Class 11 English Snapshots (Older Edition): The Ghat of the Only World - Notes, Summary, NCERT Answers and MCQs

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These Class 11 English notes make this moving piece easy. You get a summary, a timeline, themes and NCERT answers. You also get 10 MCQs, a mistakes table and a revision box.

> Syllabus check: This chapter is not in the current NCERT Snapshots (Reprint 2026-27). That book has five chapters only. Use these notes if your school, state board or older book still includes it. Always confirm with your teacher.

What is The Ghat of the Only World about?

> The Ghat of the Only World is a personal tribute by Amitav Ghosh. It was Chapter 6 of the older Class 11 English Snapshots book. It remembers the poet Agha Shahid Ali, who was dying of brain cancer. Shahid asked Ghosh to write about him after his death. This piece fulfils that promise.

The piece is warm, sad and full of life. It celebrates a man who loved food, music, friends and poetry. Use this table for quick facts.

Fact	Detail (from the NCERT text)
Chapter	Chapter 6, Snapshots (older NCERT edition, Class 11 English)
Syllabus status	Not in the 2026-27 Snapshots reprint
Author	Amitav Ghosh
Type	A memoir-style tribute, told in the first person
Subject	Agha Shahid Ali, a poet from Srinagar, Kashmir
Setting	Brooklyn and Manhattan, New York; memories of Kashmir
Illness	A malignant brain tumour, found after a blackout in February 2000
Title source	Shahid's poem "I Dream I Am At the Ghat of the Only World"
Ending	Shahid dies peacefully in his sleep on 8 December

The current Snapshots book is on the official NCERT textbook site. Older editions are not hosted there.

What happens in The Ghat of the Only World? (Summary)

> In this Class 11 Snapshots piece, Shahid first speaks of death on 25 April 2001. He asks Ghosh to write about him. Ghosh records their talks for months. He describes Shahid's parties, cooking, poetry, love of Kashmir and calm courage. Shahid dies peacefully on 8 December.

1. A request on the telephone

On 25 April 2001, Ghosh calls Shahid about a lunch. Shahid suddenly says he can't see. He jokes that he hopes he isn't dying. Then he asks Ghosh to write about him when it happens.

2. Ghosh makes a promise

Ghosh is shocked. But he agrees to do his best. From that day, he writes down their conversations. These notes later become this piece.

3. How they became friends

Ghosh admired Shahid's 1997 book, The Country Without a Post Office. They were only acquaintances at first. When Shahid moved to Brooklyn, they became close.

They shared a love of rogan josh, Kishore Kumar and old Bombay films. Neither cared for cricket.

4. A home full of life

Shahid's apartment always had a party going on. Friends, poets and relatives filled it. Someone was always cooking. He said the festivity left him no time to be depressed.

From his terrace, the Brooklyn waterfront slipped "like a ghat" into the East River.

5. The cook and the poet

Shahid was a famous cook. He could judge rogan josh by smell alone, even with failing eyesight. At a dinner party, he met the poet James Merrill. Merrill changed the direction of his poetry.

6. Wit and joy

At Barcelona airport, a guard asked if he carried anything dangerous. "Only my heart," he replied. In hospital, he greeted an orderly from Ecuador with delight, wanting to learn Spanish.

At his last class, on 7 May, he joked and sparkled. His students adored him.

7. Kashmir in his heart

Shahid lived mainly in America from 1975. But he spent summers with his parents in Srinagar. He watched violence grow in Kashmir. It became a central subject of his poetry.

Yet he refused to be a "nationalist" poet. He believed in separating politics and religion. His mother once helped him build a small Hindu shrine in his room.

8. The bad news

On 5 May, doctors stop his treatment. They give him a year or less. He first wishes to die in Kashmir. Later, he chooses to be buried in Northampton, near Amherst.

9. A peaceful end

Ghosh last sees him on 27 October at his brother's house in Amherst. Shahid is calm and at peace. He hopes to meet his mother in the afterlife. He dies in his sleep on 8 December.

Who are the people in The Ghat of the Only World?

> This Class 11 English Snapshots piece is about real people. Agha Shahid Ali is the dying Kashmiri poet. Amitav Ghosh is the narrator and friend. Shahid's siblings, Iqbal, Hena and Sameetah, care for him. Poets James Merrill and singer Begum Akhtar shaped his art.

Person	Who they are	Role in the piece
Agha Shahid Ali	Poet from Srinagar, Kashmir	Brave, witty, sociable. Dying of a brain tumour.
Amitav Ghosh	Writer; narrator	Shahid's friend and neighbour. Keeps his promise to write.
Sameetah	Shahid's youngest sister	Teaches at the Pratt Institute; Shahid moves near her.
Iqbal and Hena	Shahid's brother and sister	Bring him home from hospital; care for him.
Suketu Mehta	A Brooklyn writer	Helps start the adda, a regular friendly gathering.
James Merrill	A poet	The greatest influence on Shahid's poetry.
Begum Akhtar	A great ghazal singer	Shahid's lifelong musical inspiration.
Shahid's mother	Already dead in the piece	Helped him build a childhood shrine; he hopes to meet her again.

Character sketch of Agha Shahid Ali

Shahid is full of life, even while dying. He loves parties, food, music and people. He is witty and quick in reply.

He is a serious, disciplined poet. He loves Kashmir deeply, yet refuses narrow nationalism. He faces death calmly and without self-pity. He even plans his affairs so his siblings face no trouble.

Character sketch of Amitav Ghosh (the narrator)

Ghosh is a sensitive and loyal friend. He is shocked by Shahid's request but accepts it. He keeps careful notes for months.

He writes with deep respect and honesty. He is amazed that so short a friendship left such a large empty space.

What is the timeline of The Ghat of the Only World?

> The Ghat of the Only World, Class 11 English Snapshots, is full of dates. Learning them in order makes every answer more exact. The illness starts with a blackout in February 2000. The first talk of death is on 25 April 2001. Shahid dies peacefully on 8 December, after months of courage.

Date	What happened
1975	Shahid moves to Pennsylvania; lives mainly in America after this
1997	The Country Without a Post Office is published
1998-1999	Ghosh and Shahid speak on the phone and meet a few times
February 2000	Shahid has a blackout; a brain tumour is found
25 April 2001	Shahid first speaks of death and asks Ghosh to write
5 May	Treatment is stopped; doctors give him a year or less
7 May	Shahid teaches his last class at Baruch College
21 May	Ghosh helps bring him home from hospital
27 October	Ghosh sees Shahid for the last time, in Amherst
8 December	Shahid dies peacefully in his sleep, at 2 a.m.

What are the main themes of The Ghat of the Only World?

This Class 11 English Snapshots piece has four main themes. They are facing death with courage, friendship, love of homeland, and the diaspora experience. It also celebrates art, food and music. Above all, it shows how one joyful life can leave a lasting mark on others.

Theme	Where you see it in the piece
Courage in the face of death	Shahid jokes about dying and stays calm to the end.
Friendship	A short friendship leaves Ghosh with a "vast void."
Love of Kashmir	Kashmir becomes a central subject of his finest poetry.
Diaspora	Indians abroad gather in Shahid's home over food, music and talk.
Tolerance	His mother helps him build a Hindu shrine in their Muslim home.
Art and discipline	He says a writer must respect art and form, not just subject.

What does the title The Ghat of the Only World mean?

A ghat is a set of steps leading down to a river. Shahid saw the Brooklyn waterfront slip into the river like a ghat. The phrase also comes from his poem about his own death. So the title links his home, the river and his journey towards death.

What do the difficult words in The Ghat of the Only World mean?

Hard words in this Class 11 Snapshots piece describe illness, poetry and gatherings. Lucid means clear-minded. Bardic means in a grand poetic style. Ecumenical means bringing different religions together. Learning about twenty of these words makes this rich piece far easier to follow.

Word	Simple meaning
Expatriate	A person living outside their home country
Lucid	Clear-minded
Jocularity	Joking manner
Innocuous	Harmless, safe
Quizzical	Questioning, slightly amused
Malignant	Cancerous and dangerous
Bereavement	Grief after someone dies
Imperative	A command; something that must be done
Bardic register	A grand poetic style (NCERT footnote)
Poignance	Deep sadness
Adda	A friendly gathering with no fixed agenda
Conviviality	Friendly, cheerful company
Gregariousness	Love of company
Ghat	Steps leading down to a river

Word	Simple meaning
Heeng	Asafoetida, a strong-smelling spice
Repartee	Quick, witty replies
Nakhra	Playful showiness
Diaspora	People living away from their homeland
Ecumenical	Uniting members of different religions (NCERT footnote)
Assiduous	Very careful and hard-working (NCERT footnote)
Sháhid / Shahid	Witness / martyr; a play on the poet's name

What are the NCERT answers for The Ghat of the Only World?

> The NCERT exercise for this Class 11 Snapshots chapter has three questions. The first asks for your impressions of Shahid. The second asks how Shahid and Ghosh react to his coming death. The third asks what the piece shows about the Indian diaspora. Our model answers follow.

Questions are from the NCERT text. Answers are written by Nextoper.

Q1. What impressions of Shahid do you gather from the piece?

Shahid comes across as joyful, warm and brave. His home is always full of friends, food and music. He loves to cook and to talk.

He is witty, as the "Only my heart" reply shows. He is a disciplined poet who respects his art. He loves Kashmir but rejects narrow nationalism.

Above all, he faces death calmly. He shows no self-pity. He even plans ahead so his siblings won't be burdened.

Q2. How do Shahid and the writer react to the knowledge that Shahid is going to die?

Shahid accepts death with calm and humour. He jokes about it, then asks Ghosh to write about him. When treatment stops, he quietly plans his will. At the end, he is at peace.

Ghosh is shocked and unsure what to say. But he accepts Shahid's charge. He records every conversation. After Shahid's death, he feels a "vast void."

Q3. Look up the dictionary for the meaning of the word 'diaspora'. What do you understand of the Indian diaspora from this piece?

Diaspora means people who live away from their homeland. They often keep its culture alive.

In this piece, Indians and South Asians in America gather in Shahid's home. They share rogan josh, Begum Akhtar's ghazals and old Bombay films. They also share many friends across countries.

Shahid says this space unites people "because of the good things." So this diaspora keeps its roots alive in a new land.

What MCQs come from The Ghat of the Only World?

> Here are 10 practice MCQs on this Class 11 English Snapshots chapter. Nextoper wrote them. Each answer has a one-line reason from the NCERT text. They test dates, people and meaning. Cover the

1. Who wrote The Ghat of the Only World?
(a) Agha Shahid Ali (b) Amitav Ghosh (c) Suketu Mehta (d) James Merrill
Answer: (b) Amitav Ghosh, to keep his promise to Shahid.

2. When did Shahid first speak to Ghosh about his death?
(a) February 2000 (b) 25 April 2001 (c) 5 May (d) 8 December
Answer: (b) 25 April 2001, during a phone call.

3. What illness did Shahid have?
(a) Heart disease (b) A malignant brain tumour (c) Diabetes (d) Lung infection
Answer: (b) A malignant brain tumour.

4. Where was Shahid from?
(a) Delhi (b) Srinagar, Kashmir (c) Kolkata (d) Mumbai
Answer: (b) Srinagar, Kashmir.

5. Which dish did Shahid and Ghosh both love?
(a) Biryani (b) Rogan josh (c) Dosa (d) Fish curry
Answer: (b) Rogan josh.

6. Who had the greatest influence on Shahid's poetry?
(a) Lorca (b) Emily Dickinson (c) James Merrill (d) Kishore Kumar
Answer: (c) James Merrill, whom he met at a dinner party.

7. What did Shahid say was dangerous at Barcelona airport?
(a) His pen (b) His books (c) Only his heart (d) His poems
Answer: (c) "Only my heart."

8. Which singer was a lifelong influence on Shahid?
(a) Lata Mangeshkar (b) Begum Akhtar (c) Roshanara Begum (d) Kishore Kumar
Answer: (b) Begum Akhtar, the ghazal singer.

9. Where was Shahid finally laid to rest?
(a) Srinagar (b) Brooklyn (c) Northampton, near Amherst (d) Delhi
Answer: (c) Northampton, near Amherst.

10. Shahid said he was a national poet, but not a
(a) political poet (b) nationalist poet (c) religious poet (d) Kashmiri poet
Answer: (b) Nationalist poet. He rejected that label.

What should you revise the night before the exam?

> To revise this chapter fast, learn the date trail and five keys. Then remember one big idea. The big idea is that Shahid met death with joy, wit and calm. His request turned Ghosh's grief into writing. This piece is the promise kept.

Date trail: Feb 2000 - 25 Apr - 5 May - 7 May - 21 May - 27 Oct - 8 Dec

- Feb 2000 - blackout; tumour found
- 25 April 2001 - "You must write about me"
- 5 May - treatment stops
- 7 May - last class
- 21 May - home from hospital
- 27 October - last meeting
- 8 December - dies in his sleep

Five keys: "Some Kind Men Bring Music"

Shahid (poet), Kashmir (home), Merrill (influence), Begum Akhtar (music), Mehta, Suketu (adda friend).

One big idea: A life lived joyfully, a death met calmly, a promise kept.

Self-check: can you answer these in one line?

Question	Tick when you can answer
What did Shahid ask Ghosh to do?	[ ]
How did Ghosh keep a record?	[ ]
Why did Shahid love having parties?	[ ]
What dream haunted Shahid about Kashmiri food?	[ ]
Why did he refuse the "nationalist poet" label?	[ ]
Where did he finally choose to be buried?	[ ]
What does the title mean?	[ ]

What practice questions can you try on The Ghat of the Only World?

> These are Nextoper practice questions for this Class 11 Snapshots chapter. They are not previous-year board questions. They follow the usual short-answer, long-answer and extract formats. Write full answers first. Then compare them with the summary, timeline and themes on this page.

Practice question These questions are written by Nextoper for practice.

Short answer (about 40-50 words)

1. Why did Shahid move to Brooklyn?
2. How did Shahid and Ghosh first come into contact?
3. What does the hospital episode with the orderly show about Shahid?
4. What childhood story did Shahid use to answer talk of fanaticism?
5. Why did Shahid change his mind about dying in Kashmir?

Long answer (about 120-150 words)

1. How does Shahid turn the ordinary into the magical? Give examples.
2. Explain how Kashmir shapes Shahid's life and poetry.
3. Write a short tribute to someone you admire, in the style of this piece.

Extract-based practice

Read: "I love this spirit of festivity; it means that I don't have time to be depressed."

a) Who says this, and about what?
b) What does it show about the speaker's attitude to illness?
c) Give one other example of this attitude from the piece.

What mistakes do students make in The Ghat of the Only World?

> Many notes on The Ghat of the Only World, Class 11 English Snapshots, contain errors. Students copy them and lose marks. Common slips include misspelling the author's name and getting the first date wrong. Others call Shahid non-religious or say he was buried in Kashmir. Check each fact below before you write.

We found most of these errors in notes that currently rank online. Every correction is checked against the NCERT chapter.

Common mistake	What the NCERT text actually says
Spelling the author "Amitabh Ghosh"	The author is Amitav Ghosh.
"It began with a phone call in 2000"	Shahid first spoke of death on 25 April 2001.
"Shahid was a non-religious man"	He was respectful of religion but kept it apart from politics.
Calling the piece a biography	It is a personal tribute based on Ghosh's own notes.
"The Indian diaspora is the world's largest"	The piece makes no such claim.
Calling it Chapter 7	It was Chapter 6 in the older Snapshots.
"Shahid was buried in Kashmir"	He chose Northampton, near Amherst.
"The chapter is in the 2026-27 Snapshots"	The 2026-27 Snapshots reprint has five chapters, without this one.

What is the short answer on The Ghat of the Only World?

> Short answer: The Ghat of the Only World is Amitav Ghosh's tribute to poet Agha Shahid Ali. It was Chapter 6 of the older Class 11 Snapshots book. Dying of a brain tumour, Shahid asks Ghosh to write about him. Ghosh records his joyful parties, cooking, poetry and love of Kashmir. Shahid dies calmly on 8 December.

What do students ask about The Ghat of the Only World?

> Students most often ask who wrote this piece and who Shahid was. They also ask what the title means. Two more common questions cover why Ghosh wrote the piece and its syllabus status. Short, exam-ready answers to all five follow. Each is based on the NCERT text.

Who wrote The Ghat of the Only World?

Amitav Ghosh wrote it. It is a tribute to his friend, the poet Agha Shahid Ali. It appeared in older editions of NCERT Snapshots for Class 11.

Agha Shahid Ali was a poet from Srinagar, Kashmir, who lived mainly in America. He wrote The Country Without a Post Office. He died of a brain tumour.

What does the title The Ghat of the Only World mean?

A ghat is a set of steps leading to a river. Shahid saw Brooklyn's waterfront slip into the river like a ghat. The phrase also comes from his poem about his own death.

Why did Amitav Ghosh write this piece?

Shahid asked Ghosh to write about him after his death. Ghosh promised to do his best. He kept notes of their talks, and this piece fulfils that promise.

Is The Ghat of the Only World in the 2026-27 syllabus?

No. The current NCERT Snapshots reprint for 2026-27 does not include it. It has five chapters only. Check with your school if your book still lists it.

What is the key takeaway from The Ghat of the Only World?

> This Class 11 English Snapshots piece shows how to face death with grace. Shahid filled his last months with friends, food and poetry. He met his end without fear. Ghosh's writing keeps that spirit alive. It reminds you to value friendship while there is time.

Revise the date trail, the five keys and the meaning of the title. With those, you can answer almost any question on this chapter. Next, try the practice questions without looking back.

Related notes

- Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 3: Mother's Day notes
- Class 11 English Snapshots Chapter 2: The Address notes
- All Class 11 English Hornbill and Snapshots notes

Sources

1. NCERT, Snapshots (older edition), Chapter 6, "The Ghat of the Only World" by Amitav Ghosh. ncert.nic.in
2. CBSE Academic, Class 11 English Core (Code 301) curriculum. cbseacademic.nic.in

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