

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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GRATITUDE / ALKYSH (1951)

Shukurbek Beishenaliev (1928–2000)

References:

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OVERVIEW

Author

Shukurbek Beishenaliev was a Kyrgyz Soviet writer, novelist, playwright, and children's author. He was born in the village of Kurtka in the Naryn region of Kyrgyzstan. He graduated from the Faculty of Philology at Kyrgyz State University in Frunze in 1952 and attended Higher Literary Courses in Moscow from 1962 to 1964. Beishenaliev worked as a teacher, researcher, journalist, and editor. His writing explored Kyrgyz culture, rural life, human relationships, and social responsibility, with particular attention to children's experiences.

In 1974, he received the title of Honored Artist of the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1976, his children's book *Müyüzdüü Kozu* (*The Horned Lamb*) received an international honorary diploma associated with the Hans Christian Andersen Award. In 1993, he was named People's Writer of the Kyrgyz Republic. He died in 2000 and was buried in Bishkek.

Beishenaliev wrote novels, short stories, children's books, and plays. In 1950, he won first prize in a republic-wide literary competition for *Chynygy Dostuk* (*True Friendship*). His novel *Taalay Jolu* (*The Path to Happiness*), published in 1957, is another notable work.

His other works include *Ukuk* (*Right or Law*), *Kordun Tukum* (*The Lineage of the Oppressed*), *Soldat Mahabaty* (*A Soldier's Love*), *Urpaktar Üñü* (*The Voice of Generations*), *Dankka Jarasha Jük* (*The Burden of Glory*), *Too Koyundagy Gül* (*A Flower Among the Mountains*), *Amanat*, and *Bolot Kalem* (*The Steel Pen*), a novel about the Kyrgyz poet Togolok Moldo.

Children's literature was central to his career. Works such as *Ak Taylak* (*The White Camel Calf*), *Tabyshmakchy Chynara*, and *Chabalekey* (*The Swallow*) reflect children's lives, nature, friendship, and Kyrgyz traditions. Beishenaliev also wrote plays, including *Dos* (*Friend*), *Meyman* (*The Guest*), and *Bagynbas Akyn* (*The Unyielding Poet*). In addition, he translated works by Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov, Henrik Ibsen, and Mikhail Sholokhov into Kyrgyz, contributing to the development of Kyrgyz literature and its engagement with world literature.

Novella

The novella *Gratitude* (*Alkysh*) was written in 1950–1951 and published in 1953 by the Kyrgyz mambas publishing house. Its Russian translation, *Blagodarnost* (*Gratitude*), was published in 1963 in Frunze.

Background

The novella reflects the Soviet ideological and educational context of the postwar period, when schools, collective farms, and youth organizations worked together to develop disciplined, hardworking, and socially responsible citizens. Soviet literature for young readers often emphasized academic achievement, collective labor, patriotism, and service to society.

These ideals are reflected in the experiences of Abdylas and his classmates. By caring for calves, participating in irrigation projects, cooperating with local farmers, and fulfilling their school responsibilities, the children combine academic learning with practical work. Their teachers, the school principal, and the kolkhoz chairman reinforce these values through guidance, praise, and rewards, while the Young Pioneers and Komsomol introduce them to the broader ideological goals of Soviet society.

The novella also portrays the challenges of postwar rural life in Kyrgyzstan, including wartime family losses, seasonal pastoral migration, and agricultural labor. Abdylas's desire to support his mother highlights his personal sense of responsibility, while the children's recognition in the newspaper shows how their efforts are valued by the wider community.

Overall, the novella presents education as a combination of academic learning, practical labor, and ideological instruction, preparing young people to become disciplined, cooperative, and active members of Soviet society.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Abdylas – The main character, a hardworking schoolboy

Burma – Abdylas's mother

Aigul – Abdylas's younger sister

Akai, Roza, and Kary – Abdylas's friends

Vitka – A boy from the city who becomes friends with the children

Juma – Kolkhoz chairman

Kerimkul – School principal

Kurman – Komsomol representative

Akun – Head herder

Batysh – Head of the cattle farm

SYNOPSIS

Abdylas is a hardworking Kyrgyz schoolboy who lives with his mother, Burma, and younger sister, Aigul, after losing his father during World War II. He dreams of spending the summer working alongside his mother on a cattle farm. With the support of the school principal and kolkhoz chairman, his wish comes true.

During the summer, Abdylas and his friends help dig irrigation canals, care for calves, and learn about animal husbandry at Son-Kol pasture. They meet Vitka, a boy from the city, and develop a strong friendship through reading, horseback riding, and shared adventures. Together, they protect sheep from wolves, collect wildflowers, and contribute to their community. Their efforts earn recognition in a children's newspaper.

As autumn approaches, the friends move to lower pastures and prepare for the new school year. Abdylas and his classmates also study the Komsomol charter, learning about responsibility, cooperation, friendship, and dedication to society.

SCENES

A Young Cow and a Boy's Daily Routine Abdylas came home from school and went straight to the shed where his young cow was kept. Still wearing his school uniform and carrying his backpack, he looked at the animal and asked gently, "Why haven't you eaten your grass? Are you thirsty? Come on, let's go and get some water." As they left the shed, the young cow walked toward the canal, where fresh water was flowing. The cow had been purchased for his mother by the kolkhoz (collective farm) two years earlier as part of her wages for working in the fields. Usually, when Abdylas returned from school, he would first take off his uniform, then look after his cow, and finally prepare his books for the next school day. However, that day was different. After entering the house, he sat at the table and gazed at the portraits hanging on the wall.

A Dream of Joining His Mother Staring at the photograph on the wall, Abdylas whispered, "If only you were still alive, all my wishes would have come true." His father had died during the Second World War,

leaving Abdylas and his mother behind. His mother worked at the kolkhoz, laboring in the wheat fields and helping to grow the crops.

The previous week, the school principal had announced that during the summer holidays, students could help shepherds, cattle herders, and horse herders in the pastures. Abdylas was excited by the idea. He wanted to spend the summer working on the cattle farm alongside his mother. However, when he returned home and told his mother about his wish, she did not seem enthusiastic. She was already working in the wheat fields, and moving to the cattle farm would not be easy for her.

Abdylas's Dream Comes Closer Abdylas decided to visit the kolkhoz chairman to tell him that he wanted to spend the summer in the pastures with his mother. As he was getting ready to leave, his younger sister, Aigul, who was six years old and had just finished the first grade, asked him where he was going.

"I'm going to the kolkhoz," he replied. "I want to talk to the chairman about working in the pastures during the summer holidays."

When Abdylas arrived at the chairman's office, he found the school principal there as well. They listened to the boy and encouraged him to follow his wish. With their support, his mother finally agreed to go to the pastures with him. She would work as an assistant to a cattle herder responsible for a herd of fifty cows. Later, they would move to the cattle farm together.

A Meeting to Celebrate the Children's Results The school invited the parents of the first-grade students to a meeting to discuss their children's academic results. Jenish's father, Aigul's mother Burma and Abdylas's mother came to the school. Their teacher, Gulbar, announced the results. Aigul and Jenish had earned top marks in every subject. Both children had done exceptionally well throughout the school year. However, one boy, Medet, had failed mathematics and writing. His mother was upset and wanted to know why her son had failed those two subjects. Gulbar explained that Medet had missed classes thirty-three times and had often failed to complete his homework. His frequent absences and lack of preparation had affected his performance. Aigul's mother and Jenish's father were delighted with their children's excellent results. Pleased and proud, they left the school and headed home.

Life in the Pastures Burma, her daughter Aigul, and Abdylas went to the pastures beside the Naryn River, the longest river in Kyrgyzstan. Aigul was afraid of the cows, but Akun, the cattle herder, protected her. Although it was early spring, Aigul felt cold in the mountain pastures.

Meanwhile, Abdylas gathered his classmates and Akai to meet their teachers. Only Akai knew about his plan. Abdylas suggested that students who were at the seventh grade help dig irrigation canals to bring water to the fields. The teachers supported his idea, and the local people were pleased with the students' willingness to help.

Working for the Community Abdylas, Roza, Askar, and their classmates arrived at the canal construction site. Nuraaly, the kind, elderly team leader, assigned each student five meters of canal to dig and asked them to record their work to receive their wages later. He explained that he had worked manually all his life, but technology now made removing large stones easier.

Meanwhile, a local man named Abysh returned home and scolded his son Kary for playing with his younger brother instead of working on the canal. Abysh felt ashamed because even the village chairman had asked about Kary. Abdylas explained that Kary had said he would not work that spring break. Abysh believed everyone should contribute to the community.

"My Spring Break" When spring break ended, the students returned to school and wrote essays about how they had spent their holidays. Aigul wrote about her time at the cow farm, where she had been frightened by the cows. She also described the beautiful nature she had seen. Abdylas wrote about helping dig the irrigation canal, which was completed in time for the fields to be ploughed. He also mentioned the books he had read, including *People of Our Time* by T. Sydykbekov and works by other writers.

The Birth of a Calf When the cows began giving birth, Abdylas and his mother, Burma, stayed beside a cow that was struggling to deliver her calf. Akun, the experienced herdsman, told them it was still too early for the birth. Worried, Abdylas watched closely, carrying a book by Professor Tsvetkov about cow fertility and the birthing process.

Three days later, Abdylas saw that the cow had finally given birth. He, Aigul, and their mother were delighted to see the newborn calf. Akun explained that after years of working with cows, he had learned to recognize when they were ready to give birth and whether they could safely have calves in the future. Aigul began drawing the little calf, while Abdylas named it Tolbashy, meaning the first calf born during the calving season.

The Last Calf Eight cows had been assigned to Burma, Abdylas's mother, and all eight gave birth. The last calf was named Kenje, meaning "the youngest" or "the last one." Aigul named another calf Gul, meaning "flower." Abdylas stayed beside the cow even when the last calf was born. He and Aigul were learning how to herd the calves. When Aigul asked why newborn calves were not taken out to graze, Abdylas explained that they needed to grow a little first. One night, kolkhoz chairman Juma and school principal Kerimkul were surprised to find Abdylas working by the cowshed. They praised his dedication.

Preparing for the Exams According to the state curriculum, seventh-grade students had to take final exams in algebra, geometry, and languages. The math exams covered 100 problems, including fractions and more challenging calculations. Abdylas, Akai, Roza, Kary, and their classmates began preparing for the exams. Abdylas was worried that algebra might be difficult for him, so he asked Roza for help. After working through the problems on their own, the students attended extra classes with their teacher, who explained how to solve the questions they found particularly difficult.

The Examination Day The long-awaited exam day finally arrived. The school principal, mathematics teacher Ashym, and several other teachers formally opened the comprehensive algebra and geometry examination. The classrooms felt more serious and tense than usual, and the exam papers remained sealed in envelopes until the test began.

Abdylas worked through the problems without much difficulty and did his best to answer every question. Roza also concentrated and tried her hardest. Ashym noticed that Kary was struggling with the math problems, so he encouraged the students to do their best and reminded them not to cheat. In total, 26 students sat for the examination.

Exam Results After the exam, the students gathered to discuss which problems they had solved and which ones had given them trouble. Roza and Abdylas had promised to exchange flowers after the exam, so Roza brought Abdylas a flower, but he had forgotten to bring one for her.

Later, the teachers announced the results. Of the 26 students who took the exam, seven received an A (5), twelve received a B (4), and seven received a C (3). Kary was among those who received a C. The teachers said everyone had earned the marks they deserved. Kary was still happy with his result because mathematics had always been difficult for him.

The Final Exams and Farewell The next examination was in Kyrgyz language and literature. Abdylas's first question concerned complex sentences, including independent and dependent clauses. The second asked about the poetry of the Kyrgyz poet Toktogul Satylganov before the October Revolution. For the final task, he had to analyze a sentence grammatically. The exam was oral, and Abdylas answered all three questions confidently and correctly. Abdylas and his classmates successfully completed all their examinations. On June 12, the school held a farewell gathering for the seventh-grade students, marking the end of an important chapter in their school lives.

A Journey to the Summer Pastures The next day, Abdylas set off for the summer pastures to visit his mother, Burma. Since he was staying with his paternal relatives, his aunt Kanysh helped him prepare his backpack for the journey. Akai, Roza, and Kary joined him to see how the calves were being raised.

They rode horses through beautiful mountain scenery, passing rivers and green pastures along the way. Their guide, the shepherd Bayaly, led the group as they talked about different ways of raising calves. Everyone admired the breathtaking landscape. At last, they reached the pasture where Burma was looking after the cows and their calves.

Life at Son-Kol Pasture At last, they reached Son-Kol, one of the high-mountain pastures in the Naryn region. The breathtaking scenery left a lasting impression on Abdylas and his friends. Abdylas was amazed to see how much the calves had grown over the past three months. His sister Aigul told him that Kenje, the

last calf to be born, had grown so strong that it sometimes pushed her aside. The children gradually learned to handle the calves and use a separator to separate milk from cream. Burma showed them her records, which revealed that she had produced more milk than the previous year. Abdylas and his friends also weighed each calf and carefully recorded its weight.

Comparing the Calves' Growth When Abdylas asked which calves weighed the most, his mother, Burma, explained that Roza's mother's calf and Akai's father's two calves were the heaviest. Abdylas felt disappointed and wondered why their calves were not doing as well. Burma explained that those families had been raising cows and calves for many years and had more experience. Determined to improve, Abdylas and his friends began calculating how much weight the calves had gained over the previous fifteen days. They wanted to present their findings to Batysh, the head of the cattle farm, when she came to visit.

Meeting Vitka Abdylas and his friends showed Batysh the records they had kept, demonstrating how much the calves had grown. Batysh listened as they explained their results. Later, Vera, a Russian nurse from Frunze who looked after the health of herders in the summer pastures, told the boys and Roza that her brother Vitka had arrived in the village. She wanted them to meet him and mentioned that he spoke Kyrgyz even better than she did, though she herself spoke it simply. When they reached the village, they found Vitka reading beside the Red House, the local cultural center. Abdylas greeted him in Russian, and Vitka greeted him back. The boys introduced themselves and shared their food: Kary brought wild mountain vegetables, Abdylas offered *kurut*, dried cheese and Vitka shared apples from the city. A local woman brought kymyz, and they all ate together in the Red House.

Friendship with Vitka Abdylas and his friends soon became close to Vitka. They talked about books, and Vitka shared some of his favorites, especially *The Story of a Real Man* by Boris Polevoy. Abdylas said he had heard of the book. Vitka enthusiastically described the heroic Soviet pilot who continued to fly despite losing both legs in the war. Later, the boys taught Vitka how to ride a horse. He picked it up quickly and enjoyed the experience. Vitka told his new friends that he loved the Son-Kol pastures, with their beautiful mountains and open landscapes.

An Adventure in the Pastures Kurman, the local Komsomol representative, visited the students at the summer pastures. He needed someone to deliver newspapers and magazines to the people living there. Kary volunteered because he knew the pastures well and could travel between them on horseback. Later, the students went on a picnic, and Vitka brought his camera to photograph the beautiful scenery. When it suddenly began to rain, the boys took shelter in a cave and lit a fire. They ate boorsoks, traditional fried bread, with sour cream and drank kymyz, a fermented mare's milk drink. As the rain fell outside, they sat around the fire, sharing stories and enjoying one another's company.

A Morning at the Spring The next morning, the students woke up late, did their morning exercises, and then went to see a spring that burst from the sandy ground like a fountain. Vitka explained that there were underground layers of water beneath the surface. When the water found its way through a soft layer of sand, it shot up into the air like a fountain. Vitka dreamed of studying geology and geography at university, hoping to learn more about places like this. Meanwhile, Kary arrived with newspapers and magazines to deliver to the people living in the summer pastures. He was proud of his new role as a postman.

A Concert for Peace Aigul and Roza were picking wildflowers when they noticed people heading toward the Burgandy Suu gathering place. Kary told them that a meeting would be held there, followed by a concert featuring local singers. Curious, the three of them went to the gathering. They watched as people arranged tables to form a platform for the speakers. The presenter spoke about peace, saying that socialism and the Soviet Union had brought peace to the people. War, he reminded them, brought only death and tears. Aigul thought sadly, *If there had been no war, my father would still be alive.* Then the concert began. The audience especially enjoyed the choir's performance of the "Hymn of Democratic Youth." The singers raised their voices proudly: "You will never silence our songs!"

A Mother's Comfort Aigul was sleeping beside her mother, Burma, in the yurt. Moonlight filtered through the opening, softly illuminating the inside. Suddenly, Aigul began to cry in her sleep. "No, I don't want to! No, no, no!" she cried. Burma woke and gently drew her daughter close. "What's wrong, my darling?" she asked. "I don't want war," Aigul sobbed. "I've lost my father." Burma stroked her daughter's hair and held her tightly. "My dear, the war is over. We'll have a good life in our Soviet country. Your father died when I was pregnant with you. You and your brother, Abdylas, will grow up to be happy." She comforted Aigul until she calmed down. As she drifted back to sleep, Aigul whispered, "There won't be another war, will there, Mama?"

Collecting and Preserving Wildflowers Roza and Aigul were collecting a variety of wildflowers and rare native plants for a herbarium project assigned by their biology and geography teachers. They searched the summer pastures for different species, paying special attention to unusual flowers and plants that grew only in the local area. They wanted to collect a good variety for their school assignment. Roza took great care to dry and preserve each flower without damaging its petals or leaves. She followed the method their teacher had demonstrated at school, carefully pressing the plants so they would retain their shape. She also asked Abdylas to help her. He watched as Roza sorted the dried specimens, placed them in folders, and wrote the name of each plant beside it. She wanted her herbarium to be neat and informative, with every flower and plant properly identified.

Tolbashy's Injury While Roza and Aigul were collecting wildflowers, their calves grazed nearby. Abdylas was keeping an eye on his calf, Tolbashy, when he suddenly noticed that it was limping. One of its feet had become swollen, and the calf was struggling to walk. Abdylas grew worried, fearing that Tolbashy had broken its leg. He hurried to the pasture camp to find Batysh, the farm manager, and Akun, the head herdsman. After examining the calf's foot, Akun reassured him that the bone was not broken; the calf had only sprained its foot. He explained that potassium permanganate could help treat the injury and that Tolbashy needed to rest for several days. The veterinarian came and treated the calf twice. Abdylas watched over Tolbashy anxiously, hoping it would recover soon. Fortunately, the treatment worked, and after a few days of rest, Tolbashy was back on its feet.

A Visit from the Pioneers' Newspaper One day, Kary arrived with the newspaper *Kyzyl Kyrgyzstan* and several other papers. As the students gathered to read them, they suddenly noticed Kurman, the local Komsomol representative, approaching with two young men dressed in the city style. They wore ties and Pobeda watches, just like Soviet officials.

Kurman explained that the two visitors had come from Frunze to work for *Kyrgyzstan Pioneri*, a newspaper for Soviet schoolchildren who belonged to the Young Pioneers, a youth organization that encouraged discipline, collective activities, and service to society.

The visitors asked Abdylas and his friends how they helped the farmers and cared for their calves. They were also impressed by the students' herbarium. They took photographs of Roza and the other students and invited them to write reports for *Kyrgyzstan Pioneri* about their lives and activities in the summer pastures.

A Night Guarding the Sheep The summer pasture camps were scattered across the mountains, some much farther apart than others. Rumors began to spread that wolves were threatening two of the farms. At one camp, the father had gone to the village to take care of some business, leaving his wife and young son alone. Frightened by distant howling and the possibility of a wolf attack, the boy, known as Syiryk, hurried to Abdylas for help. No one knew his real name. His face was so weather-beaten by the sun and wind that everyone called him Syiryk. Abdylas, Akai, and Kary went with Syiryk to his camp. Vitka, the Russian boy, came along with them. They stayed awake all night, guarding the sheepfold and making sure the flock was safe. Syiryk's mother was deeply grateful for their help. To pass the time, the boys played traditional nomadic games. Vitka thought that these old games were something they could never play in the city. The next morning, as the boys were returning, they came across another flock of sheep with no shepherd in sight. They found the shepherd asleep nearby, woke him up, and continued on their way.

Good News in the Newspaper One day, Akun, the head herder, was sharing stories from his life with some of the local men. The boys and girls gathered around, listening with great interest. Just then, Kary, the young postman, arrived with exciting news. Trying to hide his surprise, he took out a copy of *Kyrgyzstan*

Pioneri. The newspaper had published an article titled “The Young Patriots,” featuring Abdylas, Akai, Kary, Roza, and Aigul. Everyone eagerly looked at the photographs and read the article. They were overjoyed to see themselves in print.

They had more reasons to celebrate, too. They had received a personal note from the journalist they had visited, as well as a letter of thanks from the kolkhoz chairman. The news made them all feel proud and happy.

A Farewell to Vitka Autumn arrived, turning the green pastures yellow, and the new school year was just around the corner. Vitka had to return to the city, where his parents were waiting for him. Burma, Akun, and the boys prepared gifts for their friend. They gave him homemade butter and kurut, a traditional dried, salted cheese. Akai even offered Vitka his beautiful belt, but Vitka politely refused to accept such a treasured gift. Vitka had brought presents for his friends, too. He gave Aigul a Pioneer neckerchief and a box of crayons. Abdylas, Akai, and Kary each received a book, while Roza was given a beautiful silk scarf. After thanking everyone warmly, Vitka said goodbye and left for the city, carrying with him fond memories of the summer they had spent together.

Preparing the Young Pioneers for the Komsomol Kurman, the local Komsomol representative, sat in the cultural center, reading poems about the Komsomol. He felt proud to belong to the organization and to serve its ideals.

The Komsomol, the Communist Youth League of the Soviet Union, was a youth organization that taught young people communist values and encouraged them to devote themselves to building a socialist society. Children usually joined the Young Pioneers before becoming eligible for the Komsomol. Suddenly, Kurman found the Komsomol’s charter, known as the *ustav*, in his bag. He was delighted. He had been planning to introduce its rules and principles to the young Pioneers living at the summer pastures, who would soon be old enough to join the Komsomol. Like many young people in the Soviet Union, they had grown up believing in the ideals of socialism and feeling proud of their country and their duty to serve it.

Moving to the Autumn Pastures The high-altitude pastures of Son-Kol had become bare. With little grass left, the cattle and sheep wandered about searching for food. Akun, the head herder, asked Batysh, the head of the cattle farm, to move the herds to lower-lying autumn pastures. The cows were barely giving any milk, and the livestock urgently needed better grazing. The kolkhoz had a pasture committee responsible for deciding when and where the herds should move. When its members heard Akun’s report that the animals needed to be moved without delay, they approved the relocation. Traditionally, Kyrgyz herders moved their livestock between four seasonal pastures: *kyshtoo* for winter, *jazdoo* for spring, *jailoo* for summer, and *kuzdoo* for autumn. So the herds left the highlands of Son-Kol and moved to the autumn pastures closer to the villages.

A Surprise from Vitka On their way to the autumn pastures, the children spotted bushes covered with *karagat* berries, or blackcurrants. They stopped to pick some, enjoying the sweet-tart fruit. Suddenly, Abdylas, Akai, and Roza caught sight of their friend Kary, the young postman. He had another surprise for them. Vitka had sent a large bag of gifts all the way from Frunze! Wanting to make sure the gifts were shared fairly, Vitka had addressed the package to Roza and Aigul. The girls opened the big bag eagerly and were delighted to discover fresh fruit inside.

When they arrived at the autumn pastures, they shared the blackcurrants they had picked along the way and the fruit from Frunze with everyone there. Vitka’s thoughtful gesture brought joy to the whole community, even from far away.

Writing About Their Summer Holidays With the new school year approaching, Roza, Aigul, Abdylas, Akai, and Kary gathered on a hill and brought along their essays about how they had spent their summer holidays. Writing a summer holiday essay was a required assignment for the students, so they took turns reading their work aloud and discussing what they had written. When it was Aigul’s turn, she admitted that she hadn’t written an essay. Roza reassured her, explaining that elementary school pupils weren’t required to do the assignment. In their essays, the others wrote about the calves they had cared for, Vitka’s visit, and the many memorable events they had shared during the summer. As they listened to one another, they recalled their adventures and realized just how much had happened during their holiday.

Getting Ready for the Komsomol Abdylas took out the Komsomol charter that Kurman had given him. Soon, the older students would move from the Young Pioneers to the Komsomol, so they wanted to be well prepared. They read the charter carefully, going through its articles and memorizing the most important ones. Afterward, they found a song about the Komsomol and sang it together at the top of their voices. Just then, they spotted Juma, the kolkhoz chairman, and Kerimkul, the school principal, approaching. The men greeted the students and thanked them for their hard work during the summer. Juma told them they would be paid for their work. The children proudly showed the men the calves they had looked after throughout the summer. The chairman and the principal praised the students for their efforts. The children were delighted with the recognition and looked forward to the new school year.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Abdylas

Abdylas is the main character of the novella and represents the qualities valued in Soviet education and rural life. Through his schoolwork, agricultural activities, and relationships with his family and classmates, he demonstrates how young people can contribute to their community. His desire to help his mother reveals his personal sense of responsibility, while his participation in caring for calves and irrigation projects shows his willingness to work for the common good. Abdylas's character is shaped by both his family circumstances and the educational environment around him. His actions present him as a young boy who values hard work, cooperation, and personal development.

Hardworking Abdylas is a hardworking character who demonstrates his dedication through his participation in agricultural activities. The scenes in which he and his classmates care for calves and take part in irrigation projects show that he is willing to contribute to the work of the village. Rather than limiting himself to school lessons, Abdylas takes part in practical tasks that require time and effort. His involvement in these activities reflects the importance of physical labor in the novella. Through Abdylas's actions, the author presents hard work as an essential quality that helps young people develop useful skills and contribute to their community.

Responsible Abdylas demonstrates responsibility through his concern for his mother and his willingness to help his family. His desire to support her shows that he understands the difficulties of their circumstances and does not think only about his own needs. This responsibility is also reflected in his participation in caring for calves and completing practical tasks with his classmates. These scenes suggest that Abdylas takes his duties seriously, even though he is still a schoolboy. His character illustrates how family obligations and everyday work shape a young person's development. Through Abdylas, responsibility is presented as both a personal quality and a contribution to family and community life.

Cooperative Abdylas is cooperative because he participates in activities that depend on the efforts of several people. His work with classmates on calf care and irrigation projects shows that he is part of a group working toward shared goals. These scenes emphasize that agricultural work requires coordination, mutual assistance, and a willingness to contribute. Abdylas's participation also connects him with local farmers, demonstrating that cooperation extends beyond the classroom. Instead of presenting achievement as an individual accomplishment alone, the novella emphasizes the importance of working together. Through Abdylas and his classmates, cooperation becomes a practical part of everyday life in the village.

Dedicated Abdylas is dedicated because he takes both his education and his practical responsibilities seriously. The novella connects his school life with his involvement in agricultural work, showing that he must devote attention to different aspects of his daily routine. His participation in caring for calves and irrigation activities reflects his commitment to tasks that benefit the village. At the same time, his schoolwork remains an important part of his development. The recognition the children receive for their efforts further highlights the value placed on commitment and achievement. Abdylas's dedication is therefore expressed through his continued involvement in learning, working, and helping others.

Burma

Burma is Abdylas and Aigul's mother, whose life reflects the challenges faced by rural women in postwar Kyrgyzstan. After her husband dies during the Second World War, she continues working at the kolkhoz to support her family. Her responsibilities include working in the wheat fields and later caring for cattle in the summer pastures. Through Burma, the novella portrays the difficulties of raising children while earning a living in demanding circumstances. Her relationship with Abdylas and Aigul also reveals the emotional side of her character. Although she faces economic hardship and the loss of her husband, she remains an important source of support and security for her children.

Caring Burma's caring nature is particularly evident in the scene where Aigul wakes up crying after dreaming about war. When her daughter sobs that she does not want another war because she has already lost her father, Burma immediately wakes up and draws her close. She gently strokes Aigul's hair, holds her tightly, and reassures her that the war is over. She also reminds her daughter that she and Abdylas will grow up to have a happy life. Rather than dismissing Aigul's fear, Burma responds with affection and patience. This scene reveals her emotional connection with her children and her desire to protect them from the pain caused by their father's death.

Hardworking Burma's hardworking nature is shown through her employment at the kolkhoz and her responsibilities as a cattle worker. Before moving to the summer pastures, she works in the wheat fields, helping cultivate the crops. Later, she takes a position as an assistant to a cattle herder responsible for fifty cows. During the summer, eight cows assigned to her give birth, and she continues caring for the animals and their calves. She also keeps records of milk production, which show that she has produced more milk than the previous year. These scenes demonstrate the physical effort and practical skills her work requires. Burma's labor is essential to supporting her family and contributing to the collective farm.

Cautious Burma's cautious nature appears when Abdylas tells her that he wants to spend the summer working in the pastures alongside her. Unlike her son, who is excited about the opportunity, Burma initially shows little enthusiasm for the plan. She is already working in the wheat fields, and moving to the cattle farm would require a significant change in her working arrangements. Her reaction suggests that she considers the practical difficulties before agreeing to her son's wish. She does not immediately accept an idea simply because Abdylas is enthusiastic about it. Only after the school principal and kolkhoz chairman support the plan does she agree to move to the pastures with him. This scene presents her as a mother who carefully considers her family's circumstances before making decisions.

Comforting Burma's comforting nature is most clearly revealed in her response to Aigul's fear of war. In the nighttime scene inside the yurt, Aigul cries out in her sleep and expresses her fear of losing her family. Burma responds immediately, asking what is wrong and holding her daughter close. She explains that the war has ended and reassures Aigul that she and Abdylas will have a good life. Her words are intended to help her daughter feel safe despite the painful memory of their father's death. Burma cannot change what happened to their family, but she tries to ease Aigul's distress through physical affection and reassurance. This scene highlights her role as a source of emotional security for her children.

Kary

Kary is one of Abdylas's classmates and friends. At the beginning of the novella, he is shown as a boy who avoids work and does not put much effort into his studies. However, as the story progresses, he becomes more involved in activities with his friends and the local community. His decision to deliver newspapers to people living in the summer pastures shows a different side of his personality. Through Kary, the novella explores how a young person's behavior, interests, and attitude toward responsibilities can develop through new experiences.

Lazy Kary's laziness is evident in both his schoolwork and his attitude toward community responsibilities. During the spring break, he refuses to help dig irrigation canals and instead spends time playing with his younger brother. His father, Abysh, becomes upset and embarrassed because even the village

chairman has asked about Kary's absence. Kary's lack of effort is also reflected in his mathematics examination. He struggles with the problems and receives a grade of 3, but he is happy with the result because mathematics has always been difficult for him. Rather than feeling disappointed or trying to improve, he seems satisfied with simply passing. These scenes suggest that Kary does not always push himself to achieve better results.

Sociable Kary's sociable nature is shown through his friendship with Abdylas, Akai, Roza, and the other students. He joins them on their journey to the summer pastures to see how the calves are being raised. He also participates in their picnic, where the boys take shelter from the rain in a cave, light a fire, and share traditional food. Through these shared experiences, Kary becomes part of the group's adventures and activities. His friendships show that he enjoys being around others and taking part in their conversations and experiences. Although he initially avoids certain responsibilities, he remains connected to his friends and becomes involved in their summer activities.

Helpful Kary shows that he can contribute to the community when he volunteers to deliver newspapers and magazines to people living in the summer pastures. When Kurman, the local Komsomol representative, needs someone to carry the publications between the pasture camps, Kary offers to help because he knows the area well and can travel on horseback. He later arrives with newspapers and magazines and takes pride in his new role as a postman. This is an important contrast with his earlier refusal to help dig the irrigation canal. While he avoids one task, he willingly accepts another that suits his abilities and interests. His actions suggest that Kary can be useful to others when he finds a role he enjoys.

Proud Kary's pride is especially clear when he embraces his role as a young postman and shares exciting news with his friends. When the newspaper *Kyrgyzstan Pioneri* publishes an article titled "The Young Patriots," featuring Kary, Abdylas, Akai, Roza, and Aigul, he brings the newspaper to the group. The students are delighted to see their names and photographs in print. Kary's involvement in sharing the news suggests that he values being part of the group's achievements and receiving recognition for their activities. He is also proud of his new responsibility as a postman. These scenes reveal that Kary enjoys feeling included and appreciated, particularly when he has something meaningful to contribute.

THEMES

Friendship: Friendship between Russians and Local People

In Soviet literature, writers often emphasized friendship between Russians and people from other nationalities living in the Soviet Union. Although the country consisted of many different ethnic groups, stories frequently portrayed Russians and local people as friends who respected one another and worked together. This idea supported the Soviet ideal of unity among different nationalities. In the novella, the friendship between Vitka, a Russian boy, and the Kyrgyz boys reflects this theme.

When Vera introduces her brother Vitka to Abdylas and his friends, they welcome him warmly. Abdylas greets Vitka in Russian, and the boys introduce themselves and share their food. Kary brings wild mountain vegetables, Abdylas offers kurut, and Vitka shares apples from the city. They eat together at the Red House, showing how people from different backgrounds can connect through hospitality and generosity.

Their friendship grows as they spend time together. They discuss books, and Vitka tells the boys about *The Story of a Real Man*, which describes a Soviet pilot who continues his life despite losing both legs during the war. The Kyrgyz boys also teach Vitka how to ride a horse, introducing him to their local way of life. In return, Vitka shares his interests and experiences with them. Their relationship is based on mutual learning and respect rather than their ethnic differences.

The strongest example of their friendship occurs when Vitka joins Abdylas, Akai, and Kary in helping Syiryk's family protect their sheep from wolves. The boys stay awake throughout the night to guard the flock. Vitka willingly takes part, even though he is new to the group. His actions show that he is accepted as one of their friends and that helping others is more important than where a person comes from.

Overall, the story of Vitka and the Kyrgyz boys reflects the Soviet literary emphasis on friendship between Russians and local nationalities. Through their shared experiences, the author presents cooperation, mutual respect, and solidarity as ways to unite people from different ethnic backgrounds.

Illustrative moment: Autumn arrived, turning the green pastures yellow, and the new school year was just around the corner. Vitka had to return to the city, where his parents were waiting for him. Burma, Akun, and the boys prepared gifts for their friend. They gave him homemade butter and kurut, a traditional dried, salted cheese. Akai even offered Vitka his beautiful belt, but Vitka politely refused to accept such a treasured gift. Vitka had brought presents for his friends, too. He gave Aigul a Pioneer neckerchief and a box of crayons. Abdylas, Akai, and Kary each received a book, while Roza was given a beautiful silk scarf. After thanking everyone warmly, Vitka said goodbye and left for the city, carrying with him fond memories of the summer they had spent together.

Agriculture: Livestock Raising, Seasonal Pastures, and the Care of Newborn Animals

During the Soviet period, agriculture was a major concern in Kyrgyzstan, where many families depended on farming and livestock raising. Kyrgyz herders traditionally moved their animals between pastures according to the seasons. In spring, they kept their livestock at spring pastures and near animal sheds, where newborn calves and lambs could be cared for. In summer, they moved their herds to high-altitude pastures with plenty of grass. In autumn, they returned to lower pastures, and when winter arrived, they brought their animals back to winter shelters and homes, where they could protect them from the cold. This seasonal movement allowed herders to find grazing land for their animals throughout the year.

The birth season was especially important because cows, sheep, and other animals needed close attention when giving birth. Newborn animals had to be fed, protected, and checked to make sure they were growing well. During this busy period, students, young people, and other workers went to the pastures to help herders. The novella shows this through Abdylas and his mother, Burma, who go to the cattle farm to help Akun, the chief herder, during the calving season.

Abdylas wants to spend his summer holidays working alongside his mother. He visits the kolkhoz chairman and explains his plan. With the support of the chairman and the school principal, Burma agrees to work as an assistant to a herder responsible for fifty cows. She takes care of eight cows, and all eight give birth successfully. When one cow struggles to give birth, Abdylas watches anxiously and reads a book by Professor Tsvetkov about cow fertility and the birth process. After the first calf is born, he names it Tolbashy, meaning the first calf of the season. The last calf is named Kenje, meaning the youngest or the last one.

Abdylas and his sister Aigul gradually learn how to care for the calves. They watch over them, weigh them, and record their growth. Burma shows them her records, which reveal that she has produced more milk than the previous year. Abdylas and his friends compare the calves' weights and calculate how much weight they have gained over fifteen days. When Tolbashy injures its foot, Abdylas seeks help from Akun and Batysh, the farm manager. A veterinarian treats the calf, and Abdylas stays close to it until it recovers.

The story also describes other agricultural tasks. Abdylas organizes his classmates to dig irrigation canals to bring water to the fields. Later, when wolves threaten sheep at a summer pasture, Abdylas, Akai, Kari, and Vitka spend the night guarding the flock. These scenes show how Soviet agricultural work took place alongside traditional Kyrgyz herding practices. The villagers cared for newborn animals in spring, moved livestock to mountain pastures in summer, monitored animal growth, improved irrigation, and protected their herds from danger throughout the year.

Illustrative moment: The high-altitude pastures of Son-Kol had become bare. With little grass left, the cattle and sheep wandered about searching for food. Akun, the head herder, asked Batysh, the head of the cattle farm, to move the herds to lower-lying autumn pastures. The cows were barely giving any milk, and the livestock urgently needed better grazing. The kolkhoz had a pasture committee responsible for deciding when and where the herds should move. When its members heard Akun's report that the animals needed to be moved without delay, they approved the relocation. Traditionally, Kyrgyz herders moved their livestock between four seasonal pastures: *kyshtoo* for winter, *jazdoo* for spring, *jailoo* for summer, and *kuzdoo* for autumn. So the herds left the highlands of Son-Kol and moved to the autumn pastures closer to the villages.

Education:

The Ideal Soviet Student

The novella illustrates the image of an ideal Soviet student and how Soviet ideology sought to educate children in the spirit of communism. Young people were encouraged to work for the benefit of the community, put collective interests before personal comfort, and sacrifice their time and energy for the good of Soviet society. Schools played an important role in teaching these values by encouraging students to participate in collective work and help the *kolkhoz* (collective farm).

During spring break, the school gathers students and asks them to help with work on the *kolkhoz*. Abdylas volunteers to look after the calves, even though his mother is already working in the wheat fields. At first, his mother hesitates, but she eventually agrees to help him. She becomes an assistant herder and is assigned eight cows that are about to give birth. Abdylas believes that he should be an ideal Soviet student, responsible, hardworking, and committed to serving the community. His project succeeds, and all the calves are born safely.

Abdylas's dedication extends beyond his initial task. He encourages his friends to help with the construction of a canal, demonstrating his ability to organize collective work for a common goal. He also helps Roza prepare her herbarium, showing that he is willing to support others in their educational activities. In another episode, he joins his friends in guarding the lambs against wolves, putting the safety of the animals and the interests of the collective farm before his own comfort.

Through these episodes, Abdylas represents the ideal Soviet youth: active, responsible, cooperative, and self-sacrificing. His actions demonstrate how communist ideology encouraged children to develop a sense of duty toward their community from an early age. The novella presents collective labor not merely as a practical necessity but also as a way of educating young people to become dedicated members of Soviet society.

Illustrative moment: Abdylas, Roza, Askar, and their classmates arrived at the canal construction site. Nuraaly, the kind, elderly team leader, assigned each student five meters of canal to dig and asked them to record their work to receive their wages later. He explained that he had worked manually all his life, but technology now made removing large stones easier. Meanwhile, a local man named Abysh returned home and scolded his son Kary for playing with his younger brother instead of working on the canal. Abysh felt ashamed because even the village chairman had asked about Kary. Abdylas explained that Kary had said he would not work that spring break. Abysh believed everyone should contribute to the community.

The Soviet Education System and Final Exams

In the novella, the final examinations show how the Soviet education system emphasized academic achievement, discipline, and hard work. Seventh-grade students were required to take exams in algebra, geometry, and languages according to the state curriculum. These exams were an important part of the school year because students had to demonstrate the knowledge they had gained before moving on to the next grade.

The students' preparation shows the effort needed to succeed. Abdylas worries that algebra might be difficult for him, so he asks Roza for help. The students work through problems independently and attend extra classes with their teacher to understand the questions they find challenging. This demonstrates that success requires preparation, cooperation, and a willingness to learn. Their efforts also show that students are expected to take responsibility for their education.

On examination day, the atmosphere becomes serious as the principal and teachers formally open the mathematics exams. The sealed exam papers add to the tension. Teacher Ashym encourages the students to do their best and reminds them not to cheat, emphasizing the importance of honesty and fairness. The results show that students have different levels of ability. Abdylas works through the problems confidently, while Kary struggles with mathematics and receives a C. However, Kary is still satisfied with his result because he knows mathematics has always been difficult for him. His reaction shows that success can also mean doing the best one can, even when the result is not perfect.

Abdylas demonstrates his knowledge again during the Kyrgyz language and literature exam. He answers questions about grammar and the poetry of Toktogul Satylganov confidently and correctly. After

completing all their exams, Abdylas and his classmates celebrate the end of seventh grade at a farewell gathering on June 12.

Overall, the final examinations reveal the structured nature of Soviet schooling and the importance placed on academic responsibility. Through Abdylas's preparation and Kary's experience, the novella shows that students are expected to work hard, act honestly, and face academic challenges with determination.

Illustrative moment: The school invited the parents of the first-grade students to a meeting to discuss their children's academic results. Jenish's father, Burma and Aigul's mother, and Abdylas's mother came to the school. Their teacher, Gulbar, announced the results. Aigul and Jenish had earned top marks in every subject. Both children had done exceptionally well throughout the school year.

However, one boy, Medet, had failed mathematics and writing. His mother was upset and wanted to know why her son had failed those two subjects.

Gulbar explained that Medet had missed classes thirty-three times and had often failed to complete his homework. His frequent absences and lack of preparation had affected his performance. Aigul's mother and Jenish's father were delighted with their children's excellent results. Pleased and proud, they left the school and headed home.

Childhood: Childhood and Child Labor in the Soviet Union

In the years immediately following the Second World War, being a child in the Soviet Union meant growing up in a world where hardship, discipline, and responsibility often overshadowed the freedom normally associated with childhood. Although the war had ended in 1945, its consequences remained visible in everyday life. Many families struggled with poverty, shortages, and the difficult task of rebuilding their lives. Children grew up in a society that expected everyone to contribute, regardless of age.

Child labor was part of this reality, particularly in rural communities and collective farms. Children might be expected to care for livestock, gather fuel, help with agricultural work, or take on household duties while adults worked. Seasonal farming created additional demands, especially during planting, harvesting, and the birth of livestock. Such work could teach children practical skills and strengthen their connection to their families and communities. However, it also raises a critical question: when does responsibility become a burden that deprives a child of rest, education, and the freedom to enjoy childhood?

Soviet ideology celebrated hard work, discipline, collective responsibility, and devotion to the community. Children were encouraged to become useful members of society and contribute to a shared future. Yet the ideal of collective effort could conceal the unequal burdens placed on young people. A child helping a family survive hardship might be praised for being responsible, even when that responsibility left little time for play or personal development. The distinction between helping voluntarily and working because circumstances allowed no alternative was significant.

Nevertheless, Soviet children were not defined by hardship alone. School, friendship, curiosity, and play continued to give meaning to their lives. Children found happiness in small achievements and companionship, even while facing adult expectations.

Ultimately, childhood in the Soviet Union in 1950–1951 reveals a tension between social solidarity and individual needs. Although helping others could foster resilience and belonging, a society's dependence on children's labor also exposed the cost of postwar recovery. The central question is whether children were being prepared for the future or being asked to sacrifice too much of their childhood to rebuild it.

Illustrative moment: Abdylas, Roza, Askar, and their classmates arrived at the canal construction site. Nuraaly, the kind, elderly team leader, assigned each student five meters of canal to dig and asked them to record their work to receive their wages later. He explained that he had worked manually all his life, but technology now made removing large stones easier. Meanwhile, a local man named Abysh returned home and scolded his son Kary for playing with his younger brother instead of working on the canal. Abysh felt ashamed because even the village chairman had asked about Kary. Abdylas explained that Kary had said he would not work that spring break. Abysh believed everyone should contribute to the community.

State Propaganda: Recognizing Children's Work and Encouraging Loyalty to the Soviet State

In the story, Soviet propaganda reaches children through newspapers, public recognition, and youth organizations. Their work on the collective farm is presented not only as a contribution to their community but also as an example of good Soviet citizenship. By praising their efforts and introducing them to Soviet youth organizations, adults encourage the children to take pride in their work and identify with the ideals of the Soviet state.

This is particularly clear when Kurman, the local Komsomol representative, arrives at the summer pasture with two young journalists from Frunze. The visitors ask Abdylas and his friends how they help the farmers and care for their calves. They are also impressed by the students' herbarium. After photographing Roza and the other children, they invite them to write reports for *Kyrgyzstan Pioneri*, a newspaper for Soviet schoolchildren. The visit turns the children's everyday activities into material that can be shared with young readers across the country.

Later, Kary arrives with a copy of *Kyrgyzstan Pioneri* containing an article titled "The Young Patriots." Abdylas, Akai, Kary, Roza, and Aigul are featured in the newspaper, and everyone gathers excitedly to look at their photographs and read the article. Their pride grows when they receive a personal note from the journalist and a letter of thanks from the kolkhoz chairman. These moments show how publicity, personal appreciation, and official gratitude reward the children for their work. At the same time, calling them "young patriots" presents their contribution to the farm as an example for other Soviet children to follow.

Propaganda also appears in Kurman's efforts to prepare the older children for the Komsomol. Proud of his own membership, he plans to introduce the organization's charter to the Young Pioneers who will soon be old enough to join. Abdylas and his friends study the charter, memorize its principles, and sing a Komsomol song together. When the kolkhoz chairman and school principal later praise their summer work and promise to pay them, the children receive both material and personal rewards for their efforts.

Together, these scenes show how Soviet propaganda operates through everyday experiences. The journalists make the children's work publicly visible, the newspaper celebrates them as young patriots, adults reward their efforts, and the Komsomol prepares them for future participation in Soviet society. The children's pride and happiness are genuine, but their recognition also encourages them to connect hard work, patriotism, and loyalty to the Soviet state.

Illustrative moment: Abdylas took out the Komsomol charter that Kurman had given him. Soon, the older students would move from the Young Pioneers to the Komsomol, so they wanted to be well prepared. They read the charter carefully, going through its articles and memorizing the most important ones.

Afterward, they found a song about the Komsomol and sang it together at the top of their voices.

Just then, they spotted Juma, the kolkhoz chairman, and Kerimkul, the school principal, approaching. The men greeted the students and thanked them for their hard work during the summer. Juma told them they would be paid for their work. The children proudly showed the men the calves they had looked after throughout the summer.

The chairman and the principal praised the students for their efforts. The children were delighted with the recognition and looked forward to the new school year.