COUNCIL FOR THE INDIAN SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS

ISC CLASS 11 ENGLISH LITERATURE ECHOES & REVERIE ANTHOLOGY GUIDE

Official Prescribed ISC Class 11 Syllabus: Complete Thematic Analysis, Character Profiles, Stanza Interpretations, Poetic Devices & Solved Reference to Context (RTC) Questions

Board: CISCE (ISC Class 11 Examination)	**Paper:** English Paper 2 (Literature in English)
Anthologies: Echoes (Stories 1–5) & Reverie (Poems 1–5)	**Target Session:** ISC Academic Curriculum 2026

PART I: ECHOES — PRESCRIBED SHORT STORIES (ISC CLASS 11)

1. Salvatore — W. Somerset Maugham

Narrative Essence: Maugham paints a gentle portrait of an ordinary Italian fisherman on the island of Capri. Struck by crippling rheumatism while performing military service in China, Salvatore returns home only to find his fiancé rejects him due to his illness. Without bitterness or self-pity, he marries Assunta, an older, plain woman who loves him, fathers children, and lives a life of quiet cheerfulness and boundless goodwill.
Core Theme: The precious, luminous quality of Goodness; acceptance without rancor; dignity in humble circumstances.
Solved RTC: *'I wonder if I have succeeded in doing what I set out to do... It is just to write down the portrait of a man who possessed nothing in the world except a quality which is the rarest, the most precious and the loveliest that anyone can have—Goodness.'* — Maugham reveals that true heroism lies not in extraordinary deeds, but in an unconditional, forgiving heart.

2. Fritz — Satyajit Ray

Narrative Essence: Jayanto and Shankar visit Bundi in Rajasthan, staying at a circuit house where Jayanto stayed as a child. Jayanto becomes obsessed with memories of 'Fritz', a two-foot-tall Swiss doll brought for him from Switzerland by his uncle. When Fritz was torn to shreds by stray dogs, young Jayanto buried it under a deodar tree. Driven by nocturnal anxiety and miniature footprints on his bedcovers, Jayanto and Shankar dig up the grave—only to unearth a tiny, complete human skeleton.
Core Theme: Supernatural suspense, psychological nostalgia, uncanny boundaries between memory and horrifying reality.

3. Quality — John Galsworthy

Narrative Essence: Set in London's West End, Galsworthy dramatizes the tragic struggle of the German shoemaker brothers, the Gesslers. They make boots of peerless craftsmanship and durability. However, they are inexorably driven out of business by industrial mass production and aggressive advertising. Rather than compromise their artistic integrity, the younger Gessler starves himself to death while finishing a pair of boots.
Core Theme: The demise of artisanal craftsmanship before soulless industrial capitalism; uncompromising artistic devotion.

4. To Build a Fire — Jack London

Narrative Essence: An unnamed man journeys through the Yukon wilderness in seventy-five-degrees-below-zero cold, accompanied only by a native husky whose instincts sense the deadly peril. The man lacks imagination and hubristically ignores the warnings of the Old-Timer from Sulphur Creek. When he falls through ice into a spring and his emergency fire is snuffed out by falling snow from tree branches, his panic rises until freezing numbness claims his life while the dog trotts off toward camp.
Core Theme: Man versus indifferent Nature; cold instinct versus flawed human intellect; fatal consequences of hubris.

5. The Story of an Hour — Kate Chopin

Narrative Essence: Louise Mallard, suffering from a heart condition, is gently informed that her husband Brently has been killed in a train disaster. Weeping in her room, she gazes out her open window at the spring blossoms and blue sky. Suddenly, an overwhelming epiphany overcomes her: 'Free! Body and soul free!' She realizes she will now live for herself. When Brently unexpectedly opens the front door alive, Louise drops dead—of 'a joy that kills', doctors claim, though in truth it is the shock of re-imprisonment.
Core Theme: Female autonomy, repressive 19th-century domesticity, ironies of freedom and patriarchal marriage.

PART II: REVERIE — PRESCRIBED POEMS (ISC CLASS 11)

1. The Dolphins — Carol Ann Duffy

Dramatic Monologue: Spoken from the perspective of an enslaved dolphin swimming in repetitive circles within an artificial pool. Duffy portrays the profound sorrow of losing the endless ocean. The dolphin laments that their natural skin no longer glides through wild currents; they must jump through hoops to satisfy human spectators. It is a powerful eco-feminist critique of human exploitation of wildlife.

2. The Gift of India — Sarojini Naidu

Patriotic Elegy: Mother India mourns the tragic sacrifice of her brave sons who were sent across oceans to fight and die in foreign lands (Flanders, France, Mesopotamia, Egypt) during World War I. Naidu laments how Indian soldiers were reaped like wheat, their graves unmarked. She demands that when the victorious nations celebrate world peace, they must honor the immortal blood spilled by Indian soldiers.

3. John Brown — Bob Dylan

Anti-War Ballad: A proud, naive mother sends her handsome young son John Brown off to war, boastfully imagining him returning laden with medals. When John returns, his face is shattered, hands blown off, whispering through a metal voice box. He hands his mother the medals, bitterly exposing how war is not glory but a slaughterhouse where youth are used as pawns in others' games.

4. Desiderata — Max Ehrmann

Didactic Prose-Poem: Latin for 'things desired'. Ehrmann offers timeless philosophical guidance on living serenely amid noise and haste. He counsels humility, speaking truth quietly, avoiding comparing oneself with others, being gentle with oneself, and remembering that whether clear or not, the universe is unfolding as it should. Be cheerful and strive to be happy.

5. The Spider and the Fly — Mary Botham Howitt

Cautionary Allegory: A cunning, predatory spider employs escalating flattery, sweet invitations, and appeals to vanity to lure a hesitant fly into his parlor. Despite initial resistance, the fly falls prey to the spider's praise of her pearly wings and sparkling eyes, flying straight into his web. It warns youth against treacherous flatterers.