraj to print off the forms. While doing this, Nataraj, who is the only one awake, hears a tapping noise coming from the steel mesh that separates the press from Vasu's stairway.

The tapping is Rangi, who is nervous about this encounter because she does not know what Vasu will do if he finds out. She says that Vasu is planning to shoot Kumar, who has been cured by Dr. Joshi, while he is walking in tomorrow's procession. Nataraj agrees to save the elephant. At nine a.m., the trio finishes printing the poet's book.

Nataraj hurriedly makes final preparations for the procession and runs through the list of required items in his head: chariot, flowers, taxi for Dr. Joshi, etc. Within fifteen minutes, he takes a bath, shaves and eats breakfast at his house. Afterwards, he decides to settle the matter with Vasu.

Vasu welcomes Nataraj into his apartment, and Nataraj, who cannot approach the issue directly, attempts to invite Vasu to the ceremony, thinking that he cannot kill the elephant if he is in the crowd. Vasu says he is not interested. Nataraj attempts to flatter Vasu by commenting on the beauty of a stuffed baby tiger. After several more attempts to get Vasu to attend the procession, Nataraj admits that he has come to plead for the life of Kumar. Vasu immediately suspects Rangi's infidelity.

Vasu explains that the elephant is worth ten thousand rupees and that it has a red streak in its eye, meaning it is likely to go mad. He wants to kill Kumar to "teach those forest men a lesson," and he says that he has already been promised the elephant after its death. They argue over the sentimental and scientific approaches to killing the elephant, with Vasu championing the scientific approach, which essentially boils down to money. Vasu hints that he will have a right to kill the animal if it goes mad.

Nataraj arrives at the temple at four o'clock. Sen and the poet are dressed for the ceremony. The mayor prepares for his speech, and the mahout is riding atop a finely decorated Kumar. Nataraj is saddened at the sight of the happy Kumar. Concerned that Vasu will somehow frighten Kumar into a stampede, and thereby gain an excuse to kill it, Nataraj asks Dr. Joshi if elephants are frightened by fireworks. Dr. Joshi says not to be concerned, so long as the sparks are kept at a safe distance.



The ceremony begins. Rangi dances, and musicians play. The Mayor gives a speech in which the poet presents his poem to the temple. In the midst of the ceremony, Nataraj's mind races, and he shouts out, "Oh, Vishnu! Save our elephant, and save all the innocent men and women who are going to pull the chariot. You must come to our rescue now." The ceremony stops, and everyone's attention turns toward Nataraj.

Sen, who is in charge of the temple proceedings, is initially agitated by Nataraj's interruption. Someone in the crowd voices a suspicion that Nataraj is possessed. The Chairman, also referred to as the Mayor, asks Nataraj if he is okay. "You must save the elephant," says Nataraj, who quickly leaves the temple and heads for home. On the way home, he hands Babu, who has been following him, to the schoolmaster and tells him not to allow the child in the procession.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Vasu is a scientifically minded individual whose irreverence toward sacred creatures stems not from ignorance, but from logic. He isn't uneducated, but he does not believe in spiritual things. He does not believe in the metaphysical. This is in keeping with his the theme of Vasu's over-inflated ego. He is not governed by anything, including a god, and therefore his ego has no limit.

Nataraj shouts out in the middle of the ceremony. This is yet another example of Narayan's subtle humor. The situation, although desperate, is mildly humorous. Kumar may represent India or Indian culture, which is ruled by the British Empire until the late 1940s. Although the culture is nearly destroyed by the Partition and British rule, it survives.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

When he returns to his house, Nataraj toys with the notion of telling his wife about the situation and about Rangi's warning, but he fears his wife's jealousy. Muthu, Dr. Joshi, Sen and the poet visit the house. Nataraj tells them about Vasu's plan, and they decide to confront the taxidermist as a group and curb his plan.

The group visits the District Superintendent of Police and Sen, who has taken the lead, explains the situation. The Superintendent will not assist them directly, but he orders an officer to meet them at the fountain near the press in five minutes in order to confront Vasu. They meet the rough-looking officer and proceed, with the officer waiting at the bottom of the steps, to Vasu's upstairs apartment. The group verbally confronts Vasu to no avail, and the inspector finally ascends the stairwell.

The inspector asks to see Vasu's gun licenses, which he promptly throws at the inspector. Then, Vasu orders the group to leave his house. The inspector threatens to arrest Vasu for disorderly behavior and removes his whistle so that he can summon other police that are in the area. Vasu wrenches the whistle from the inspector's mouth and sends it hurtling through the window. The inspector tries to slap Vasu, but Vasu dodges the blow. He then dislocates the inspector's wrist with a chop of his hand and pushes the inspector onto his cot.

Vasu claims that the inspector has hurt himself, and as a show of what would happen if he'd intended to hurt the man, Vasu smacks the cot with his palm, bending the frame. Vasu threatens the group with trespassing, and they exit, spouting warnings at Vasu lest he should harm the procession.

An excited Babu returns from the festival and describes the goings on. He has stolen plantains from a chief priest, and his friends intended to stick the elephant with a needle. Nataraj is startled by the second claim and says, "an elephant will always mark such a fellow down..." Nataraj's wife serves his dinner on a plantain leaf, an honor normally reserved for guests.

Much to Nataraj and his wife's chagrin, Rangi visits Nataraj at his house. Embarrassed by her presence, Nataraj says, "it must be something connected to the temple." Rangi, who is carrying a jute bag filled with food, informs Nataraj that Vasu has summoned her to his apartment. Despite his wishes, Rangi says she will go to see Vasu because she is afraid he will burn her house with her mother in it. Before leaving, she promises to dissuade Vasu using the 'ways' of a woman of her position.

Nataraj's wife, who is agitated by Rangi's visit, and Babu leave for the procession. Nataraj is left to guard the house. He ponders returning to the procession, but he fears that another outburst would land him in the Madras Mental Hospital. After an hour of



debating, Nataraj decides to return to the procession and study the situation from the outskirts of the crowd. However, as he is leaving the house, he learns that the procession is delayed because it is waiting on the elephant's golden head-ornaments, which are to arrive from a temple that is located ten miles away.

Nataraj returns to his house and falls asleep. When he awakens, he hears the distant piper's music playing "Bhairavi." He determines that the procession has arrived at the Chairman's building and that it will not reach the fountain for another hour. Nataraj again falls asleep. When he awakens, he can hear that the procession is nearing the fountain, where Vasu will have a good shot at the elephant. He exits his house and heads to Vasu's apartment. He opens the apartment door. The lights of the apartment are off, and only a few candles illuminate the room.

Vasu is sitting in front of the windowsill, with a timepiece and a gun nearby. He is sleeping. Nataraj crawls across the room and grabs the gun. He then stands and points it at Vasu's sleeping head. The procession passes beyond sight. Suddenly, the timepiece's alarm rings. Nataraj drops the gun and runs from the apartment.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Vasu is truly above the law at this point in the story. He injures a police officer without the slightest bit of repercussion. His ego has reached its climax, and he feels that nothing can stop him from his will. Vasu's display of his strength is both foreshadowing and the beginning of his self-destruction. He demonstrates his power, with which he'll later kill himself, and at the same time he destroys his bed, which he can no longer sleep in. The bed has a mosquito net. If he did not break it, Vasu would have been able to sleep there in the evening, avoiding all mosquitoes. He has put into motion his own demise. We learn about the 'minor set back.' The procession is delayed for the elephant's head-ornament. The episode in Vasu's apartment is the climax of *The Man-eater of Malgudi*.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

The following morning life returns to normal. Sastri and Nataraj begin printing the fruit juice labels for K.J. The old mail carrier, Thanappa, stands in the doorway of the press, visibly shaken. He delivers a receipt and states, "This receipt has to be signed." The receipt is addressed to Vasu, and Nataraj tells Thanappa to seek Vasu for the signature. Thanappa says that he did and found the taxidermist dead in his apartment.

Nataraj asks Thanappa not to tell anyone about Vasu's death and then ascends the stairs to Vasu's apartment in order to investigate the situation. Vasu is in the same position as the evening before. Nataraj notices Rangi's jute bag lying near the corpse, but he dares not investigate for fear of leaving fingerprints. As he is leaving the apartment, Nataraj notices the green collections folder in the pocket of Vasu's bush coat. Nataraj removes the green folder, being careful not to get any fingerprints on it. On his way out the door, Nataraj steals the stuffed tiger cub, which he locks in his roll-top desk.

Nataraj's press becomes the center for the police investigation, and the police question a number of suspects, including Narayan, the poet, the journalist, Rangi, Muthu, Dr. Joshi and the tailor. As soon as he hears the news of Vasu's murder, Sastri leaves town for his niece's wedding. The police determine that Vasu died of a blow to the head from a blunt object.

The police examine the contents of the jute bag and determine that Vasu did not eat the soup within. Still, they send the soup off so that it can be tested for poison. There is an air of suspicion in the town, and each person involved in the investigation questions the innocence of the others who are involved. The police can find no evidence, and the case is dropped. However, the townspeople have concluded that Nataraj murdered Vasu.

Chapter 11 Analysis

The Man-eater of Malgudi, which has up to this point been a dark comedy, suddenly becomes a murder mystery. Death is a common climax in fiction stories, however, and this sudden change of pace should not be considered out of the ordinary. Narayan writes this portion of the book well, ensuring that the reader will most likely not guess the murderer. He includes a number of red herrings, including Rangi's jute bag, and a number of motives. There is also concern that Nataraj will be falsely accused of murdering Vasu. The reader becomes concerned for Nataraj's innocence when Nataraj steals the folder and the tiger cub and again when he tries to give the cub to the poet.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Nataraj questions his own innocence, creating scenarios in which he may have accidentally killed Vasu. Everyone, including the poet and Sen, avoids Nataraj. One morning, when returning home from the river, Nataraj encounters the normally evasive adjournment lawyer. Nataraj demands the money for the lawyer's invitation cards. The lawyer agrees to pay for the cards and anxiously walks away.

Nataraj, who is almost devoid of business, spends his time reading *War and Peace*. The poet passes by the fountain in front of the store. Nataraj runs to catch up with him and then invites him to sit in the store. The poet agrees, fearfully answering Nataraj's questions regarding recent news. Wanting to give the poet a gift, Nataraj removes the stuffed tiger cub from his desk and attempts to hand it to the poet, who refuses and darts out the door. Nataraj weeps and hugs the tiger cub thinking, "the greatest act of destruction that the Man-eater had performed...he had destroyed my name, my friendships, and my world."

Sastri returns, giving Nataraj a mixture of offerings from different temples. Nataraj explains his situation: everyone in the town thinks he is a murderer. Sastri assures him that the town will one day know the truth. According to Rangji, who was with Vasu when he died, Vasu had fallen asleep while waiting for the procession. He awoke amidst a flurry of mosquitoes and, still groggy, slapped his own head in order to kill them. His blow was so strong that he killed himself.

"The universe," says Sastri "has survived all the *rakshasas* that were ever born. Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment." Sastri recalls the story of Bhasmasura the unconquerable, who scorches everything he touches until he one day touches his own head and bursts into flames.

Chapter 12 Analysis

The novel again becomes a dark comedy. Nataraj questions his own innocence, and he, quite ironically, takes on the role of the feared killer. He has become Vasu, at least in the eyes of the villagers. Sastri tells the true story of Vasu's death, which, almost verbatim, parallels the story of Bhasmasura the unconquerable. Charmed by a dancer, Bhasmasura kills himself with his own touch. Rangji clearly represents the dancer, and Vasu represents the *rakshasa* Bhasmasura.



Characters

Nataraj

The owner of a small printing press that is located in Malgudi, Nataraj is a father and a husband who is very much concerned with family affairs. At the start of the novel, Nataraj is a man obsessed with power. He enjoys his position as boss, so much so that he separates his press with a blue curtain, assuring that his customers will not see him lowered to a handyman position beneath Sastri. The blue curtain maintains his ego. Nataraj's blue curtain, as well as his ego, is slowly cast aside, and by the end of the book, Nataraj has lost the curtain and his ego. It is this change in character that qualifies the press owner as the only round character in *The Man-eater of Malgudi*.

Vasu

Vasu is a thick-necked strongman who runs a taxidermy business. He is well educated, traveled and experienced. Vasu moves into the apartment above Nataraj's press and immediately begins poaching animals from Mempi forest. Vasu is Narayan's version of a *rakshasa*, a demonic creature of folklore that brings about its own destruction.

Although Vasu's character appears to change, this is only an illusion of Vasu's ego. Vasu is a flat character who, at one point, is willing to humble himself before the forester because he believes humility will result in personal gain. Vasu's ego eventually inflates to a point where, like a *rakshasa*, he is above the law. However, he is soon killed by his own hand.

Sen

Sen is a journalist who frequents the front of Nataraj's press. He spends most of his time discussing the political movements of the Prime Minister, Nehru. Sen is a flat, secondary character.

The Poet

The poet spends most of his days at Nataraj's press. He writes a tribute to Krishna in monosyllabic verse. The poet's name is Kavi.

Sastri

Nataraj's old and loyal employee, Sastri is wise and levelheaded. He predicts the downfall of Vasu. He is a minor character, who says little; however, what he says is important and often moves the plot.



Muthu

The owner of a teashop in Mempi, Muthu is very concerned with Kumar's well being.

Dr. Joshi

Dr. Joshi is the sole resident of the animal hospital. He is the veterinarian who cures Kumar the elephant from its sickness and later fights for the elephant's life.

Rangi

Rangi is a temple dancer who is considered a woman of ill repute. She is with Vasu at the time of his death.

Babu

Babu is Nataraj's adventurous young son.

The tailor

The tailor is a short-tempered resident of Mempi who is opposed to the idea of moving Kumar to Malgudi.



Objects/Places

Malgudi

Malgudi is a small, imaginary town most likely located in southern India. This is the setting for most of the story.

Kabir Street

Kabir Street is the location of Nataraj's house.

Queen Anne Chair

A luxurious Queen Anne chair sits in the foyer of Nataraj's press. Vasu insists on sitting in this chair.

Nehru

Nehru is Prime Minister of India during the mid-twentieth century.

Heidelberg

The Heidelberg printing press is owned by Nataraj's neighbor, the Star press.

The Blue Curtain

The blue curtain divides the press's inner workings from the eyes of outsiders. The division caused by this curtain will slowly diminish, fading completely by the end of the book. The curtain can be viewed on several levels, as *The Man-eater of Malgudi* can be viewed on several levels. First, the curtain can represent Nataraj's ego. The curtain protects his inner self (the press) from the eyes of the world. It separates his inner sanctum from his outer world. Second, the curtain is a partition, which relates to the movement that divides India in 1947. This movement divides Pakistan into two parts, decreeing that the Muslims occupy the western portion, while the Hindus occupy the eastern. Eventually, the western portion of this division separates from India entirely, becoming modern-day Pakistan.

Kumar the Elephant

Kumar the elephant is Mempi's temple elephant. Near the middle of the story, Kumar becomes ill, and Nataraj is asked to assist the elephant. Directed by a mahout, Kumar



walks to Malgudi, where he receives treatment and is cured. Later in the novel, Vasu intends to kill Kumar in order to profit from the dead animal. Vasu dies before he completes this task. Kumar represents the sacred. Although Vasu is above the law, he is not above the sacred. It can be argued that his attempt to kill the sacred elephant is the act that leads to his demise.

Mempi

Mempi is a village located about fifty miles from Malgudi. Vasu does most of his hunting in the forests near Mempi. This village is also the home of Kumar the elephant and Muthu, the teashop owner.

Rakshasa

Rakshasa is a demon of folklore with superhuman strengths or abilities that recognizes no restraints of man or God. Vasu can also be considered such a demon.

Abu Lane

Abu Lane is a section of Malgudi known for its nefarious individuals. Sastri and Rangi live on Abu Lane.



Social Concerns And Themes

The Man-Eater of Malgudi has been interpreted in two different ways: as an allegory of good and evil, and as a study in identification and displacement. Readings of the work as an allegory focus on the relationship between the narrator Nataraj, the passive and well-meaning printer of the town of Malgudi, and Vasu, the eccentric taxidermist and out-of-towner who forces his way into Nataraj's attic and uses it to house himself and practice his seemingly grisly profession. In the allegorical view, Narayan represents Indian passivity while Vasu embodies the aggressive forces of modernism poised to threaten and destabilize Indian society. Certainly, Vasu unsettles the whole community and seems to overwhelm everyone with his brusque personality and antisocial tendencies.

This version of the plot of The ManEater of Malgudi derives credibility from the mythological underpinnings of the narrative: Vasu is cast in the novel as a rakshasha, one of the demons who challenges the gods and introduces chaos into existence. Specifically, Nataraj's assistant, Sastri, characterizes Vasu as Bhasmasura, a demon in Hindu myths who blights everything he touches, defies the heavens, and makes ordinary human beings suffer.

In the end, however, Bhasmasura overreaches himself and self-destructs — an example of pride that inevitably leads to a fall. In the novel itself, Vasu frightens everyone in Malgudi, disrupts the lives of its citizens, and attempts to obstruct its rituals. Ultimately, however, he kills himself while trying to squash a mosquito which lands on his forehead.

The other, radically different, reading of The Man-Eater of Malgudi treats it as a narrative of identification; a work where the narrator-protagonist Nataraj is aroused from his inconsequential mode of existence by the energetic Vasu. According to this version, Nataraj increasingly acts and thinks like Vasu until he reaches a point when he has to get rid of the man who embodies the more primitive and instinctive self that has been bottled up in him for such a long time. Nataraj, in other words, emerges as a much stronger figure at the end of the novel and is even able to displace Vasu by forcing him into a corner from which he has no way out except through self-destruction.

Techniques

Like most of Narayan's novels, *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* is written in clear, straightforward prose. Narayan's dominant tone is of gentle irony; Narayan seems to be incapable of heavy-handed satire or cynicism. He shows a marked ability to control the narrative pace, shifting adroitly from the slow-moving opening scenes to the fast-paced end where Nataraj and the townspeople maneuver to thwart Vasu. Since *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* is a first-person narrative, we are made to share Nataraj's growing tension and anxiety at Vasu's actions; and yet the novel never ceases to be funny. And although the book has mythical overtones and some very fantastic happenings — for instance, the manner of Vasu's death — it is almost always realistic in its depiction of Indian settings and culture.



Themes

Ego/Pride

The theme of ego and pride relates to the moral of *The Man-eater of Malgudi*, which is that those who are prideful will eventually bring about their own destruction. Vasu is incredibly egotistical, caring only for himself and ignoring the needs of others. He also believes that he can do whatever he wants. Stories and quotes referring to this theme appear throughout this book. Foreshadowing Vasu's downfall, Sastri states that "he shows all the definition of a *rakshasa*...Every *rakshasa* gets swollen with his ego. He thinks he is invincible, beyond every law. But sooner or later something will destroy him." Also, the story of Bhasmasura, the demon, is a clear foreshadowing of Vasu's demise. The demon, much like Vasu, destroys himself.

Although not readily apparent, Nataraj also suffers from an inflated ego. At the beginning of the novel, Nataraj is comfortable giving orders to Sastri and is ashamed to work for his employee. However, by the end of the novel Nataraj has gained a higher level of humility. Nataraj's final comment in the novel is, "Yes Sastri, I am at your service."

Mid-Twentieth Century India

The Man-eater of Malgudi can be viewed as a retelling of the modern history of India up until the early 1960s. A number of symbols, including the press as a whole, Kumar the elephant and Malgudi can represent certain aspects of the country of India. However, the most apparent symbol is that of the press as India.

The press is divided by a partition so that Vasu can freely go in and out of his apartment without disturbing the Nataraj or Sastri. This is probably a reference to the Partition of 1947, when the country is divided into east and west. Whether or not Narayan intends this symbolism is unclear, but undercurrents of the basic sentiments of India throughout the mid-twentieth century are definitely present in the story.

Narayan refers to Gandhi, Nehru and the Congress party, generally when referring to politicians in the story (i.e. the congressman and the Chairman). Sen also acts to infuse the story with political information regarding Prime Minister Nehru. Vasu, who invades Nataraj's space and refuses to leave, can be viewed as the British Empire.

Division

Division is an extremely important theme, considering the timeframe of this story. In 1947, India is partitioned into two sections, the east and the west. Muslims occupy the western portion of India, now the separate nation of Pakistan, while Hindus occupy the eastern region of India, known as Bangladesh.

The blue curtain represents a division between Nataraj the press owner and Nataraj the human being. This curtain is Nataraj's pride or ego. When it is in place, he feels comfortable knowing that outsiders cannot see him in a humbled state. The curtain divides Nataraj's inner self from his outer self. The mesh partition that is set up between the press and Vasu's stairwell is another division in *The Man-eater of Malgudi*. This represents conflict between Nataraj and Vasu and may be considered a reference to the partitioning of east and west India.



Style

Point of View

The story is told from the first person point of view of Nataraj, the press owner. This viewpoint is consistent throughout the story, with the exception of chapter ten, when a group of individuals, excluding Nataraj, visits Vasu. This part of the story is Nataraj's retelling of Sen's story. At this point, the story switches briefly to the third person point of view.

The Man-eater of Malgudi is Nataraj's retelling of events that occur in and around Malgudi. As both narrator and participant, Nataraj has the ability to influence the reader's point of view, and the reader must keep in mind that Nataraj is not an objective observer. He views things as a pacifistic, family-oriented, business-minded press operator would, complete with stereotypes and opinions. However, Nataraj is a fair-minded individual who is not prone to exaggeration, and the reader can assume that he is telling the story as it truly occurs. His stereotypes and opinions are generally accurate, although he does not initially act on them.

Setting

The story is set in Malgudi, a town in India, during the mid-twentieth century. The time is enormously significant because this is a time of great political and religious upheaval in India. Although the story rarely refers to historical events (Narayan mentions Gandhi only a handful of times), many of the characters are designed with the history of India in mind. Because the story is set in a time of political and religious change, the reader must look at the story both politically and religiously.

During the middle part of the twentieth century, India is under great political unrest. The Congress, whose most prominent members are Gandhi and Nehru, is constantly rebelling against British rule. In 1947, the British relinquish rule and leave India to its own devices. Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League, immediately ordains the separation of Pakistan into religious provinces. The migration that follows results in over half a million deaths. The Muslims, who occupy West Pakistan, eventually separate from India entirely.

The entire story takes place in a fifty-mile radius of the small town of Malgudi. The only other point of interest is Mempi, a village that Nataraj visits on two occasions. Because the geographical range of the story is so small, Narayan can implement frequent chance meetings of characters. Also, characters who wish to be inconspicuous are unable to do so.



Language and Meaning

The Man-eater of Malgudi is a book written by an Indian writer for an Indian audience. In that respect, individuals who are not familiar with Indian culture may miss some relevant themes and historical signifiers, as well as religious and cultural associations. However, one does not need to be familiar with any aspect of Indian culture to enjoy the story. It can stand on its own as an entertaining piece of fiction. However, Narayan is not writing fiction to entertain. He is writing literature to change. The book is charged with political and religious sentiments, and therefore, in order to understand the depth of this book, one must be familiar with Indian culture and history.

Without at least a basic understanding of India's history during the mid-twentieth century, the reader may overlook important connections between characters in the book and historical figures. Gandhi is the poet, and Sen is Nehru. Vasu can be seen as the British Empire.

In this book, numerous cultural terms and stories will be foreign to those who are unfamiliar with Indian culture. The most important such term is *rakshasa*, which is explained in detail through stories and definition. Narayan is apparently aware of his international audience and attempts, as best he can, to define some of India's religious and cultural customs.

Structure

The Man-eater of Malgudi is divided into twelve chapters. The chapters follow a modern-style plotline, in which the story climbs to a climax that is very near the end of the book. Shortly after the climax (roughly ten pages), the story is over. This is different from a classical plotline, in which the story reaches its climax at the middle and declines toward the end.

The story begins with normality and rises to the absurd, ending on the decline toward the normal, but not back at the normal. The chapters are short, approximately 10-15 pages, and are oftentimes split into two or more sections separated by a double space. Each chapter, therefore, generally covers two or three minor incidents that move the plot. Chapter 2, for instance, is split into two sections: the introduction of Vasu and his return fifteen days later.



Quotes

"I have made a habit of collecting Golden Thoughts, and I have arranged them alphabetically. I wish to bring them out in book form and distribute them to schoolchildren, free of cost. That is how I want to serve our country." Chapter 3, p. 28.

"There was a prowler last night, so they say. We saw pug-marks on the sand and sheep were bleating as if they had gone mad." Chapter 4, p. 33.

"What about the permit. You didn't have one?" Chapter 4, p. 47.

"After all it was *you* who agreed to take the man in. You have only yourself to blame." Chapter 5, p. 57.

"I swear that I gave him the attic for free, absolutely free, because he asked for it." Chapter 5, p. 62.

"Nataraj, you know my grandson had a pet - a dog that he had kept for two years. He was very much devoted to it, and used to play with it the moment he came back from school...Someone killed it last night." Chapter 6, p.67.

"He shows all the definition of a *rakshasa*...Every *rakshasa* gets swollen with his ego. He thinks he is invincible, beyond every law. But sooner or later something will destroy him." Chapter 6, p. 72.

"There was Bhasmasura, who acquired with a special boon that everything he touched should be scorched, while nothing could ever destroy him. He made humanity suffer. God Vishnu was incarnated as a dancer of great beauty, named Mahini, with whom the *asura* became infatuated. She promised to yield to him only if he imitated all the gestures and movements of her own dancing. At one point in the dance Mahini placed her palms on her head, and the demon followed this gesture in complete forgetfulness and was reduced to ashes that very second, the blighting touch becoming active on his own head." Chapter 6, p. 73.

"We have heard of a Government hospital for animals recently opened. We want your help to get our Kumar treated there." Chapter 7, p. 85.

"He is completing *Radha Kalyan*, that is the marriage of Krishna with Radha, and his book will be out soon." Chapter 7, p. 98.

"This is as good a date as the best one, but do you know why it's classed not so good? You see, there is a slight aspecting of Jupiter, and the poet's ruling star is ---, and four and a half hours; that will be until 5.25, and it may mean a slight setback in one's efforts, that's all." Chapter 8, p. 105.

"I must get back before he awakes. Listen: he is talking of shooting your Kumar tomorrow. Be careful." Chapter 9, p. 114.



"The elephant has been promised me when it's dead. I have it in writing here." Chapter 9, p. 127.

"It's not possible. The route [of the procession] has been fixed and the license taken for it. It's impossible to change anything." Chapter 10, p. 139.

"I went up, but, but...he is dead." Chapter 11, p. 158.

"Rangi was awakened by the man yelling, 'Damn these mosquitoes!' She saw him flourish his arms like a madman, fighting them off as they buzzed about his ears to suck his blood. Next minute she heard a sharp noise like a thunderclap. The man had evidently trapped a couple of mosquitoes which had settled on his forehead by bringing the flat of his palm with all his might on top of them. The woman switched on the light and saw two mosquitoes plastered on his brow. It was also the end of Vasu." Chapter 12, p. 173.

"Every demon carries with him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment." Chapter 12, p. 174.



Topics for Discussion

Discuss the significance of place and time in this book.

Is Vasu a *rakshasa*? If so, what would be his story? Include weaknesses and strengths.

Discuss the significance of the blue curtain.

What is the Man-eater of Malgudi? Explain your answer.

What does Kumar represent?

Could *The Man-eater of Malgudi* be considered Indian folklore? Discuss why or why not.

Discuss the role of pride or the ego in this novel.



Copyright Information

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Editor - Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Library of Congress
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Includes bibliographical references.

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for fiction, nonfiction, and biographies written for young adults.

Includes a short biography for the author of each analyzed work.

1. Young adults—Books and reading. 2. Young adult literature—History and criticism. 3.

Young adult literature—Bio-bibliography. 4. Biography—Bio-bibliography.

[1. Literature—History and criticism. 2. Literature—Bio-bibliography]

I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952

Z1037.A1G85 1994 028.1'62 94-18048 ISBN 0-933833-32-6

Copyright ©, 1994, by Walton Beacham. All rights to this book are reserved. No part of this work may be used or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or in any information or storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright owner, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, write the publisher, Beacham Publishing, Inc., 2100 "S" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008.

Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1994