

### SUMMARY OF THE THIRD LEVEL

Grand Central Station of New York has two levels. A fact that can be sworn on a stack of timetables by the executives in charge of the New York Railways. Charley was quite an ordinary man from New York. One evening he reached the Grand Central Railway Station, New York, after a long day's work in the office. He was in a hurry to get home. His wife Louisa was waiting for him.

1. Having found no train from the first level of the station, Charley went down to the second level.

2. While waiting for a train on the second level, Charley found a door and tunnel down.

3. Following the tunnel, he took steps down and reached the third level of the station.

4. Charley keeps walking in the quiet corridor, angling left and slanting downward, till he reaches an architecturally old station that is completely different from the two familiar levels.

5. The antiquated small room with fewer ticket counters and train gates, a wooden information booth, flickering open flame gas lights and brass spittoons reminds him of the architecture of the 1800s. He also finds that people are dressed in outmoded outfits. He notices that the date on the newspaper *The World* is printed June 11, 1894. As he tenders money to the clerk at the counter to buy two tickets, he realises that he need to have old currency bills to do so.

6. He went the ticket counter and asked for two tickets to Galesburg – the 1894 Galesburg or more clearly, a hundred years old Galesburg – where he was born.

7. When he tried to pay cash at the counter, the clerk suspected him for tendering fake currency.

8. Threatened, Charley ran out of the third level and reached home.

9. He had always wanted to travel to Galesburg with his wife, Louisa. In his mind, it is “a wonderful town still, with big old frame houses, huge lawns, and tremendous trees....” It is a place with long and pleasant summer evenings and where people have ample of time.

10. So, the next day during lunch, he exchanges three hundred dollars for old style bills amounting to some two hundred only. The loss doesn't bother him much as he believes that in Galesburg everything will be cheaper and that he can manage even with a small amount. But, he could never again find the corridor leading to the third level.

11. He told his wife who initially refused to believe him.

12. He then visited his psychiatrist, his friend Sam who calls it a “waking-dream wish fulfilment” and rationalises Charley's psychology by saying that the “modern world is full of insecurity, fear, worry, and war...” and everybody wants to escape to some “temporary refuge from reality.” According to him, even hobbies like stamp collection is a manifestation of this escape.

13. His wife Louisa is worried after knowing all this and asks him not to look for

the third level any further. Suddenly Charley realises that his friend, Sam Weiner, is nowhere to be found, so he and his wife keep looking for him in the weekends. Sam was the one with whom Charley used to share his ideas about Galesburg.

14. Charlie is proud of his collection of stamps that had been started by his grandfather.

15. One day he began going through his collection of stamps that had many first covers.

When a new stamp is issued, stamp collectors buy some and use them to mail envelopes to themselves on the very first day of sale; and the postmark proves the date. The envelope is called a first-day cover. They're never opened; you just put blank paper in the envelope.

16. Charlie across a first day cover envelope sent to his grandfather. He opened it and read a letter addressed to him by his friend Sam.

17. Sam had gone to the third level well prepared carrying enough old money. He was happy living in 1894. He had to give up his profession because people did not need a shrink in those days. He wanted Charley and Louisa to keep looking for the third level and join him in Galesburg.

18. From then on the couple spend their time looking for the tunnel. Till now they have been unsuccessful but they aren't giving up hope.

### **Questions & Answers**

1. What will the President of the New York Central and the New York, New Haven and Hartford railroads swear? What did the narrator claim?

2. The narrator thinks that the Grand Central is growing like a tree. What makes him think so? Why has it been 'an exit'?

3. How did the narrator get lost when he was heading for the sub-way?

4. What did the narrator see unusual at the third level?

5. Describe Galesburg Illinois in 1894. Why did the narrator want two tickets to Galesburg, Illinois?

6. "That ain't money, mister" said the clerk to the narrator. Why did he warn the Narrator?

7. How did the narrator get the old-style currency? Why couldn't he buy two tickets for Galesburg in spite of having the currency used in 1894?

8. What does the third level refer to?

9. Why did the narrator talk to a psychiatrist friend of his and what did he say about the third level?

10. How did the narrator's psychiatrist friend analyze his claim of being at the third level of Grand Central Station?

11. What was written in Sam's letter to Charley?

12. Why couldn't Sam go back to his old business?

13. What do Charley's friends think about his stamp collection?

14. What is a 'first-day cover'? How is it collected?

15. What was written in the letter that Sam wrote to Charley in 1894?