

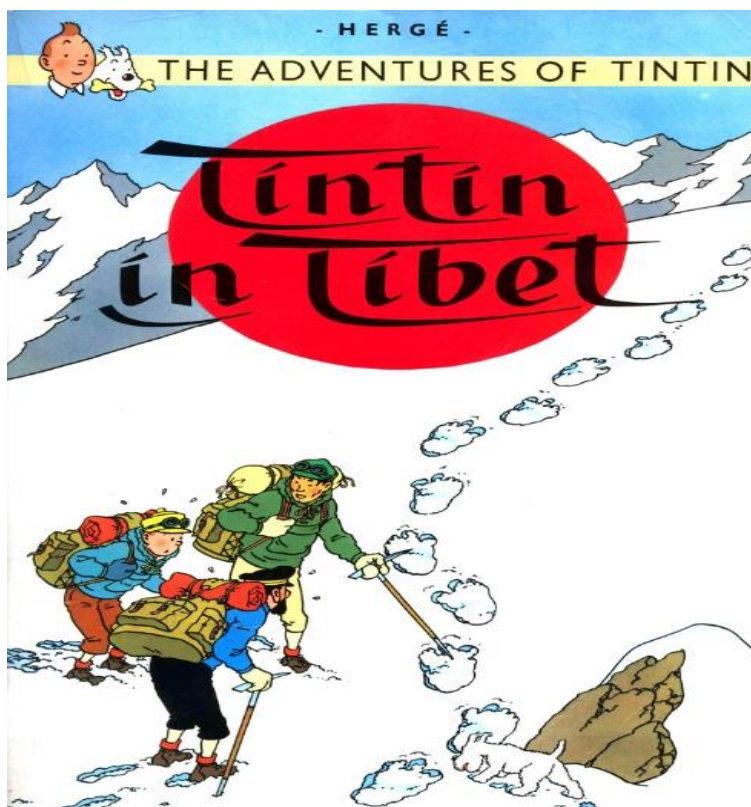
The Department of English

RAJA N.L. KHAN WOMEN'S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS)
Midnapore, West Bengal

Course material- 2 on

Tintin in Tibet

(Plot synopsis and brief character sketches)



For
English Hons.
Semester- IV
Paper- HCC10 (*Popular Literature*)

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What *Tintin in Tibet* is all about!

Tintin reads about a plane crash in the Gosain Than Massif in the Himalayas after returning from a trekking escapade, while enjoying holiday in the French Alps with Captain Haddock and Professor Calculus. While in the middle of a game of chess, Tintin, fatigued, dozes off and has a dream-like vision that his young Chinese friend Chang Chong-Chen (introduced in *The Blue Lotus*) is terribly hurt and calling for help from the ruins of a plane crash. Tintin gets to know that Chang was on the plane that crashed, from an article published in the newspaper the very next morning. Pained and heart-broken, Tintin weeps but recovers soon to realize that his dream was a telepathic vision, Tintin decides to fly to Kathmandu in Nepal via New Delhi, with Snowy, and is accompanied by Captain Haddock who was very skeptical about the venture and believed Chang to be dead. They hire Tharkey, a Sherpa who lead them to the crash site in Tibet, accompanied by some porters, after they have travelled via India and Nepal.

Tintin and his party suddenly discover giant footprints in the snow as they were trekking up the Himalayas, to the crash site. The terrified porters and Tharkey claims the strange footprints belong to Yeti. Overcome by fear, the porters refuse to progress and abandons the group. Tintin, Haddock and Tharkey go on and eventually reach the crash site. Tintin, with Snowy begins his search, attempting to trace Chang's steps, and after glimpsing at a silhouette in the snow finds a cave in which Chang carved his name on a rock, which clearly indicated that he survived the crash.

Tintin and Snowy encounters a storm and catches a glimpse of a human like figure silhouetted in the snow-storm. Tharkey tries to convince Tintin that the expanse is too large to search for and survivors and believes that Tintin had met the Yeti the previous night. However, Tintin spots a scarf stuck higher up on a cliff face and decides to pursue his search, but Tharkey leaves. In their attempt to climb the cliff, Tintin and Haddock almost falls to death, but is finally saved by Tharkey who has come back after undergoing a change of heart, considering Tintin's selfless love for his friend Chang and his desire to rescue him. A terrible storm blow away their tent and they were forced to keep walking in the snow to escape being frostbitten in the cold. Before

collapsing due to exhaustion, they sight the Buddhist monastery of Khor-Biyong at a distance but finds themselves buried in the snow after an avalanche.

The levitating monk at the monastery, Blessed Lightning, 'sees' in a vision that shows three people and a dog, identifiably Tintin, Haddock, Tharkey and Snowy are stuck in peril. After regaining his consciousness, Tintin realizes that it is beyond their physical capacity to reach the monastery and decides to give Snowy a written call for help to deliver. Allured by a bone when he chanced upon it suddenly, Snowy lets go of the message, but soon realizes his blunder and runs to the monastery for help. Blessed Lightning recognizes him as the white dog in the vision and the monks head after him to rescue the party.

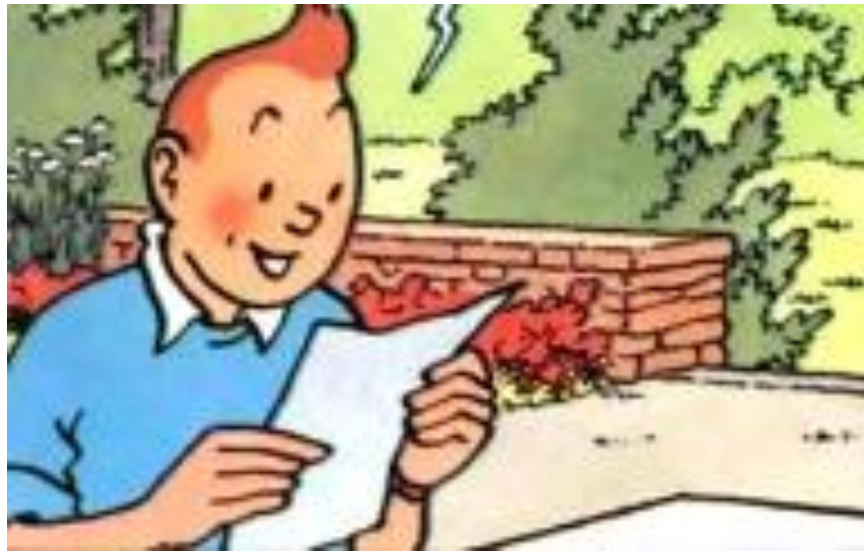
It took Tintin, Haddock and Tharkey two days to regain consciousness in the monastery after receiving generous care from the monks. The Grand Abbot, after realizing why Tintin and his party were there, he realizes the futility of the quest and asks Tintin to return to his country. However, another vision from the Blessed Lightning helps Tintin learn that Chang is still alive inside a mountain cave, but that the "migou", or yeti, is also giving him company. While Haddock questions the authenticity of this vision, Tintin, after receiving directions, travels to Charabang, a small village near the Horn of the Yak, the mountain mentioned by Blessed Lightning. Haddock, after initial hesitations, follows Tintin to Charabang. On the final lap of their journey, the two of them, and Snowy, head to the Horn of the Yak on the final lap of their journey.

Once there, they wait outside the cave until they see the yeti leave. Posting Haddock outside the cave for lookout, Tintin walks inside to find a feverish and shaking Chang lying on a slab of stone. The Yeti, a large anthropoid with an oval-shaped ear, suddenly arrives and enters the cave before the Captain can warn Tintin. On finding Tintin trying to take away Chang, the animal is naturally not a bit pleased at all and tries to attack and wade off Tintin. As he reaches toward Tintin however, Tintin sets on the flash bulb of the camera, which scares him away. Tintin and Haddock carry Chang back to the village of Charabang, and Chang explains to them that the Yeti saved him after the crash and took him away from the rescue parties.

When a safe passage for the party is readied, Chang, the Grand Abbot and an emissary group of monks met Tintin and Haddock and presented Tintin a silk scarf in honour of the bravery he has shown, and appreciating the strength of his friendship with Chang. They return to Nepal by caravan after a week of rest at Khor-Biyong, when Chang has recovered. As their group moves away from the monastery, Chang wonders that the Yeti is not really a wild animal, but instead has a human soul, while the Yeti watches their departure from a distance, heart-broken.

Characters in *Tintin in Tibet*

Tintin



Famous for taking up dangerous cases, Tintin is a young Belgian reporter whose courage, ethics, loyalty and honesty made him a hero across the world. Through his prompt actions, great presence of mind, good sense of right and wrong, and above all, his fearlessness, Tintin, more often than not, is seen emerging victorious and crushing the baddies at the end of each of the adventures. Through his investigative journalism, Tintin unravels mysteries and is seen solving crimes as difficult as any.

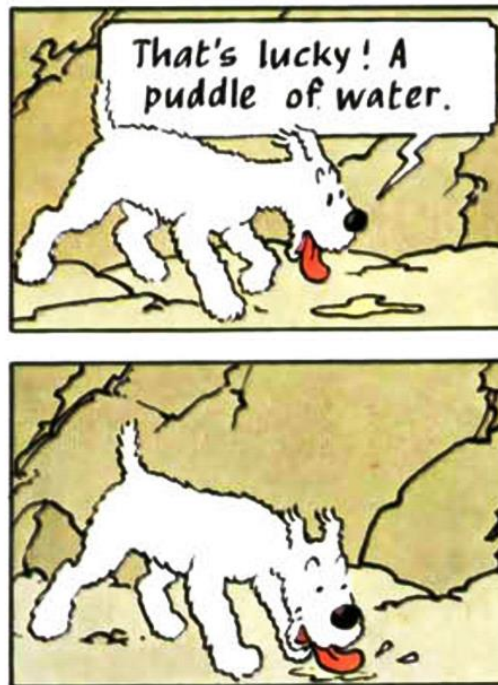
Conceived by his creator Herge as a propagandist hero, much like Totor from the earlier series, Tintin became Herge's mouthpiece and is found to resemble him in more ways than one. Of Tintin, Herge said, "Tintin is me wanting to be heroic and perfect." He continued, "Tintin is

me... my eyes, my feelings, my lungs, my guts!... I believe I am the only person able to animate him, the only person able to give him a soul.” Tintin has appropriated Herge’s boy-scout ideals. Ethically upright, Tintin’s intense desire to punish the wrong and protect the innocent is prominently featured in almost all the adventures. Tintin's iconic representation pierces the real with the symbolic and “allows readers to mask themselves in a character and safely enter a sensually stimulating world”, as Scott McCloud points out. Thereby, Tintin is not a name, neither is it a surname. Tintin has become a phenomenon.

Tintin’s character reaches newer heights in *Tintin in Tibet* as the boy reporter is seen shedding his age-old countenance of a tough young man, always fearless and courageous in the face of danger. The guy who is not afraid to die, who has seen the world enough to know life better than many teenagers, is surprisingly brought down to tears when the realization dawned upon him that his dear friend Chang might have possibly died in the unfortunate incident. However, it did not take too long for Tintin to assume his familiar self and become the guy whom the world so loves. His countenance became strong and his clenched fists displayed determination as he decides to venture towards Tibet to rescue Chang. It was also quite surprising to find Tintin, a modern reporter who is quite aware of the progress in scientific developments and is friends with Professor Calculus, believing in visions that he had in his untimely dream.

However, his dependence on his powerful intuitive powers like always also needs to be appreciated. With sufficient evidences vouchsafing for Chang’s death, it was Tintin’s intuitions that compelled him to hope for Chang’s survival and begin his search. It was this determination that made the angry and skeptical Captain Haddock surrender to Tintin’s whims, and accompany him in his endeavour. The entire journey through the snow-capped Himalayas seems, in hindsight, to be a journey towards reinventing his own self. Tintin, finally rescuing Chang who had officially been taken to be dead, was accomplishing a task that was apparently deemed to be impossible. Therefore, the very act of doing the impossible was a symbolic way of negotiating his own fears and insecurities.

Snowy



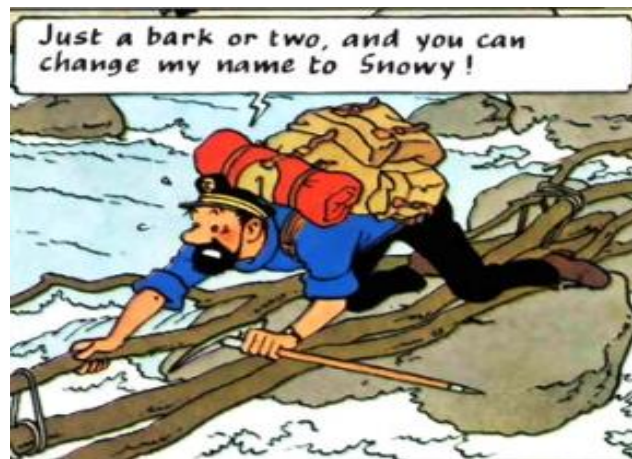
Snowy, a white fox terrier and Tintin's constant companion, seems to the readers nothing less than Tintin's shadow. It is always imperative that Snowy will obviously be accompanying Tintin wherever he goes. Numa Sadoul writes in *Tintin et Moi*, "Snowy is always there alongside Tintin. They talk to each other." Sadoul continues, "Tintin and Snowy are totally on the same wavelength even when they are in conversation." In the original French version, 'Milou' was the name given to Snowy. This, according to scholars, came as a way to thank a girlfriend of Herge, Marie-Louise Van Cutsem, who was fondly called Milou.

Snowy and Tintin, through the span of all the adventures, are seen sharing a very deep bond and love each other to no end. Many a times each of them are seen counting on the other when saving their life was a concern and evade dire consequences. In the illustrations, Snowy is found to communicate adequately with the readers in the form of thoughts which are apparently not carried to the other characters present in the scene, much like 'aside'. These interjections do carry a peculiar sense of humour that is typical to Snowy and brings him at par with the human

characters in the story. However, Snowy does land himself and Tintin in troubles whenever he spots a bone. Like Captain Haddock, he is fond of *Loch Lomond* brand Scotch whisky too.

Snowy does have a very crucial role in *Tintin in Tibet* as well. It was because of Snowy and his spirit of life that got Tintin, Tharkey and Haddock rescued after being buried in snow. Had Snowy not been there and fit to reach the monastery to lead the monks, the Blessed Lightning's visions would not have been validated. Therefore, in this story too, Snowy appears to be almost a Christ figure, a saviour. With that on mind, Snowy faltered on two occasions. His consumption of wine and falling into the river was nothing but courting silly troubles. But if the course of the plot is concerned, this action did provide a bit of comic relief to the readers. On another occasion, he got distracted by a bone and lost the crucial letter that he was carrying to the monk. That said, there can be no doubt that Snowy and Tintin are indeed brothers in arms, sharing a life of adventures.

Captain Haddock



Tintin's best friend, a seafaring captain, Captain Archibald Haddock was introduced in *The Crab with the Golden Claws*. Haddock's first name was not revealed by Herge until the last completed story, *Tintin and the Picaros*. A very charming character, loved by all, the Captain is a man of mood with his own distinguishable tantrums. Initially, he was depicted as a naïve man who is

fond of alcohol, specific brands that is, and a bit irresponsible whose bouts of drunkenness were used to create a comic effect. But in crunch situations, the Captain always gets back his mojo and acts sensibly. After he finds a treasure captured by his ancestor, Sir Francis Haddock, he undergoes a genuine change in nature and become quite fond of his friends. The Captain is clearly an experienced man, pitted against the young protagonist to guide him in moments of crisis. Captain Haddock, after spending twenty years of his life in sea, conducting voyages, has finally retired to settle in the fancy mansion Marlinspike Hall, his ancestral home. Even though he is not a sailor anymore, he is found to be comfortable roaming around in a sailor's outfit.

Haddock uses a range of brilliantly curated insults and curses to express his feelings, such as "billions of blue blistering barnacles" (sometimes just "blistering barnacles", "billions of blistering barnacles", or "blue blistering barnacles"), "ten thousand thundering typhoons" (sometimes just "thundering typhoons"), "troglodyte", "bashi-bazouk", "visigoths", "kleptomaniac", "ectoplasm", "sea gherkin", "anacoluthon", "pockmark", "nincompoop", "abominable snowman", "nitwits", "scoundrels", "steam rollers", "parasites", "vegetarians", "floundering oath", "carpet seller", "blundering Bazookas", "Popinjay", "bragger", "pinheads", "miserable slugs", "ectomorph", "maniacs", "freshwater swabs", "miserable molecule of mildew", and "Fuzzy Wuzzy", but nothing that is actually considered a swear word.

Very much like Snowy, the Captain also enjoys a warm place in the boy hero's heart and is seen accompanying him in all his endeavours. A selfless man, the Captain's love for Tintin knows no bounds. They have mutual respect for each other and absolute trust is the key to their relationship. This is once again manifested in the portrayal of Captain Haddock in *Tintin in Tibet*. The Captain seemed to be pretty much convinced that Tintin's Chinese friend had died in the crash, and tried hard to dissuade him from venturing into the search operation, Haddock nevertheless accompanies Tintin to the rough mountains of Tibet. This he does out of his concern for his young friend and was even ready to sacrifice his own life if that increases chances of Tintin's survival while scaling the high cliff. However, he too, like snowy, comes to terms with his habits in rough circumstances, but not before he had drowned himself with a bottle of Loch Lomond, crossed the wrong pool and fell of the root bridge while clambering back.

Tharkey



One of the minor characters in the story, Tharkey is a Sherpa guide whom Tintin hires to guide the group and help them in locating the ill-fated Patna-Kathmandu flight carrying Chang Chong-Chen. Reluctant at first, Tharkey took up the key responsibility knowing very well the nature of the perils that lay ahead. His importance in the entire action lies in the fact that it was him who saved the lives of Tintin and Haddock when they were found hanging off the cliff in a state of danger. Initially, after reaching the site, and assuming that Tintin had seen the Yeti the previous night, he decided to convince Tintin and Haddock to leave the site immediately. When his pleas were ignored, he deserted Tintin. However, his conscience and Tintin's love for his friend changed Tharkey's heart and brought him back to the site to discover Tintin and Captain in trouble, and finally saving them. He accompanied them in their further journey but was forced to rest at the monastery once he got himself hurt.

Chang



Chang's importance in Tintin's life is nothing that the readers have to wonder. The fact that they are moved to tears when they are separated or re-united speaks volumes about the warmth of their relationship. The very thought of Chang's death was enough to break the young reporter who appeared to be very strong and fearless otherwise.

The character of Chang Cong-Chen was modeled on a real life Chinese friend of Herge, Zhang Chongren, who was also an artist. Zhang was a student at the Academie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, when they first met. This friendship culminated into a collaboration that produced *The Blue Lotus*, the adventure where Tintin first met Chang. It is largely believed and also acknowledged by Herge, that it was Zhang who educated Herge about the Chinese culture, history, their drawings and their life style. It took Herge almost twenty five years since *The Blue Lotus* to bring back Chang in *Tintin in Tibet*.

Although Chang does not directly feature in the illustrations for the major portion of the text, only to appear at the end of the story, his presence was a luminous one. Not once did any of the characters forget his hypothetical presence, or rather his absence since the journey to rescue him

had begun. Chang was introduced to the readers and situated in the context of the story first through a letter from him. It was followed by news articles about a plane crash and one about Chang being a victim of the crash. Simultaneously Tintin began having visions of Chang seeking help. This worked as a catalyst and influenced the subsequent course of action in the entire story. Chang's importance in the story lies in the fact that the entire adventure is all about the discovery of this Chinese friend of Tintin and his rescue.

In Chang, we also find a very sensible and kind human being. It was his accounts that dismissed the popular perception of the Yeti to be an “abominable snowman”. Chang felt the warmth and love that the Yeti displayed after he rescued Chang from the debris of the crash. While he was finally leaving the mountains, Chang felt bad for the Yeti who saved his life and took care of him. This made Chang confess to Tintin and Haddock that the Yeti, he feels, also has a human soul that is capable of loving, at is not really “abominable” at all.