

## Chapter- 7

## Chapter Name – Birth by A.J.Cornin

**About the Author**

Archibald Joseph Cronin (1896-1974) was a Scottish novelist and physician. "*The Citadel*" is known as his most famous novel ever. It is a story of experiences of a newly just-out-of-school doctor who goes to a Welsh mining town of Blaenelly to assist a Dr Edward Page. The novel shows his drastic progress from checking on patients in mines to practising in London. Cronin has the first-hand experience of this account, for he was the Medical Inspector of mines and later a Doctor in Harley Street.

Another famous mining novel of his, set in the North East of England, is "*The Stars Look Down*". These novels have been made into films as *Hatter's Castle*, *The Keys of the Kingdom* and *The Green Years*. A long-running BBC radio and television series, *Dr Finlay's Casebook* has been adapted from his novel *Country Doctor*, reviving it after several years.

**About "*The Citadel*" by A.J Cronin**

"*The Citadel*" is a story about a doctor who has recently passed medical school and is coming to a small Welsh mining town of Blaenelly to be an assistant to Dr Edward Page. Later on in the novel, we trace his evolution from a doctor in the mines to a medical practitioner in London. The book talks about various unconventional and controversial new ideas about medical ethics. It exposes the corruption in medical practice where the dishonest doctors have "raised guinea snatching and the bamboozling of patients as an art form" amidst such a degraded and incompetent environment, the protagonist, Andrew Mason, is having a hard time maintaining his scientific integrity and social obligations.

The novel incites the need for National Health Service and ultimately led to its commencement. *The Citadel* won the National Book Award, Favourite Fiction of 1937, voted by the American Bookseller Associations members. According to a Gallup poll conducted in 1939, *The Citadel* has voted the most exciting book readers have ever read.

**Theme**

- 'Birth' is the story of an ordeal that is life, but there is also another ordeal, that of giving **birth** to a life.
- This metaphysical contemplation upon the metaphor of the ordeal concerning life and **birth** is the **story's theme**.
- They are sacrificing love.
- Strength of character.

- Focussing on a solution rather than a problem helps one overcome all the challenges of life.
- Selfless action brings new nobility to human life and greater hope for human society

## BACKGROUND

- The midwife is present in the house before the doctor arrives.
- The mining community did not have complete faith in modern medicine and preferred to have a more experienced and traditional present during birth.
- Yet, Joe Morgan trusted Andrew completely.

## SUB-CONCEPTS

- Global Awareness
- Financial Literacy
- Civic Literacy
- Health Literacy
- Environmental Literacy

## Introduction

The story being discussed in context here is an extract from the author's famous novel *The Citadel*. In the birth by A.J Cronin characters, the protagonist, Andrew Mason here, has an encounter with Joe Morgan, who, along with his wife of twenty years, are expecting their first child. Mason goes to perform the delivery, and what he was expecting to be an uneventful night turned out to an experience that would change his life forever.

## Characters

**Dr Andrew Manson:** He is a young medical graduate working in a small mining town. On the call of Joe Morgan, a miner, Dr Andrew Manson manages to help in a difficult birth and saves the baby's life due to his knowledge and efforts.

**Joe Morgan:** He is the miner husband of Susan Morgan. He asks Dr Andrew Manson to help in his wife's delivery and reposes full faith in the doctor.

**Susan Morgan's Mother:** She is a tall, grey-haired woman aged 70, who is concerned about her daughter's happiness.

**The Midwife:** She is pessimistic about the child's survival when he is found to be not breathing when born, but still dutifully assists Dr Andrew Manson in his work.

**Christine – Dr Andrew's girlfriend**

**Susan Morgan – Joe Morgan's wife**

Loving

Caring

Sacrificing

**Word Meanings**

excerpt – extract

medical practice – work as a doctor

welsh – in Wales

mining town – a town where most people work in a coal mine

disappointing – unhappy

surgery – operating room

burly – large and strong

driller – a miner who uses a drill machine

missus – wife (informal)

ye – you

before time – the delivery is going to be before the due date

contemplation of – thinking about

mystery – secrecy

perceptive – energetic

premonition – idea

drew up short – stopped

strain – tiredness

stout – strongly built

midwife – woman trained to help in childbirth

Bach – dear

leave the case – not stay till the delivery was completed

fret – worry

overwrought – very tired

snatch – take

the lethargy of spirit – lack enthusiasm

cinder – partly burnt piece of coal

grate – fireplace

paced – walked slowly

muddled – mixed up

obsessed him – dominated his thinking

morbidity – negatively

sordidly – unpleasantly

shrewish – quarrelsome

reason – reasoning  
 dismal – disappointing  
 wince – feel pain  
 idyllic – perfect  
 otherwise – differently  
 admitted – allowed  
 level, doubting – reasonably doubtful  
 overflowing – full of emotions  
 broodingly – worryingly  
 started – jerked suddenly  
 addressed – talked to  
 meditation – thinking  
 pursued a different course – followed a different line of thought  
 awful set upon – very much wanting  
 ay – yes  
 fancy – belief  
 collected – calmed  
 top landing – top of the stairs  
 perceived – realised  
 elapsed – passed  
 harsh – hard  
 streaks of dawn – the light of morning  
 strayed past – came through  
 blind – sunshade  
 still form – the lifeless body  
 torn between – feeling two opposing thoughts  
 resuscitate – bring back to life  
 desperate – critical  
 dilemma – choice  
 instinctively – without thinking  
 collapsed – unconscious  
 pulseless – not having the pulse of life  
 not yet out of the ether – not become conscious  
 frantic – agitated  
 ebbing – receding  
 glass ampoule – sealed glass capsule with liquid medicine  
 hypodermic syringe – needle used to inject liquid medicine into the bloodstream  
 unsparingly – without a break

flaccid – lifeless

strengthened – started beating properly

in his shirt-sleeves – in only his shirt without a jacket over it

brow – forehead

frightened gesture – an indication of fear

in a flash – immediately

fishing – searching

sodden – soaked

tallow – animal fat

cord – umbilical cord connecting the mother to the child in her womb

of a lovely texture – with a beautiful feel

lolloped – hung loosely

haggard frown – worried and tried to look

asphyxia pallida – an abnormal medical condition in a newly born baby who appears pale and limp, temporarily unable to breathe and to have a slow heart action

the Samaritan – name of a medical journal

threw out – spoke quickly

basins – large bowls

pallid – pale

respiration – breathing

ewer – a large jug with a wide mouth

frantically – desperately

Word – Meaning

crazy juggler – madman moving the child quickly

raging hopelessness – fierce disappointment

stark – evident

consternation – a feeling of anxiety

longing – desiring

dashed away – finished

draggled – dirty and wet

stumbling – tripping over

sopping – drenched

whimpered – spoke in a crying tone

stillborn – born dead

heed – listen to

crushing – squeezing

limp – motionless

by a miracle – mysteriously

pigmy – small  
 convulsive – jerky  
 heave – gasp  
 turned giddy – became weak  
 unavailing – ineffective  
 exquisite – enjoyable  
 gasping – breathing hard  
 mucus – a viscous liquid  
 iridescent – sparkling  
 spinelessly – loosely  
 blanched – pale  
 hysterically – uncontrollably  
 shuddering litter – a total mess  
 soiled – dirty  
 impaled – stuck  
 scullery – room for washing dishes  
 expectant – hopeful  
 thickly – in a hard to understand the tone  
 spent – tired  
 footfalls – sounds made by feet while walking  
 oblivious – unaware

### Chapter Highlights

- Dr Andrew was a young medical graduate who worked as an assistant to Dr Edward Page in a small Welsh mining town, Blaenelly.
- Dr Andrew was returning home after a disappointing evening with his girlfriend, Christine,
- Dr Andrew found Joe Morgan, anxious and scared, waiting for him.
- Joe Morgan informed him that the doctor was needed at their home as his wife was in labour before the expected date. It was to be their first child in a marriage of nearly twenty years.
- When they reached the house, Dr Andrew realised that he would have to wait some time; so he decided to wait downstairs.
- Then Dr Andrew is called upstairs and starts his work. After an hour's struggle, the child, a perfectly formed boy, was born lifeless.
- Dr Andrew was horrified but continued his effort first to save the mother, whose energy was reducing.
- After the mother was safe, his attention went to the child. He instinctively decides to revive the child.

- Dr Andrew quickly diagnoses the most probable cause for the stillbirth, i.e. asphyxia pallida.
- Dr Andrew recalls a method he had once read about how such a child had been successfully saved.
- Dr Andrew tries alternate hot and cold water treatment to revive the child's breath.
- Dr Andrew then rubbed the baby's body with a rough towel, crushing and releasing the chest.
- A medical miracle happens. The child finally breathes. Dr Andrew redoubles his efforts until the child cries.
- After handing over the baby to the midwife, Dr Andrew left the house. He realised that he had truly saved a life that night, fulfilling the purpose of his profession.
- For the first time, Dr Andrew felt that he had done something 'real', something worthwhile.

### Summary

The story is an extract from *The Citadel*. Moreover, it narrates how a medical fresher handles a case of child delivery. Also, mysteriously, he gets back living in a dead child. He applies all his medical knowledge and instincts for doing so. Further, the story states the excitement of the doctor and his team.

The story describes how Andrew Manson, recently out of medical school, returned home after a quarrel with her girlfriend, Christine. On reaching home, he finds Joe Morgan waiting for him to attend to his wife. Despite the night, he agrees to attend to her as she expects her first child in 20 years.

At Joe's house, he saw a midwife attending the very serious lady. Andrew sees Mrs Morgan and paused as he could understand that it would take some time. While sitting, his mind starts to wander in the thoughts of other people, like Barnwell, who foolishly devoted all his life to a woman who betrayed him. Besides, he remembers Edward page, who married an ill-nature Bowden and was now living unhappily, separately from his wife. Meanwhile, Andrew had to go back to attend to the patient.

After an hour-long and harsh struggle, a child was born towards the dawn, but it was lifeless. On seeing the child, Andrew shook with horror. Subsequently, he looks to the mother, who needs immediate attention. So, Andrew has to choose whom to attend: the mother or the child.

He gave the child to the nurse and attended the mother first, who was unconscious. Steadily, her heartbeat strengthens, and Andrew could now participate in the baby. Afterwards, Andrew inquired the midwife about the child whom she had put under the bed among the soaked

newspaper. So, Andrew pulls out the child who was perfectly formed. He couldn't recognise that it's a case of asphyxia due to lack of oxygen and excess carbon dioxide in the blood.

Moreover, he did not lose heart and started to give the necessary treatment to the child. However, the midwife told him repeatedly that it is stillborn, but he didn't listen. Also, he continues his treatment.

Near the conclusion, a wonder occurred; he rubbed the child with a towel crushed and relaxed the little chest with both his hands. He tries to fill his breath into the limp body. After some time, the small chest gave a short, complex motion, and the child starts turning around.

Eventually, Andrew flung a sigh of relief and handed the child to the nurse. Afterwards, he stated the whole story to Joe, standing outside and walking down the street. He has a sense of deep satisfaction that he could achieve something great.





## BIRTH

### BIRTH ( BY A.J.CRONIN )

**About the  
Author-  
A.J.CRONIN**

A.J. Cronin, 19 July 1896, Cardross, United Kingdom  
Died-6 January 1981, Montreux, Switzerland  
Citadel, The Stars Look Down

**Characters :**

Dr. Andrew Manson – A doctor working in the mining town of Blaenelly  
Joe Morgan – A mine-worker  
Susan Morgan – Joe Morgan’s wife  
Susan’s mother – Joe Morgan’s mother-in-law  
An elderly midwife (nurse)  
Christine – Dr. Andrew’s girlfriend

**Theme  
of the lesson**

This metaphysical contemplation upon the metaphor of the ordeal concerning life and **birth** is the **theme** of this story.  
Sacrificing love.  
Strength of character.  
Focussing on solution rather than problem helps one overcome all the challenges of life.

**Lesson  
Contents**

JOE MORGAN WAS WAITING FOR DR ANDREW  
THE CASE DEMANDED ALL ATTENTION OF DR ANDREW  
DR ANDREW’S MIND WANDERED  
THE HORRIFYING DILEMMA  
DR ANDREW’S EFFORTS TO SAVE THE CHILD  
THE MIRACLE  
DR ANDREW IS RELIEVED

