

Explore the role that different teachers have in the novel 'The English Teacher'

In the novel 'The English Teacher', the protagonist, Krishna, worked as a teacher. However, throughout the novel he is the student of various other characters who teach him lessons of life. Krishna's first teacher is Brown, who is the teacher of routines and rules to Krishna. He would have created Krishna to be a machine who would help students in his college 'mug-up' and would fuss over 'honour' being spelt without a 'u'. In the novel, Brown is responsible for Krishna's very mechanical approach to education without feeling or passion.

Comment [K1]: Clear opening sentence, focused on the question. I particularly liked the implication that Krishna, the obvious teacher, is going to be dismissed as an example precisely because he is too obvious. This gives the impression that this candidate can see through the obvious level of the text to the more interesting points underneath

Comment [K2]: Clear topic sentence making this point clear

Susila, who is Krishna's wife, later comes into Krishna's life and she becomes a vital teacher for Krishna as she encourages him to break the rules that Brown has created. This can be seen in how Susila said 'They [bathroom tiles] are nice, why should they be used only in bathrooms?' in a debate with Krishna over whether it is correct to only ever use bathroom tiles in the bathroom as they do in 'civilised countries'. This teaches Krishna to do what he likes and not what society demands of him. After her death, Susila continues to be Krishna's teacher by teaching him to be spiritual, to have faith and to free his mind. She tells Krishna that 'the mind must be calm and unruffled' if he wants to communicate with her spirit, teaching him the benefits of being calm and accepting.

Comment [K3]: Clear summing up sentence at the end to make it clear what the point is

Comment [K4]: Nice use of pairs of commas to quickly include information without disrupting the flow of the essay.

Comment [K5]: Good smooth quotation

Comment [K6]: Nice development of this point

Another teacher in the novel is Krishna's daughter, Leela. She taught Krishna something that Krishna, and adults in general, have forgotten: curiosity. This can be seen in how Leela constantly asks Krishna 'Why?' throughout the novel, which indicates her willingness to learn and improve, a willingness that Krishna is lacking at the start of the novel. The fact that Leela wanted to go to school on 'Sunday' also shows that Leela has taken up her mother's role as a teacher who encourages Krishna to break rules and do what he wants to.

Comment [K7]: A more formal connective would have been better here

Comment [K8]: Good appreciation of this central theme

Nonetheless, the most vital teacher of all for Krishna is probably the Headmaster. The Headmaster is the one that shows Krishna the real meaning of education and the passion that should be involved in teaching. He teaches Krishna that education was not about 'spending a few thousand on buildings', but is about 'educating the mind'. The Headmaster teaches for the love of it, in comparison to Krishna who does it merely for 'one hundred rupees a month.'

Comment [K9]: Good sense of personal evaluation

Comment [K10]: Again, good appreciation of this key theme

However, of all the teachers in the novel, the most important teacher is Krishna himself as he is the one who makes his own choices and is the one that shows willing to train himself. The Headmaster commented of his own wife that 'she must first train herself' in order to live correctly and, ultimately, this is the message that Narayan wants to convey to us. As we see Krishna develop throughout the novel from the passionless, conforming character that he is in Chapter One to the free, and free-thinking, individual of Chapter Eight, we are meant to admire his progress and desire to emulate it. In a sense Krishna is the most important teacher because he is the one that Narayan uses to teach us.

Comment [K11]: Excellent point – having dismissed the obvious role of Krishna as a teacher in the school at the start of the novel, this candidate re-visits Krishna and this time explores him in a more interesting light – this time that he is a teacher of the reader

Comment [K12]: Good sense of conclusion – of cutting to the point through all the nonsense to the most interesting part

Comment [K13]: Clear and powerful final sentence that ends the essay strongly