

# **11th Standard- English**

## **Birth Summary**

It was nearly midnight when Andrew Manson, the young doctor reached Bryngower. He found driller Joe Morgan waiting anxiously for him. Joe told Andrew that his wife, Susan, wanted his help and that too before time. Andrew went into his house, took his bag and left with Joe for number 12 Blaina Terrace.

Joe's voice showed signs of strain as he told the doctor that he would not go in. He reposed full faith in Andrew. A narrow stair led up to a small bedroom. He found two women beside the patient. One was Mrs Morgan's mother. She was a tall, grey-haired woman of nearly seventy. The other was a stout, elderly midwife. The old woman offered to make a cup of tea for the doctor. The experienced woman had realized that there must be a period of waiting.

Andrew drank tea in the kitchen downstairs. He knew he could not snatch even an hour's sleep if he went home. He also knew that the case would demand all his attention. Although he was very worried and upset, he decided to remain there until everything was over. An hour later he went upstairs again. He noted the progress made, came down once more and sat by the kitchen fire. The old woman sat opposite him. His thought were filled with Christine, the girl he loved. He stared broodingly, into the fire and remained like this for quite long. He was startled when the old woman suddenly asked him not to give her daughter the chloroform. She feared that it would harm the baby. The doctor replied that the anaesthetic would not do any harm.

An hour passed. It was now dawn when the child was born, lifeless. As he gazed at the still form, a shiver of horror passed over Andrew. His face, heated with his own exertions, chilled suddenly. He was torn between his desire to attempt to make the child start breathing again, and his obligation towards the mother. She was in a desperate state. The dilemma was quite urgent. Instinctively, he gave the child to the nurse. He turned his attention to Susan Morgan. She lay collapsed on her side, almost pulseless and not let out of the effect of medicine to make her unconscious. Her strength was ebbing. He smashed a glass ampoule and injected the medicine. Then he worked severely to restore the soft and weak woman. After a few minutes of quick efforts, her heart strengthened. He saw that he might safely leave her.

Then he asked the midwife about the child. She made a frightened gesture. She had placed it beneath the bed. Andrew knelt down and pulled out the child. It was a perfectly formed boy. Its limp, warm body was white and soft as tallow. The head lolled on the thin neck. The limbs seemed boneless. The cord, hastily slashed, lay like a broken stem. The whiteness meant only one thing—unconsciousness caused by lack of oxygen.

His mind raced back to a case he had once seen in the Samaritan. He remembered the treatment that had been used. He instantly asked the nurse to get him hot water and cold water and basins. Then he snatched a blanket. He laid the child on it and began the special method of respiration. As soon as the basins arrived, he poured cold water into one basin and hot in the other. Then he hurried the child between the two. Fifteen minutes passed. Sweat ran into Andrew's eyes. His breath came pantingly, but no breath came from the lax body of the child.

A desperate sense of defeat pressed on him. It was a quickly spreading hopelessness. The midwife and the old woman were watching him. He remembered the old woman's longing for a grandchild which had been as great as her daughter's longing for this child. All this seemed broken and useless now. The midwife remarked that it was a stillborn child. Andrew did not pay any attention to her.

He had laboured in vain for half an hour. He still persisted in one last effort. He rubbed the child with a rough towel. He went on crushing and releasing the little chest with both his hands. He was trying to get breath into that limp body. At last, the small chest gave a short, convulsive heave. Then another and another. Andrew redoubled his efforts. The child was gasping now. A bubble of mucus came from one tiny nostril. The limbs were no longer boneless. The pale skin slowly turned pink. Then came the child's cry.

Andrew handed the child to the nurse. He felt weak and dazed. The room lay in a shuddering litter. He wrung out his sleeve and pulled on his jacket. He went downstairs through the kitchen into the scullery. His lips were dry. He took a long drink of water. Then he reached for his hat and coat. It was now five o'clock. He met Joe and told him that both were all right. Andrew kept thinking that he had done something real at last.