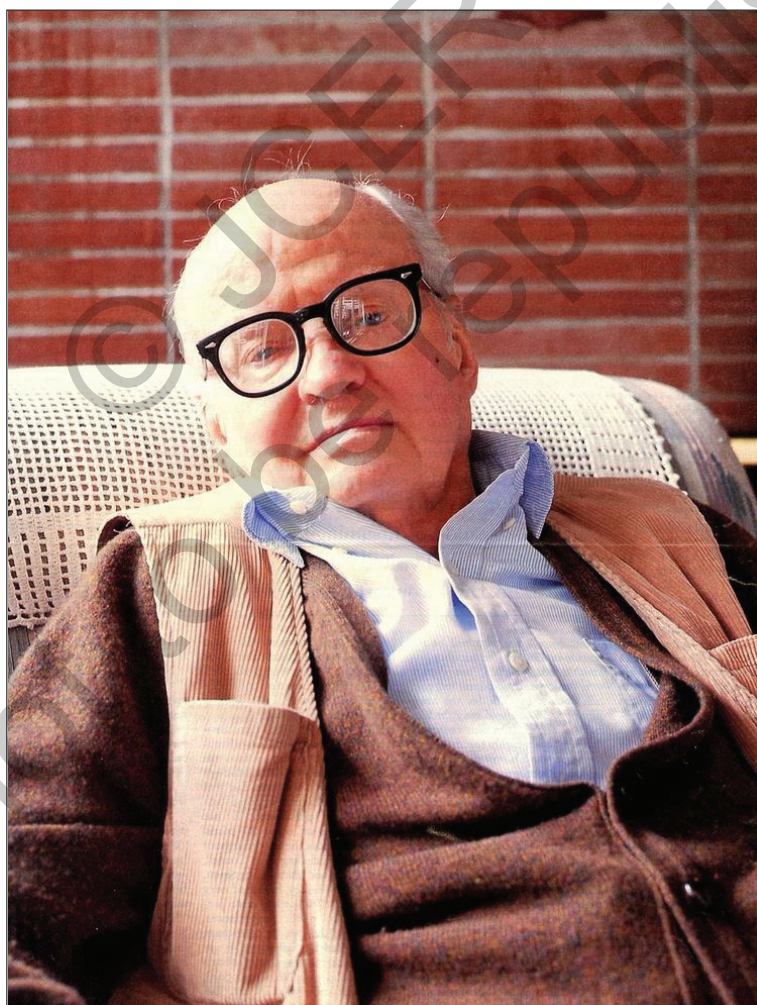


The Third Level



Jack Finney

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jack Finney was an American novelist and a short-story writer. His best-known works are science fiction and thrillers. He attended Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. After living in New York City and working for an advertising agency there, he moved with his family to California in the early 1950s. Finney's first short story, *The Widow's Walk*, won a contest sponsored by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine in 1946. His first novel, *Five Against the House*, was published in 1954. It was made into a movie the following year.

INTRODUCTION

The Third Level by Jack Finney is an interesting story that is set after the World Wars. Consequently, life was full of fear, insecurity, and worry. The story talks about the figments of imaginations that can be used to escape from reality. It takes readers back in the time of joy and peace. Charley, the protagonist, wants to escape from the harsh realities of the modern world and imagines the world of the 19th century where the people were living peaceful lives and they had ample time for themselves.

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

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. Having found no train from the first level of the station, Charley went down to the second level. While waiting for a train on the second level, Charley found a door and tunnel down. Curious as he always was, Charley suspected it to be a mysterious tunnel.

Following the tunnel, he took steps down and reached the third level of the station. But, Grand Central has only two levels. How is this third level possible? Charley remained wondering. Wondering the old fashioned train engines, the hundred year old fashion, men with long moustaches, women dressed in the old French style, a man pulling out his watch from pocket, gas lamps and spittoons. From a newspaper, he learnt the time – 1894. Charley knew one thing for sure – time travelling. He had got into similar tunnels in the past – under Roosevelt Hotel, under Times Square. In the past he had got into more such mysterious tunnels and caves but always a question remained unanswered – why was he not able to go back to those places once again?

Anyway, now, in the third level of the Grand Central Station, he had not much time to ask questions – Louisa was waiting at home. He went to 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. When

he paid the cash at the counter, the clerk suspected him for tendering fake currency. Threatened, Charley ran out of the third level and reached home.

Charley narrates this incident to Sam Weiner, his friend who works as a psychiatrist. Sam concludes that the Third Level is nothing but a mere figment of Charlie's imagination. The miseries of the modern world made Charlie hallucinate about the existence of the Third Level.

During his lunch break the next day, Charley withdraws nearly all his savings and buys old-style currency to buy tickets to Galesburg of 1894. But he can never again find the entrance to the third level at Grand Central Station. However, Charley finds evidence that the third level actually exists when he discovers a letter dated July 18, 1894. The letter is addressed to his grandfather at Galesburg, Illinois, from his psychiatrist friend Sam Weiner who, as it seems, was not sceptical of the third level as he had appeared.

IMPORTANT WORD NOTES

WORDS MEANINGS

Stack — Pile

Psychiatrist — A doctor who studies and treats mental disorders

Obvious — Clear

Refuge — Shelter, protection from danger

Uptown — In or to the parts of a town city that are away from the centre

Subway — An underground railway/ railroad system

Tan — Yellowish brown in colour

Gabardine — A loosely woven fabric

Suburban — An area that is outside the centre of the city

Ducked into — Bent down to get in

Bumping — Meeting by chance

Corridor — Along narrow passage in a building

Glint — A sudden flash of light

Mapped open — Opened suddenly with a sharp sound

Glanced — Looked quickly

Spittoons — Vessels for spitting into

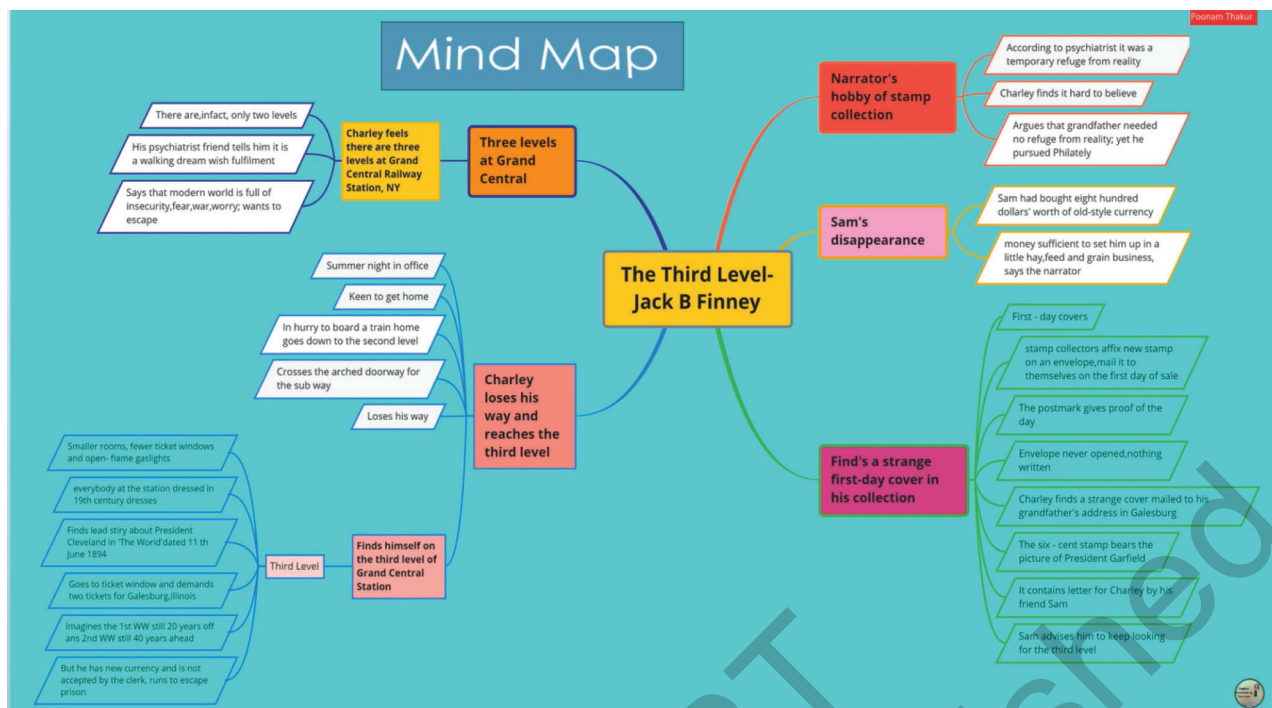
Lapels — Front parts of the top of a coat that are joined to the collar and are folded back

Derby — A bowler hat

Sideburns — Hair that grows down the side of a man's face in front of his hairs

Premium — At a higher than normal price

Fussing with — To pay too much attention to things



MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

- Who is the author of "The Third Level"?
 - George Orwell
 - Agatha Christie
 - James Joyce
 - Jack Finney
- What was Jack's full name?
 - Walter Braden Jack Finney
 - Stephen Jone Jack
 - Ray Douglas Bradbury
 - None
- What is the meaning of "Waking dream wish fulfillment"?
 - a pleasant wish that makes one forget the present
 - a pleasant wish that takes one to the future
 - A pleasant wish which inspires to work
 - All of the Above
- What is the theme of "The Third Level"?
 - human tendency of escapism because of the harsh realities of the present
 - time travelling
 - theory of escapism

- D) a dialogue between a patient and a psychiatrist
- A) human tendency of escapism because of the harsh realities of the present**
5. Who was Charles' wife?
- A) a woman
- B) a woman with bright top
- C) A woman at The Third Level
- D) Louisa
- D) Louisa**
6. What is the significance of 1894 in "The Third Level"?
- A) it was past
- B) Authors' parents were alive
- C) Author's childhood time
- D) representing a peaceful, romantic living time
- D) representing a peaceful, romantic living time**
7. Why did Charley visit Sam?
- A) To consult the incident of Third level at Grand Central Station
- B) To invite him
- C) to invite him to accompany at Galesburg
- D) To guide him in Galesburg
- A) To consult the incident of Third level at Grand Central Station**
8. What does the Psychiatrist explain to Charlie?
- A) Third level is a beautiful place
- B) Third level is worth seeing
- C) Third level is well maintained
- D) That it was the result of stress and anxiety of his mind
- D) That it was the result of stress and anxiety of his mind**
9. Why was Louisa, Charley's wife worried?
- A) Knowing the incident of Third Level
- B) for not getting tickets
- C) tickets were delayed
- D) Sam was scaring
- A) Knowing the incident of Third Level**
10. Why does Charley want to visit Galesburg?
- A) to escape from the troublesome world
- B) to enjoy
- C) to see the beautiful landscape

- D) to meet his old friends
- A) to escape from the troublesome world**
11. What is the First Day Cover?
- A) A new stamp gets the Postmark and date
- B) A gift
- C) A gift wrapper
- D) A gift wrapped in a beautiful wrapper
- A) A new stamp gets the Postmark and date**
12. What was the strangest thing at The Third Level?
- A) Beards
- B) Moustaches
- C) dresses
- D) The corridor that led him into the past.
- D) The corridor that led him into the past.**
13. What convinced Charly that he had reached the Third Level Grand Central Station and not the second level?
- A) A different world of gas lights and brass spittoons
- B) beards and moustaches of 1894
- C) newspaper with a date June 11, 1894
- D) All of these
- D) All of these**
14. What did Charley find in his stamp collection?
- A) old addresses
- B) hair styles
- C) old letters
- D) First day cover
- D) First day cover**
15. Who was Sam in The Third Level?
- A) a doctor
- B) a friend
- C) a psychiatrist and a friend of Charley
- D) None
- C) a psychiatrist and a friend of Charley**

SHORT ANSWERS TYPE QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. How was the third level different from the second level?

Ans : In the third level the room was smaller. There were fewer ticket windows and train gates. The information booth in the centre was wooden and old looking. The man in the booth wore a green eyeshade and long black sleeve protectors. The lights were dim and flickering as they

were open-flame gaslights. There were brass spittoons on the floor.

2. How does the narrator describe Galesburg, Illinois?

Ans : The narrator states that Galesburg, Illinois is a wonderful town with big old frame houses, huge lawns and big trees whose branches roof the streets. Summer evenings were twice as long. People sat out on their lawns, men smoked cigars and talked quietly, the women waved palm-leaf fans.

3. What did the narrator do the next day when the clerk in third level warned him? Why was his psychiatrist friend worried over his action?

Ans : In the Third Level the clerk warned the narrator for tendering insufficient money for two tickets to Galesburg. The next day the narrator withdrew his entire money from the bank and bought old-style currency to buy tickets. When his psychologist friend learnt it he became worried and thought that the narrator's 'ailment' could have created more problems.

4. What is so enigmatic about Sam Weiner's disappearance and resurfacing in Galesburg?

Ans : Sam Weiner's disappearance and resurfacing in Galesburg may be due to the narrator's insistence on the existence of third level, which affected his mind. He may have found Galesburg a good place and may have gone there.

5. What do you think 'the Third Level' refers to?

Ans : The Third Level refers to the subway of the Grand Central Station that takes passengers to Galesburg, Illinois. The Third Level on the station was a medium of escape for Charley from the harsh realities of modern life. It provided him a base where he could interweave fantasy and reality.

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. How did Charley reach the Third Level?

Ans : One night Charley worked till late at the office. Then he was in a hurry to get back to his apartment. So he decided to take the subway from Grand Central. He went down the steps and came to the first level. Then he walked down to the second level from where the suburban trains left. He ducked into an arched doorway that headed to the subway. Then he got lost.

Knowing that he was going wrong he continued to walk downward. The tunnel turned a sharp left and then taking a short flight of stairs he came out on the third level at the Grand Central Station. Here he saw many unusual things. There were very few ticket windows and the train gates were old-looking and made of wood. Dim gaslights flickered and men wore derby hats and four-button suits. It was a rather strange world of sideburns, beards and fancy moustaches.

2. What is a first-day cover? How did it assume importance in the story?

Ans : 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

In the story, Charley found one that shouldn't have been there. It dated back to July 18, 1894. It was authenticated by the government. The stamp was a six-cent, dull brown one, with a picture of President Garfield. It had been mailed to his grandfather on the same date by his friend, Sam. The note inside was addressed to Charley.

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