

CBSE Class 11 English Core

Revision Notes

CHAPTER – 4

Albert Einstein at School

The father of modern physics, Albert Einstein is famous to have discovered the theory of relativity which marked a revolution in physics. However, how many of us know the fact that in his early school days he did not believe in rote learning as a student and got expelled from his school. No teacher liked him and he too, in turn, disliked attending school. This led to the school finally taking a decision to expel him.

The narration begins with Albert being asked about a date by his history teacher. This was when he was very abrupt and crude in replying that he found it pointless to memorise dates when one could flip through the necessary pages whenever one needed to. He believed in education but didn't consider learning facts as education. He hated school because he hated the conventional form of education and the teachers found him to be a 'disgrace.' Finally, the teacher, disgusted and fed up, asked him to be taken away by his father. Einstein also hated going home, not for the obvious reasons of bad food and lack of comfort, but because he hated the atmosphere of 'slum violence.'

He was so against the idea of going to school and adapting to the set educational pattern that he once confided in his friend that he thought he would never pass the exams for the school diploma. He once told his cousin Elsa that he wanted to study science simply because he liked it. He didn't need additional reasons to study the subject he was interested in. He was sent to Munich to study where within six months he grew disinterested and found it useless to waste his father's money, especially when it was so unfruitful and unproductive.

This was the moment of Albert's childhood craze when he gleamed with a sudden bright idea of averting school forever. He asked his friend Yuri to search for a friendly doctor who would certify him that he had nervous breakdown so that he could stay away from school. To this doctor, Albert revealed his love for mathematics and his maths teacher. Later, in school, he asked for a reference letter from his maths teacher. This is when he heard the most surprising comment from his maths teacher who said: "I knew you were going to leave before you knew yourself."

Finally, the day when Albert was called by the headmaster he was not worried. However, he was taken aback when the headmaster said that he couldn't tolerate Albert's attitude towards education and his behaviour in the classroom which disturbed an ideal environment for studying. Thus, he wanted Albert to leave school. Albert felt the medical report burning a hole in his pocket.

He left the school where he had spent five miserable years, without turning his head to give it a last look. He felt like seeing only Yuri before he left Munich. Elsa was back in Berlin when he left. Yuri bade him farewell and wished him good luck.

Thus the story ends up giving glimpses of Einstein's early life and his dynamic concept of education. Since he had a flair for science, he viewed things in logical and reasoning way. He did not believe in traditional and conservative way of rote learning, the contemporary system of education which was outdated and unproductive, rather he was interested to know the ideas behind facts what the real source of knowledge was. He possessed revolting ideas in connection with education and later he emerged as a great scientist like many other well known personalities.

The lesson winds up giving a message to the stakeholders that the students should be allowed to choose the subjects of their choice. Music, fine-arts and sports should be made the integral part of school education. It should be made inspiring, interesting and purposeful. What children needs freedom. Without freedom no mental or physical growth is possible. Entertainment and education must go hand in hand. Ideas must dominate our education. only then our schools will produce geniuses like Einstein.

It also leaves a message for students also that they should put their queries to their teachers in a respectful manner to avoid any sort of unpleasant environment in the class as every teacher is, after all, a human being and demands a little respect.