

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

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KYCHAN (1956)

Shukurbek Beishenaliev (1928–2000)

Reference:

Beishenaliev, Sh. (1978). *Tandalmalar: Povestter, testier baldar and ospurumdor uchun* [Selected works: Novellas and short stories for children and adolescents]. Mektep.

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 Ünü* (*The Voice of Generations*), *Dankka Jarasha Jük* (*The Burden of Glory*), *Too Koynundagy 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 *Kychan* was first published in Kyrgyz in 1956. Its first Russian edition appeared in 1957, published in Moscow. A translation by A. Duginets followed in 1959 and helped bring the story to a wider readership. In 1967, the author, Shukurbek Beishenaliev, revised and expanded the novella, publishing a new version of the work.

Background

The novella is based on the true story of Kychan Jakypov (1919–1933), a Kyrgyz boy who lived in the village of Socialchy during the early years of Soviet rule. At that time, some people opposed the new government, while criminal groups operated in rural communities. Despite his young age, Kychan bravely helped expose a criminal gang in his village. Most of the gang members were arrested, but one escaped and later killed him in revenge.

Kychan became a symbol of courage and honesty among young people. During the Soviet era, his name was given to schools and streets, and he was remembered as a role model for the younger generation. His story continues to represent bravery, loyalty to his community, and the willingness to stand up for what is right.

The novella also reflects the influence of Soviet ideology, presenting loyalty to the collective farm, support for the new government, and the fight against crime as important values. Kychan is portrayed as an ideal young pioneer whose courage and selflessness serve as an example for others. Through his story, the novella promotes collectivism, social responsibility, and devotion to the community, reflecting the values encouraged in Soviet literature.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Kychan (Duishoke) – The protagonist, a courageous Kyrgyz boy who defends the collective farm.

Mairyk Mullah – A religious leader who abuses his authority and conspires against the collective farm.

Jakyp – Kychan's father, a carpenter and blacksmith.

Turdukan – Kychan's mother, who cares deeply for her family.

Jumaaly – A former Basmachi member who secretly engages in criminal activities and kills Kychan.

Kapsalang – Kerez's brother-in-law, involved in grain theft and conspiracies against the collective farm.

Tenti Albanov – Kychan's teacher, who promotes education and Soviet ideals.

Atai – Kychan's close friend and schoolmate.

Kerez – Kychan's friend, who exposes the conspirators' crimes.

Yzakul – The collective farm chairman who helps investigate the crimes.

SYNOPSIS

The story follows Kychan, originally named Duishoke, a Kyrgyz boy growing up during the early Soviet period. When Kychan is three years old, Mairyk Mullah visits his sick father, Jakyp, to perform a spiritual healing ritual. After the child accidentally disturbs the mullah by playing with his prayer beads, healing stick, and turban, Mairyk becomes furious and attacks him and his mother. To gain forgiveness, Kychan's parents offer him a young foal. The mullah also demands that Duishoke's name be changed to Kychan, forcing his frightened parents to agree.

Ten years later, their village undergoes significant changes through collective farming, education, and Soviet influence. Kychan becomes a hardworking and courageous student under the guidance of his teacher, Tenti Albanov. Along with his friends Atai and Kerez, he learns to read and challenges the influence of traditional elites.

Meanwhile, Mairyk Mullah, Kapsalang, and Jumaaly secretly steal grain and plot against the collective farm. When the boys discover their crimes, the conspirators set fire to a hay shed and falsely accuse them. Eventually, Kerez reveals the truth, leading to the arrest of Mairyk and Kapsalang, while Jumaaly escapes.

Seeking revenge, Jumaaly later attacks Kychan for protecting the collective farm's cattle. Despite his severe injuries, Kychan courageously identifies his attacker before dying. His tragic death symbolizes honesty, sacrifice, and resistance against injustice during a period of profound social change.

SCENES

Mairyk Mullah and Duishoke's Renaming

The Mullah's Change of Heart Jakyp, his wife Turdukan, and their three-year-old son, Duishoke, lived in a poor tent. When Jakyp became seriously ill, their relative Aktan went to the summer pasture to ask Mairyk Mullah to heal him. Although the mullah already knew about Jakyp's condition, he refused to travel across the hot plains. He knew the poor carpenter had nothing to offer as payment. Angrily, Aktan accused him of lacking generosity and said, "May God punish you!" The words troubled the mullah, who cursed Aktan in return. That night, nightmares frightened him, and he decided to visit Jakyp and perform *ruqiya*, a spiritual healing ritual.

The Mullah's Unexpected Encounter As Mairyk Mullah rode his horse toward the poor family's tent, full of holes, his horse suddenly became frightened by a black creature emerging from the mud. The mullah was startled too and began performing *dhikr*, repeating prayers to calm himself. Soon, he realized that the mysterious creature was none other than Duishoke, Jakyp's three-year-old son. Entering the tent, the mullah began reciting verses from the Quran to heal Jakyp. Meanwhile, Turdukan was busy with household chores outside. Bored by the mullah's chanting, little Duishoke approached him, grabbed his *tasbih* (prayer beads) and colorful *tayak* (healing stick), and admired their bright colors. He also began tugging at the edge of the mullah's *selde*, the white cloth wrapped around his headwear.

The Mullah's Violent Outburst When Turdukan noticed her son disturbing the mullah, she rushed inside after hearing Mairyk shouting and cursing. "I'll kill you, you little devil!" he yelled angrily at the boy. Turdukan hurried to pick up her son, but the mullah attacked them both. She tried to shield Duishoke from his blows, yet Mairyk struck both the mother and the child. Seeing the terrible scene, Jakyp grew even more distressed and weak. Hoping to calm the mullah's anger, Turdukan suggested giving him their young foal as a gift. She showed Jakyp the wound on her head where the mullah had struck her and pointed to her torn dress as evidence of his violence.

The Mullah's Conditions for Forgiveness Jakyp and Turdukan begged Mairyk Mullah to forgive their son, but he remained furious, continuing to curse the boy. He called Duishoke the son of the devil and accused Turdukan of having conceived him with an evil spirit. In tears, Turdukan apologized, while Jakyp pleaded, "Please forgive our child. He is only a little boy and cannot be held responsible for his actions. We offer you our foal. Please, show us mercy." Mairyk finally calmed down, pleased with the promised gift. "May God forgive you," he said, "but I have conditions. Your son's name must be changed. Duishoke is a Muslim Kyrgyz name. From now on, he will be called Kychan, a non-Muslim name." Although frightened by the thought of giving their son a non-Muslim name, Jakyp and Turdukan had no choice but to agree to the mullah's demand.

Ten Years Later in the Village of Socialchy

Ten Years Later Ten years had passed, and the village had been settled and named Socialchy. Kychan, Atai, Kerez, and Asylgul were skating on the ice along the riverbank with their teacher, Tenti Albanov. The village had joined the collective farm (kolkhoz) four years earlier. Mairyk Mullah, who had lost his former status and prestige, approached the children and their teacher. Wearing old clothes, he no longer looked like an influential religious figure. As he watched Kychan, now a grown boy, he wondered why he had not killed him years ago. Mairyk despised the Soviet school, believing it to be a place where children's morals were corrupted. He condemned the teacher and the children, especially thirteen-year-old Asylgul, who in earlier years would not have been allowed to play with boys.

Mairyk Mullah on the Ice Tenti Albanov asked Kychan, "Did you see Mairyk Mullah?" "Yes," Kychan replied. "He was watching us." The boys and Asylgul approached Mairyk and invited him onto the ice. They helped him put on a pair of skates. Frightened and shocked, Mairyk felt that they were making fun of him, although the children were simply trying to include him in their game. He condemned ice skating as a "devil's game." Among the boys, Kerez felt sympathy for Mairyk and asked the others to stop teasing the respected old man. In an attempt to persuade them to let him go, Mairyk promised to show them a Red Army warrior.

The Former Basmachi Becomes a Red Army Hero Mairyk led the boys to a house where a celebration was taking place. There, he introduced them to Jumaaly, the son of a formerly wealthy man who had once supported the Basmachi but later served in the Red Army. The boys, especially Kychan, admired Jumaaly as a Red Army soldier and Bolshevik officer. He was a large, powerful man who looked strong and fearless. Tenti Albanov, the teacher, asked Jumaaly which Red Army unit he had served in. Jumaaly replied that he had been in the Red Army but could not remember the name of his unit. Another man, Kapsalang, suggested that the kolkhoz chairman appoint Jumaaly as the manager of the collective farm's storage facilities for grain and other food supplies. Yzakul, the chairman, agreed, saying that he had no objection if Jumaaly was willing to take the position. Mairyk then praised Jumaaly's strength, declaring that anyone who wanted to fight him could come forward and test his courage.

Jumaaly's Strength and the Wrestling Match Yzakul promised to find a worthy opponent to wrestle with Jumaaly. One winter day, a crowd gathered to watch a wrestling match between Jumaaly and an unknown warrior. Jumaaly appeared on horseback, looking big and powerful. Suddenly, the crowd began shouting for the warrior, and Yzakul himself stepped forward to take part in the horseback wrestling. However, the people did not approve of the match. When the fight began, they protested, saying that no one should lay a hand on the kolkhoz chairman. The contest was stopped, and someone offered Yzakul a horse as a gift, describing it as a fine animal. Yzakul accepted it.

Then Jumaaly was challenged to demonstrate his strength by lifting a large sack of grain. He succeeded easily, impressing the crowd. Everyone admired his strength, including Kychan.

Literacy in the Village

The Boys Deliver the Newspaper Kychan, Atai, and Kerez were walking from school to the village, a distance of about 1.9 miles. They carried copies of the *Kyzyl Kyrgyzstan (Red Kyrgyzstan)* newspaper to distribute among adults who were learning to read. On their way, they passed Mairyk Mullah's small, low clay house. Seeing the boys, the mullah asked whether the Soviet authorities intended to take away all the food and property belonging to wealthy people. Kychan replied that mullahs and other wealthy people were considered enemies of the Soviet state. Mairyk became angry and crumpled the newspaper in his hands.

Learning and Sharing at Home Kerez led his friends to his home. An orphan, he had been raised by his sister and brother-in-law, Kapsalang, who worked at the kolkhoz. Kerez was teaching Kapsalang the Latin alphabet so he could perform clerical work on the collective farm. The boys drank a wheat-based beverage at Kerez's house, but they were still hungry, so they continued to Kychan's home. Kychan's father, Jakyp, was a carpenter who made tools for the kolkhoz, with their relative Aktan helping him. Kychan shared some roasted corn kernels, similar to modern popcorn, with his friends. Meanwhile, Jakyp read the newspaper, having learned to read with Kychan's help.

Kychan's Progress in Craftsmanship One day, Tenti Albanov and Yzakul visited Jakyp's workshop. Tenti praised Kychan for his skill in making an iron item for Siada, an elderly woman. Jakyp, who was also a blacksmith, thanked the teacher for educating the children so well. He was proud that Kychan was making good progress at school and even teaching his own father what he had learned. Meanwhile, Kapsalang, who had once recommended Jumaaly for the position of grain storage manager, was working in that position himself. Tenti remarked that Kapsalang seemed suspicious and might eventually be dismissed and arrested.

The Grain Storage

Suspicious Activity at the Grain Storage One day, Kychan and Atai went looking for Kerez near the kolkhoz grain storage. The building had a large, closed door. Peering through a gap, they spotted Kapsalang walking over the grain spread across the storage floor. They also saw Jumaaly holding a large sack. When he turned it upside down, dust poured out onto the grain. Kychan felt disappointed by both Kapsalang and Jumaaly. Suddenly, Kapsalang came outside, noticed the boys, and gave them some grain to roast and eat. He explained that they were simply transferring wheat from one place to another.

The Boys Visit Jumaaly at the Grain Storage One day, Kychan took his friends to the kolkhoz grain storage to hear stories about Jumaaly's heroic deeds. As the boys gathered outside and began singing, Jumaaly asked what they wanted. They replied that they had come to listen to his stories. Pleased by their interest, Jumaaly seemed happy to entertain them. However, Kapsalang suddenly shouted, "Hey, you damned giant, come here!" Kychan also noticed Mairyk Mullah nearby. When the boys entered the storage, Kapsalang became angry with Kerez, apparently because he thought the boys were disturbing their work. He told them that Jumaaly was busy and accused their teacher, Tenti Albanov, of filling their heads with foolish ideas. Kychan defended his teacher, saying that Tenti was a good man. As the boys headed home, Mairyk Mullah remarked bitterly that he would be very happy if Kychan and his teacher, Tenti, disappeared.

Beisheke's Visit

Kychan's Gifts Kychan's older brother, Beisheke, was studying at an institute in Frunze. One day, he returned home to visit his family. Kychan was overjoyed to see his brother again. Their mother began preparing *boorsok*, small pieces of dough fried in hot oil, and asked Kychan to help her. He gladly agreed, but while they were cooking, a few drops of hot animal fat splashed onto his wrist and burned him. Beisheke quickly came to his aid and bandaged the injured wrist. Afterward, Beisheke opened his suitcase and took out a bag filled with books and crayons for his younger brother. Kychan was absolutely delighted with the gifts, which brought him great happiness.

Teyitbek's Arrest One day, Kapsalang visited Jakyp's house and asked Beisheke about his nephew, Teyitbek, who had been arrested in Frunze. Beisheke explained that Teyitbek had been arrested for being an enemy of the state and that there was little hope of his release. Later, Yzakul, the chairman of the kolkhoz, visited the family and met Beisheke. Since Yzakul came from another place, he was still new to the village. During their conversation, Kychan wanted to show his older brother his ice skates, so he began skating around inside the house. Yzakul told him not to disturb the adults while they were talking, but Beisheke defended his younger brother, saying that Kychan was family and could listen to their conversation.

Kychan's Desire to Fight the Enemies of the Soviet State Yzakul praised Kychan as an excellent student, as his teacher, Tenti Albanov, had told him. He encouraged the boy to help identify people who opposed the Soviet government. Inspired by Pavlik Morozov, whom he regarded as a hero who fought against the enemies of the state, Kychan said he wanted to follow his example. Kychan then revealed his suspicions about Kapsalang, Jumaaly, and Mairyk Mullah, explaining that he had seen them doing something suspicious in the grain storage. Yzakul pointed out that Kapsalang was the grandson of a wealthy man whose family's property had been confiscated by the Soviet authorities. For this reason, he suggested, Kapsalang might be hostile toward the Soviet government.

Class Struggle

The Meaning of Class Struggle During a lesson, Tenti Albanov introduced a new topic called *tap kuroshu*, meaning class struggle. In Kyrgyz, the word *tap* has several meanings. Kychan gave one meaning, but when he realized it was not the one the teacher intended, he felt embarrassed. Tenti explained that the word could refer to warmth or temperature, such as the temperature of the day or the human body, but in this lesson it referred to class struggle. He explained that in the Soviet Union, the former wealthy classes were in conflict with the working class. One day, Kychan was invited into the teacher's room, where he found Yzakul, Beisheke, and Tenti. The teacher asked whether he was ready to take part in a play about the struggle between the working class and the wealthy. Tenti had written a play in which Kychan would portray a Bolshevik, Atai would play a wealthy man, Kerez would portray a mullah, and Asylgul would play the wealthy man's youngest wife.

The Play Causes Conflict in the Village Kerez refused to play the role of a mullah, but Tenti encouraged him to participate. One day, Kerez's sister, Kanym, asked him to perform his role at home for fun. Kerez put on the costume, including a beard, and acted out the part for her. Suddenly, his brother-in-law, Kapsalang, arrived with Mairyk Mullah. Furious at seeing Kerez dressed as a mullah, Kapsalang beat both Kanym and Kerez. After this incident, Kerez refused to continue participating in the play. The following day, Asylgul's mother came to the school and accused Tenti of planning to marry her daughter off as the wealthy man's youngest wife. Although the marriage was only part of the play, the woman was deeply upset. Since the villagers had never experienced theatre before, many struggled to understand the difference between acting and real life, and the proposed performance met with strong resistance.

The First Theatre Performance in the Village When the play was finally staged, the villagers greatly enjoyed the performance. Kychan played the role of a mullah, which angered Mairyk Mullah. He warned Kychan's parents that their son had insulted him and blamed them for allowing it. However, Kychan's mother, Turdukan, replied that it was not their fault because the school was teaching the children. Through their performance, the students portrayed a new life, a new era, and a new society. Their play criticized the old Kyrgyz elite, including the *manaps*, ruling elite traditional leaders who were often portrayed as privileged and greedy. Kapsalang was also angered by this portrayal. Nevertheless, ordinary villagers enthusiastically

welcomed the performance. It was the first theatrical production ever staged in their village, marking an important moment in its cultural life.

A Plot against Tenti and the Students Jumaaly, Mairyk, and Kapsalang gathered to discuss how to cause trouble for Tenti and his students and create a conflict between Tenti and Yzakul, the kolkhoz chairman. Mairyk Mullah suggested setting fire to the hay shed and then blaming the students for it. He believed that Tenti would defend his pupils, which would offend Yzakul and eventually lead to a conflict between the teacher and the chairman. Meanwhile, Tenti instructed his students to continue delivering newspapers to Mairyk, even though the mullah often scolded them and chased them away. Surprisingly, Mairyk eventually changed his attitude and began acting like a friend to the teenage students.

The Hunting Trip and the Four Foxes One day, Mairyk Mullah announced that he would travel to the Issyk-Kul region to heal someone and bring back a hunting eagle for Jumaaly. On Sunday, the villagers gathered to enjoy a hunting trip. Jumaaly released his eagle to hunt foxes, and the bird successfully caught four. The first fox was given to Yzakul, the kolkhoz chairman. The second was taken by Kapsalang, even though Kychan and the other students asked him to give it to their teacher, Tenti. The third fox went to Mairyk Mullah, but the students again pleaded for Tenti to receive it. Jumaaly kept the fourth fox for himself. The students felt disappointed and saddened that their teacher had received nothing. However, Tenti reassured them that he had not come for a fox. He had come to enjoy the hunting trip, and he was happy simply to have shared the experience with everyone.

The Hidden Grain Storage

On the Prayer Hill One day, Kychan went to Mairyk Mullah's house to repair his fence. The fence had been built long ago, and its wooden slats were falling apart. It also had no lock, and no one was around to fix it. After finishing the repairs, Kychan climbed the hill where Mairyk Mullah usually went to pray. There, he noticed a traditional *chiy* mat lying on the snow. Made from densely tufted perennial grasses, the traditional *chiy* mat was used inside Kyrgyz yurts to divide the living area from the kitchen. Kychan wondered why he had never noticed the mat before.

Kychan Discovers the Hidden Grain Storage He lay down on the *chiy* mat on the snowy hill, but suddenly, someone pushed him away. As he looked up, he saw Jumaaly, who was half underground and half above the ground. Jumaaly told his companions to use the other entrance to the underground storage, which was inside Mairyk Mullah's house. Kychan could see sacks of wheat stored underground. Then Jumaaly ordered his companions to bring Jakyp, Kychan's father. Kychan realized that the hidden storage had another entrance connected to Mairyk Mullah's house.

A Promise of Silence Mairyk Mullah, Kapsalang, Jumaaly, and Jakyp discussed what Kychan had witnessed. They asked Jakyp to make sure his son kept quiet about the grain hidden underground. Mairyk Mullah pleaded with Kychan, promising to give grain to his father and clothes to his mother. He also promised to teach the boy things far more valuable than what Tenti Albanov had taught him. Jakyp begged them to forgive his son and assured them that Kychan would not tell anyone. But Kychan stood up and declared, "Father, they are thieves!" Then he walked away. Jakyp was overcome with guilt. Afraid of what might happen next, he left home.

The Missing Grain When Kychan returned home, his parents were frightened that he might be killed for what he had witnessed. Kychan told them that the chairman was not in his office because he had gone to a meeting at the provincial center. "Please, my son, be quiet," his parents urged him. "You'll get yourself into trouble. Kychan began to cry, upset that his parents were so afraid of Kapsalang and the others that they dared not speak out against them. The next morning, Kychan went to school and told his teacher, Tenti Albanov, everything he had seen. Tenti reported the matter to Yzakul, the kolkhoz chairman. When Yzakul and the other officials arrived to inspect the underground storage, they found nothing. The sacks of grain had been moved elsewhere. Kychan was deeply disappointed. He realized that the thieves had transferred the grain before the officials arrived. Mairyk Mullah explained that the underground space was only being used to store his furniture, timber, and dung.

The Fire

The Kolkhoz Shed One day, as spring approached, Kychan, Atai, and Kerez were skating on the frozen river. They were enjoying themselves when Mairyk Mullah rode by and scolded them, ordering them to stay off the ice. He called Kychan a very bad boy. "That's none of your business," Kychan replied. "We like skating!" After they finished skating, the boys were on their way home when they noticed that the kolkhoz shed, where hay was stored, had caught fire. Kychan and Atai rushed to fight the fire and so they sent Kerez to fetch help. But soon, the thick smoke made it difficult for them to breathe. By the time people arrived, Kychan had been badly injured while trying to save the shed.

Kerez is Sick Kychan was taken to a hospital in Frunze, while Kerez was also reported to be ill. When Tenti Albanov asked Atai to visit Kerez, Atai went to look for him but could not find him. Kapsalang, Kerez's brother-in-law, explained that during the fire, Kerez had lost consciousness while running to alert the villagers. He had been ill ever since, Kapsalang claimed, and that very day he had been sent to a hospital in Frunze with his sister. Atai asked whether Kerez had gone to visit his relatives, but Kapsalang denied it.

Rumors About the Fire Meanwhile, rumors began spreading through the village about how the fire had started. According to the rumors, Kychan, Atai, and Kerez had been skating when they caught a chill and decided to make a fire near the hay shed. They had set fire to some dry hay, but the flames quickly spread beyond their control. The rumors grew more outrageous. People said that Kerez had collapsed and lost consciousness, while Kychan, overcome with despair, had tried to kill himself by throwing himself into the flames. Only Atai, they claimed, had survived unharmed.

Atai Tells the Truth One day, Kapsalang and Yzakul visited the school to interrogate Atai about the fire. At first, Atai was frightened by Kapsalang. But when he saw his teacher, Tenti Albanov, he found the courage to speak and told them the whole truth. Kapsalang grew furious at Atai's words, but Yzakul insisted that the truth had to be established as soon as possible. Tenti argued that they should wait until Kychan and Kerez returned before drawing any conclusions. Yzakul, however, declared that all three boys should be expelled from school. He added that a letter would be sent to Beisheke, Kychan's older brother, and that Jakyp would also be questioned about the incident.

The Boys' Return and Vindication Atai's mother, Kymka, had been raising him on her own. Jakyp and Turdukan visited her because both families were troubled and worried by the rumors accusing the boys of starting the fire. Kymka firmly believed that Atai was telling the truth. When Kychan returned from the city, he was immediately summoned to the chairman's office, where a Soviet police officer wearing a red hat was waiting for him. Jakyp and Turdukan waited anxiously for their son, watching the office from a distance. When they saw the police officer shake hands with Kychan and Atai, the parents were overjoyed. It seemed that the boys had finally been cleared of the accusations. As soon as Kychan arrived home, local people came to congratulate him. Kymka performed a traditional ritual to ward off misfortune. Kychan spat water into a cup, then Kymka circled the cup around his head, threw the water away, and turned the cup upside down.

Back at School When Kychan returned to school, he wore new clothes that his older brother, Beisheke, had bought for him. Dressed in his smart new outfit, he looked like a young man from the city. Asylgul approached him and pointed out that he had missed many classes. She offered to help him catch up with his studies, but Kychan refused her offer.

Later, Tenti Albanov called Kychan aside and advised him not to turn down Asylgul's help. He had missed too many lessons and needed to make up for lost time. Asylgul also asked Kychan whether he had really been innocent. Her question offended him, but Tenti encouraged him not to take it to heart. If he had done nothing wrong, the teacher explained, he had no reason to feel offended. Kychan was also saddened that he had been unable to see Kerez while he was in the city. Tenti then advised Kychan and Atai to visit Kapsalang regularly, pretending they were simply asking about Kerez. Perhaps, he suggested, they might uncover some secret about Kerez's disappearance when he eventually returned.

A Visit to Kapsalang Kychan and Atai went to the storage facility where Kapsalang worked and kept an eye on his house, but they found nothing suspicious. They did, however, spot Kapsalang in the shed, busy

with something. When he noticed the boys, Kapsalang greeted Kychan with exaggerated friendliness. "Oh, Kychan, welcome! How are you? That fire was a terrible thing for all of us," he said. Irritated by his false friendliness, Kychan asked bluntly, "Where is Kerez?" "Didn't you see him when you were in the city?" Kapsalang replied. "He'll be back." Then Kapsalang placed some wheat in Atai's hands. He tried to offer some to Kychan as well, but Kychan ignored him and walked away. Atai, too, refused to keep the wheat. He left it behind and followed Kychan.

The Story Behind Kychan's Name Kychan often thought about his name. Kapsalang and Mairyk Mullah had mocked him, saying that even his name was bad and that he was no better himself., too, often called Kychan an unbeliever. These insults made Kychan curious about the meaning and origin of his name. Kychan wondered whether his name came from the Kyrgyz word *kychagan*, describing someone who is always finding fault with others. He wanted to understand why he had been given such a name. One day, he asked his parents, "Was my name always Kychan?"

Duishoke His mother explained that his real name had been Duishoke, just as his older brother's name was Beisheke. "Then why did you change my name?" Kychan asked. His parents explained that when he was about three years old, Mairyk Mullah had changed his name from Duishoke to Kychan. At the time, the little boy had been playing with Mairyk Mullah's prayer beads, a stick, and his *selde*, a traditional turban worn by Muslim religious figures. Kychan grew even angrier with Mairyk Mullah, who had given him that name when he was only three years old.

The New Tractor One day, a new tractor arrived in the village to plough the fields. The villagers were delighted, celebrating the arrival of the machine and praising the Soviet country for bringing progress to their lives. Until then, they had worked hard to cultivate corn and grain by hand, and the tractor promised to make their labor much easier. Everyone welcomed the change except Kapsalang. As he watched the tractor, he could not bear the thought that the land once belonging to his forefathers no longer belonged to him.

Kerez's Confession Kerez returned to the village. Kychan and Atai questioned him about his disappearance and the fire at the kolkhoz hay shed. At first, Kerez tried to conceal the truth. But when the two boys pretended to be a judge and a prosecutor and threatened him with the death penalty, he finally confessed what had happened. Kerez revealed that Kapsalang and Mairyk Mullah had organized the arson. Jumaaly had set the hay shed on fire as the boys were returning from skating on the frozen river. Kerez also confessed that Kapsalang had beaten him.

Kerez Reveals Their Secret Kerez told Kychan and Atai that Jumaaly had been taking the stolen grain to a Uyghur merchant in the city who owned a bakery and sold bread. Jumaaly pretended that he was traveling to the city to visit Kerez in the hospital, but in reality, he was meeting the merchant. Kerez and his sister, Kanym, had also stayed at the Uyghur merchant's house. Kerez pleaded with Kychan and Atai to save him and Kanym from being forced into slavery. He revealed that Jumaaly, Kapsalang, and Mairyk Mullah were planning to leave for Kashgar.

Jumaaly's Hidden Past That evening, Jumaaly and Kapsalang beat Kerez and drove him out of the house. They were cousins, and both were determined to punish Kerez and Kanym for revealing their secrets at school. Kanym was beaten as well. Jumaaly had once been among the Basmachi, an anti-Soviet movement, but later promised to reform and prove his loyalty to the Red Army. Despite that promise, he had continued his criminal activities in secret.

Seeking Help from the Chairman Kerez ran to Kychan's house and begged him to help save his sister, Kanym. Together, the boys went to see Yzakul, the kolkhoz chairman. Yzakul was troubled and confused by the actions of Kapsalang, Mairyk Mullah, and Jumaaly. Kapsalang had repeatedly misled him, making it difficult for him to see the truth. Now, after hearing the boys' account, Yzakul admitted that he had been mistaken and thanked them for bringing the truth to light. Kychan then turned to Kerez and reassured him that he could stay at his house. His parents, Kychan promised, would be happy to welcome him.

Kerez's Desperate Search for Kanym Kychan and Kerez went to Atai's house and asked his mother to help them find out what had happened to Kanym, Kerez's sister and Kapsalang's wife. Fearing that her involvement might arouse suspicion, Atai's mother could not go herself. Instead, she sent an elderly woman named Urumkan. Kerez gave her his handkerchief to use as a secret sign so that Kanym would recognize her. Urumkan returned with ninety soms (the Kyrgyz currency). Kanym had given her thirty soms money for herself and the remaining sixty for Kerez. She had also sent a farewell message to her brother. That night, Kychan and Kerez spied on Kapsalang's house but saw nothing. Fearing that Kanym had been taken away, Kerez broke down in tears.

Justice at Last Kychan and Kerez went to Mairyk Mullah's house and saw Mairyk, Kapsalang, and Jumaaly loading their belongings from the underground storage in preparation for their departure. The boys immediately informed Yzakul, who sent the police to arrest them. When the police arrived, the men were about to depart. The officers caught Mairyk Mullah and Kapsalang, but Jumaaly managed to escape. Yzakul took part in the hearing, and the two captured men were arrested. At last, Tenti Albanov declared that the boys had been innocent of starting the fire at the kolkhoz hay shed.

Tenti Leaves for Moscow When the school year ended, the students learned that their teacher, Tenti Albanov, would be going to Moscow to study at Lomonosov University. Before leaving, he thanked all his students, especially Atai, Kerez, and Kychan, for their courage and honesty. Meanwhile, Asylgul was sent to the pastures with her mother, who would work on the cattle farm. Asylgul's task was to teach the herders how to read.

The Cowherd

A New Responsibility One day, the kolkhoz held a meeting to find someone to herd the cows in pastures, away from the cornfields and harvested crops. Kychan volunteered for the job, making his parents proud. Yzakul warned the villagers that Jumaaly was hiding in the mountains and attacking the cattle. Despite the danger, Kychan accepted the responsibility and was appointed for the summer.

Kychan's First Summer as a Cowherd Yzakul gave Kychan a fine young horse, swift at racing and galloping. Kychan's parents were delighted with the gift and proud of their son's new responsibility. The next morning, Kychan overslept and did not set out with the cows until nine o'clock. He gathered the herd of thirty-two cows and drove them to the pasture. As he spent time with the animals, Kychan began learning each cow's character. He even talked to them as if they were his companions. Wearing his red Pioneer neckerchief, the symbol of Soviet schoolchildren, Kychan returned from his first day of work with a sense of pride. Yzakul had also promised that he would receive a salary for his work as the kolkhoz cowherd.

Learning the Duties of a Cowherd Kychan tried to wake up earlier each morning, although he loved sleeping late. By sunrise, he was usually awake and ready for work, having spent his evenings playing with his friends. Each morning, he went from house to house collecting the cows. The women usually milked their cows before handing them over to him. They praised Kychan for his diligence, grateful that he was working while other children were still asleep.

Atai and Kerez visit Kychan While Kychan was herding the cows, his friends Atai and Kerez often came to visit him. Whenever they met, the boys would swim in the river. Kychan could never resist joining them, even though he was supposed to be watching the herd. One day, while the boys were swimming, they lost track of the cows. Aktan, another villager, helped Kychan search for the missing herd. When they finally found the cows, Aktan scolded Atai and Kerez for distracting Kychan and preventing him from doing his job properly.

A Mysterious Shadow by the River One hot day, while herding the cows, Kychan grew thirsty and tired. As the animals rested in the heat, he lay down on the riverbank and covered his face with his *kalpak*, hat to shield himself from the sun. Suddenly, his horse became frightened and restless, as if sensing danger nearby. Kychan got up and tried to lead it to the river for a drink. Then he noticed a shadow on the water. It looked like the silhouette of a person, but he could not make out who it was. "Jumaaly, if that's you, come

out!" Kychan shouted. "Show your face!" But no one appeared, and the mysterious shadow remained unexplained.

Beisheke's Letter from Frunze On August 8, 1933, Jakyp and Turdukan received a letter from their son Beisheke, who was in Frunze. He wrote that he was being sent to the Jalal-Abad region in southern Kyrgyzstan to serve as a government official. Although he could not visit his parents in person, he promised to serve the Soviet government faithfully. Jakyp felt worried about his son's assignment because the Basmachi, armed groups opposed to Soviet rule, were still active in the southern regions. "Don't worry," Turdukan told him. "We should be happy that our son has been chosen by the Soviet government."

A Rainy Day on the Pasture The rain fell without stopping that day. Jakyp wanted to take the cows out to pasture himself so Kychan could have a day off and spend some time with his friends. Bektay had often asked Kychan to take him along, but Kychan suggested that Bektay could ride with him on his horse instead. Jakyp was still worried about Beisheke, who had been sent to the south. He had hoped his son would become a chairman in the Chuy region, where their family lived. Turdukan and Kychan, however, did not seem as troubled by Beisheke's assignment.

Kychan and Bektay Set off Together As the rain continued, the neighboring women began asking when the cows would be taken out to pasture. So Kychan and Bektay set off together to herd them. As they rode, Kychan thought again about the strange shadow he had seen by the river. He regretted not telling the villagers about it, but he was still unsure whether the figure had really been Jumaaly. Before long, he put the troubling thought out of his mind.

Kychan Worries Still Kychan dreamed of visiting his teacher, Tenti Albanov, in Moscow. By then, he imagined, Tenti would have become a professor, and Kychan would tell him all about the village, its people, and their achievements. Yet something troubled Kychan. He could not stop thinking about the mysterious shadow he had seen by the river.

Kychan and Bektay The shadowy man had planned to attack Kychan that rainy day, expecting everyone to remain indoors because of the bad weather. But when he saw Kychan out with his friend Bektay, he realized that the opportunity was not in his favor and abandoned his plan. Meanwhile, Kychan and Bektay enjoyed their time together. They shared stories about school and playfully competed to see who spoke Russian better. Kychan never saw the mysterious shadow again.

Searching for Jumaaly Kerez and Atai were sent to collect hay using a traditional wooden sledge pulled by oxen. The policeman Mambetov had arranged the task under the pretense that the boys were simply gathering hay. In reality, he wanted them to watch the mountains and hills and report if they spotted Jumaaly. The police had been searching for him for a week but had been unable to find him.

Melons, Watermelons, and a Village Haircut Meanwhile, Kychan had become a highly respected herder in the village, and the people admired him for his hard work and responsibility. One day, Aktan, a relative of Jakyp, brought some melons and watermelons and invited Kychan, Atai and Kerez to enjoy them. For the Kyrgyz nomads of that time, who rarely had the chance to eat fresh fruits and vegetables, such a treat was a real delight. Afterward, since there was no barber shop in the village, Aktan gave the boys haircuts himself, shaving their heads.

Preparing for the New School Year The school year was approaching, and Beisheke had written to say that he would visit by September 1. Kychan eagerly awaited his brother's arrival. The grain harvest had been gathered, and the nomads were returning from their summer pastures. Families were busy preparing their children for school, buying books, notebooks, pencils, and other supplies. After a summer of hard work, the village was returning to its usual routine, and the children were looking forward to meeting their classmates and beginning another year of learning.

Rewards for the Young Workers Yzakul invited Kychan, Atai, and Kerez to his office and thanked them for their summer work. He gave each boy a large bag filled with books, notebooks, pencils, and crayons.

Yzakul told Atai and Kerez that their hay-collecting work was finished for the day and instructed them to return the sledge and the oxen.

Aktan was supposed to take over Kychan's cows. Kychan asked to herd them one last day at his favorite grassy spot, and Yzakul agreed. Kychan also asked about Jumaaly, who was still hiding in the mountains. Yzakul promised he would soon be caught and told the boys about their new teachers.

Four Days Before School Began

Kychan's Last Day as a Herder It was Kychan's last day of summer work, and the world seemed brighter than ever. The sky stretched blue above the open pastures, and the warm sunlight lay gently over the hills. As his cows grazed peacefully, Kychan dreamed of traveling throughout the vast Soviet Union, seeing its distant regions and discovering the world beyond his village. His horse stood nearby, and the familiar sounds of the countryside filled his heart with happiness. Everything seemed beautiful and full of promise. He had no idea that this peaceful day would soon turn into a terrible nightmare.

The One-Eyed Man Appears Suddenly, Kychan heard a rustling in the tall grass behind him. His horse sensed danger and shied away, its ears twitching nervously. Kychan turned and froze. Before him stood the dreadful, one-eyed Jumaaly, the fugitive who had been hiding in the mountains. With a powerful hand, Jumaaly seized the horse's reins, bringing the animal under his control. "What do you want, Jumaaly?" Kychan demanded, trying to hide his fear. "Go away! Do you want me to call the villagers?"

Jumaaly's Cruel Demand "Give me your *kalpak* hat, your horse, and that spotted brown cow," Jumaaly ordered. Kychan understood that the man intended to steal the kolkhoz's property. Though fear tightened his chest, he refused to surrender what had been entrusted to him.

"These belong to the kolkhoz, you devil!" he cried. "I will not give you any of them!" Jumaaly's face twisted with anger. His enormous hands seized Kychan and dragged him down from the horse. The boy struggled desperately, kicking and twisting to free himself. He struck Jumaaly on the head with his herding whip, hoping to escape. But the fugitive was much stronger. He forced Kychan to the ground and pinned him there.

Revenge in the Open Pasture Jumaaly pulled a large knife from his pocket and held it threateningly before the helpless boy. "Will you give me the cattle now?" he demanded. "No!" Kychan shouted. "You devil! You cannot take the kolkhoz cattle!" His refusal enraged Jumaaly. In a sudden burst of violence, the fugitive attacked Kychan with the knife, striking him repeatedly. The boy's cries broke the silence of the pasture. "This is revenge for Kapsalang and Mairyk!" Jumaaly snarled. Kychan fell into the grass, his body covered in blood. Above him, the bright sky darkened as clouds gathered over the hills, hiding the sun as though nature itself were mourning the terrible deed. Barely able to move, Kychan cried out again and again, "Help! Help! Help!"

Aktan Hears the Cries Not far away, Aktan, the responsible for managing the village's irrigation water, heard a desperate cry carried across the fields. He recognized the danger in the voice and immediately thought of Kychan, who was tending the kolkhoz cattle that day. Aktan rushed toward the pasture. As he approached the river, he spotted Jumaaly fleeing. Aktan pursued him, determined to stop the murderer before he could disappear into the mountains again. The river rushed between them. When Jumaaly crossed the water, Aktan swung his hoe, hoping to strike the fugitive. But the blow missed. Jumaaly turned with his large knife raised, threatening Aktan with death if he came any closer.

The Terrible News Reaches the Village Jumaaly escaped, striking his frightened horse several times to force it onward. Aktan could do nothing more to stop him. At last, he turned back toward the pasture, where Kychan's cries had fallen silent. What he found filled him with horror. Kychan lay in the grass, gravely wounded and covered in blood. Aktan raised the alarm. The terrible news spread quickly from the pasture to the village, bringing fear and sorrow to the people. The peaceful day had ended in tragedy, and the whole village would soon learn what Jumaaly had done.

The Village Rises in Search of Jumaaly The terrible news spread through the village, and the people immediately set out to search for Jumaaly. Armed with axes, hoes, shovels, rifles, pitchforks, and whatever other tools they could find, they hurried toward the places where the fugitive was believed to have fled.

Anger and fear filled their hearts, for Jumaaly had attacked a boy who had faithfully guarded the kolkhoz cattle. Meanwhile, the villagers gathered at Jakyp's house. The atmosphere was heavy with worry and sorrow. Kychan's parents, friends, and relatives waited anxiously, praying that the boy would survive.

Kychan Tells His Story Policeman Mambetov and Yzakul arrived at Jakyp's house. The villagers respectfully stepped aside to let them enter. Inside, Kychan lay gravely wounded, surrounded by his grieving family and friends.

When Mambetov asked what had happened, Kychan slowly opened his eyes. He took a few sips of water and then asked his mother to place his red Pioneer neckerchief on his chest. Mambetov bent down and kissed Kychan on the forehead. "My dear boy, the doctors will be here soon," he reassured him. Then the policeman began questioning Kychan. Despite his terrible pain, the boy recounted everything he had witnessed.

Jumaaly Faces the Accusation Suddenly, someone announced that Jumaaly had been caught. He was ordered to sit before the policeman. Jakyp could hardly contain his anger. Seeing the man who had nearly killed his son, he kicked Jumaaly in a burst of fury. Mambetov immediately ordered everyone to remain calm and demanded an explanation from the prisoner. "Why did you wound this boy?" he asked. "It wasn't me," Jumaaly replied, pretending innocence. "I am only a beggar." Kychan, gathering what little strength remained in him, reached for the cup of water and hurled it at Jumaaly. "You devil!" he cried. The room fell silent.

Kychan's Final Words Night descended upon the village. The moon hung in the dark sky, seeming almost blood-red, while not a single star appeared above the rooftops. Inside Jakyp's house, family members and friends kept vigil beside Kychan, their hearts heavy with fear. Kychan turned toward the policeman. "Let me sign the paper, dear policeman," he whispered. With his remaining strength, he signed his name: *Kychan Jakyp uulu*. He left behind his final handwriting as a lasting mark of his courage and sacrifice. Then he closed his eyes forever. Soon afterward, two or three doctors arrived, but they were too late to save him. Only four days remained before the school year began. No one could bear the thought that Kychan, who had dreamed of returning to school and traveling across the Soviet Union, would never again sit in his classroom or see his beloved friends.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Kychan

Kychan Jakypov is the main character of the novella, based on the life of a real Kyrgyz boy who lived from 1919 to 1933. He grows up in the village of Socialchy during the early years of Soviet rule. Coming from a poor but hardworking family, Kychan values education, friendship, and honest work. His teacher, Tenti Albanov, plays an important role in shaping his outlook and encouraging him to stand up for what he believes is right. As Kychan becomes more involved in village life, he discovers the criminal activities of Mairyk Mullah, Kapsalang, and Jumaaly. Despite threats and danger, he refuses to remain silent. His tragic death reveals the strength of his character and his devotion to his community.

Courageous Kychan's courage is one of his most remarkable qualities. He does not allow fear to prevent him from standing up against wrongdoing. When he discovers that Jumaaly and Kapsalang are involved in stealing grain from the collective farm, he refuses to accept their attempts to silence him. Even when his parents warn him about the danger, Kychan chooses to tell his teacher, Tenti Albanov, what he has witnessed. His courage becomes even more evident when he works to protect the collective farm's property. In the final confrontation, Jumaaly demands that Kychan surrender the horse and cattle entrusted to him. Although he understands the danger, Kychan refuses. He fights back with his herding whip, even though Jumaaly is much stronger. Kychan's courage is not the absence of fear but his willingness to act despite it. His final actions demonstrate how firmly he stands by his principles.

Honest Honesty guides Kychan's actions throughout the novella. He believes that people should tell the truth and take responsibility for what they do. When he sees suspicious activity inside the grain

storage, he does not ignore it simply because the people involved are influential in the village. Later, when he discovers the hidden grain beneath Mairyk Mullah's house, the conspirators try to persuade him to remain silent. Mairyk offers grain to his father, clothes to his mother, and promises of valuable knowledge. Kychan rejects these offers and openly calls the men thieves. His honesty also appears in his response to the accusations surrounding the hay-shed fire. Although rumors damage his reputation, he remains determined to reveal the truth. Kychan's character shows that honesty requires more than refusing to lie; it also means speaking openly when others try to hide wrongdoing.

Responsible Kychan gradually develops a strong sense of responsibility toward his family and village. When he volunteers to herd the collective farm's cattle during the summer, he accepts a task that requires patience, discipline, and care. At first, he sometimes oversleeps or becomes distracted by swimming with his friends, showing that he is still an ordinary boy learning to meet his obligations. However, he works to improve his habits and becomes a respected herder. He learns to recognize the individual characteristics of the cows and takes pride in his work. His responsibility is most clearly demonstrated when Jumaaly attempts to steal the animals. Kychan understands that the cattle belong to the collective farm and refuses to surrender them. Even when threatened with violence, he does not abandon his duty. Through these experiences, Kychan develops from a playful schoolboy into someone trusted with the welfare of the community's property.

Determined Kychan is determined to uncover the truth and protect the people around him. When the officials fail to find the stolen grain because it has been moved, he does not simply give up on the investigation. He continues paying attention to suspicious behavior and works with Atai and Kerez to understand what is happening. His determination is also evident in his desire to learn. He enjoys school, appreciates the books and crayons his older brother brings him, and dreams of visiting different parts of the Soviet Union. Even after the hay-shed fire and his time in hospital, he returns to school and tries to resume his life. In the final confrontation with Jumaaly, Kychan remains firm despite the threat to his life. His determination is rooted in his belief that wrongdoing should be exposed and that entrusted responsibilities should not be abandoned. His tragic fate makes this quality central to the novella's portrayal of him.

Mairyk Mullah

Mairyk Mullah is a religious leader whose character changes as the village of Socialchy develops under Soviet rule. At the beginning of the novella, he enjoys authority and expects people to respect and obey him. His treatment of Kychan as a three-year-old child reveals his harsh nature, as he strikes both the boy and his mother over a harmless act. Later, as the village joins the collective farm and Soviet education becomes more widespread, Mairyk loses much of his former influence. He resents the changes and joins Kapsalang and Jumaaly in schemes against the collective farm. His involvement in grain theft, deception, and the plot to burn the hay shed reveals the darker side of his character.

Hypocritical Mairyk Mullah is hypocritical because his actions contradict the religious and moral values he claims to represent. As a religious leader, he is expected to demonstrate kindness, honesty, and self-control. However, when little Duishoke interferes with his prayer beads and belongings, Mairyk responds with unnecessary violence toward the child and his mother. Later, he becomes involved in stealing grain and plotting against the collective farm. He also attempts to influence Kychan through promises and material rewards rather than encouraging him to do what is right. These contradictions expose the difference between Mairyk's public image and his true character, revealing that he uses his position for personal advantage.

Authoritarian Mairyk Mullah displays an authoritarian personality because he expects others to obey him without questioning his authority. His behavior toward little Duishoke demonstrates his desire to control even minor actions. Instead of responding calmly when the child plays with his prayer beads, he becomes violent and demands that the frightened parents change their son's name. As the village begins to embrace education and collective farming, Mairyk resists these changes because they weaken his traditional influence. He also disapproves of the school's activities and attempts to undermine the teacher's authority. Through these actions, Mairyk represents an individual who values power and obedience more than understanding, fairness, and personal freedom.

Manipulative Mairyk Mullah is manipulative because he uses deception, persuasion, and promises to influence others for his own benefit. When Kychan discovers the hidden grain, Mairyk attempts to silence him by offering material rewards to his family and promising to teach him valuable knowledge. He hopes these offers will make the boy abandon his principles and protect the criminals. Mairyk also suggests burning the collective farm's hay shed and blaming the students, demonstrating his willingness to frame innocent people to escape responsibility. Rather than admitting his wrongdoing, he creates confusion and exploits people's trust. His manipulative behavior reveals his selfishness and his determination to preserve his influence.

Tenti Albanov

Tenti Albanov is Kychan's teacher and one of the most important influences on his development. He represents education, social change, and the growing opportunities available to children in the village of Socialchy. Through his lessons, Tenti encourages students to read, think critically, and understand the changes taking place in their society. He also teaches them about class struggle and challenges traditional attitudes that limit their opportunities. Tenti recognizes Kychan's abilities and encourages him to develop his knowledge and sense of responsibility. When the boys face accusations following the hay-shed fire, Tenti supports them and insists that the truth must be established. His influence helps shape Kychan's values and confidence.

Progressive Tenti Albanov is progressive because he believes education and new ideas can improve people's lives. As a teacher, he encourages children to read, think critically, and understand the social changes occurring in their village. He challenges traditional beliefs that restrict opportunities and helps his students develop a broader understanding of the world. His introduction of theatre also allows the children to explore social problems and express their ideas creatively. Tenti recognizes that education is not limited to memorizing lessons; it also involves learning to question injustice and make thoughtful decisions. Through his teaching, he represents progress, enlightenment, and the importance of preparing young people for a better future.

Supportive Tenti Albanov is a supportive teacher who cares about his students' well-being and believes they deserve fairness. When rumors accuse Kychan and his friends of causing the hay-shed fire, Tenti refuses to accept the accusations without sufficient evidence. Instead, he insists that the boys should be given an opportunity to explain themselves before anyone reaches a conclusion. His actions demonstrate his willingness to defend his students against unfair judgment. He also recognizes Kychan's abilities and encourages him to develop his knowledge and confidence. By offering guidance during difficult moments, Tenti creates an environment in which his students can learn from their experiences and grow into responsible individuals.

Patient Tenti Albanov demonstrates patience by understanding that children need time, guidance, and encouragement to develop. Rather than expecting his students to behave perfectly, he helps them learn from their mistakes and difficulties. When Kychan feels hurt by Asylgul's question about his innocence, Tenti advises him not to take the comment personally if he has done nothing wrong. This guidance encourages Kychan to remain calm and trust the truth. Similarly, after Kychan returns from the hospital, Tenti encourages him to accept help with the lessons he has missed instead of becoming discouraged. His patient approach shows that effective teaching requires understanding individual feelings and supporting students through challenging experiences.

Jumaaly

Jumaaly is one of the main antagonists of the novella. He is introduced as a powerful man who claims to have served in the Red Army and earns the admiration of the village children, especially Kychan. His impressive appearance and demonstrations of strength help him gain respect, but his true character gradually emerges through his involvement in criminal activities. Although he has a history of association with the Basmachi, an anti-Soviet movement, he presents himself as a reformed man. In reality, he secretly steals grain from the collective farm and works with Mairyk Mullah and Kapsalang. After his crimes are exposed, he escapes arrest and later returns to take revenge on Kychan.

Deceptive Jumaaly is deceptive because he hides his criminal intentions behind an impressive public image. At first, he presents himself as a powerful man who claims to have served in the Red Army, earning the admiration of villagers and children, including Kychan. His appearance and demonstrations of strength make him seem trustworthy and heroic. However, his involvement in stealing grain from the collective farm reveals his true nature. He secretly works with Mairyk Mullah and Kapsalang to obtain resources for personal gain. By pretending to be loyal and reformed, Jumaaly takes advantage of the villagers' trust. His deception allows him to conceal his wrongdoing until his criminal activities are exposed.

Greedy Jumaaly's greed is revealed through his involvement in stealing grain and other resources belonging to the collective farm. Instead of using his position and abilities to benefit the village, he secretly transfers grain to a hidden storage place and helps arrange its sale to a merchant. His actions demonstrate that he values personal profit more than the welfare of the community. He is willing to betray the trust placed in him and cooperate with other criminals to achieve his goals. His greed also leads him into conflict with Kychan, who understands the importance of protecting the collective farm's property. Ultimately, Jumaaly's selfish desires contribute to the tragic events of the novella.

Vengeful Jumaaly's vengeful nature becomes especially clear during his final confrontation with Kychan. After his criminal activities are exposed and his companions face consequences, Jumaaly develops a desire to punish those he blames for their downfall. When he encounters Kychan in the pasture, he openly declares that his actions are motivated by revenge for Mairyk Mullah and Kapsalang. Rather than accepting responsibility for his own crimes, he directs his anger toward the innocent boy who refuses to surrender the collective farm's cattle. Jumaaly's revenge ultimately leads him to kill Kychan. This act reveals his cruelty, hatred, and willingness to sacrifice another person's life to satisfy his desire for retaliation.

THEMES

Society

Social Change: Resistance and Acceptance of Social Change in Early Soviet Kyrgyzstan In the novella, Shukurbek Beishenaliev presents the early Soviet transformation of Kyrgyz village life through the conflict between those who welcome the new social order and those who resist it. The establishment of the collective farm (kolkhoz), the spread of education, the introduction of new recreational activities, and the arrival of modern agricultural technology change the villagers' everyday lives. While many ordinary villagers accept these developments as signs of progress, characters such as Mairyk Mullah, Kapsalang, and Jumaaly react with hostility because the changes threaten their traditional authority, privileges, and personal interests.

One of the clearest examples of resistance is Kapsalang's reaction to the establishment of the kolkhoz. His family's land has been confiscated, and he struggles to accept that the property once belonging to his forefathers is no longer his. This resentment becomes particularly visible when the new tractor arrives in the village. While the other villagers celebrate the machine because it promises to make agricultural work easier, Kapsalang cannot share their enthusiasm. Instead, he is reminded of the land his family has lost.

Mairyk Mullah also consistently resists social change, particularly the influence of Soviet education. Having lost his former prestige and authority, he regards the school as a threat to traditional religious values and his own position in the community. When he sees Kychan, Atai, Kerez, and Asylgul skating together on the frozen river, he condemns their activity as a "devil's game." He is especially disturbed by the fact that Asylgul, a girl, is playing with boys, something that would previously have been unacceptable in his view. The children's innocent enjoyment thus becomes a symbol of a changing society in which young people have greater freedom and traditional social boundaries are being challenged. Mairyk interprets these developments as moral corruption rather than progress.

His hostility also extends to literacy and cultural education. When the boys bring him a copy of *Kyzyl Kyrgyzstan* newspaper, he asks whether the Soviet authorities intend to take away all the property of wealthy people. After Kychan explains the Soviet attitude toward mullahs and the wealthy, Mairyk angrily crumples the newspaper. Similarly, he becomes furious when the students perform a play that portrays a mullah and a wealthy man as representatives of the old social order. His reaction shows how education and theatre can challenge established authority by introducing new ideas about class, religion, and equality.

The fact that ordinary villagers enjoy the performance, despite the anger of Mairyk and Kapsalang, suggests that cultural change can gain public acceptance even when influential individuals oppose it.

Jumaaly shares this resistance, although his motives are also connected to his criminal activities and desire to preserve his power. Alongside Mairyk and Kapsalang, he participates in a plot against Tenti Albanov and his students, including the plan to set fire to the kolkhoz hay shed and blame the boys. The three men attempt to undermine the teacher because his educational work encourages young people to question the old hierarchy and support the new society. Their opposition is therefore more than a disagreement about customs: they actively try to sabotage institutions associated with Soviet change. Jumaaly's later attack on Kychan makes this conflict especially tragic. When Kychan refuses to surrender the kolkhoz cattle, insisting that they belong to the collective farm, Jumaaly attacks him in revenge for Kapsalang and Mairyk. Kychan's defense of collective property contrasts sharply with Jumaaly's determination to protect his own interests.

In contrast, the novella presents education as one of the most important ways people accept and participate in social change. Tenti Albanov's literacy campaign reaches beyond the classroom as his pupils distribute newspapers and teach adults to read. Kerez teaches Kapsalang the Latin alphabet so that he can perform clerical work at the kolkhoz, while Kychan helps his father, Jakyp, learn to read. Jakyp proudly thanks Tenti for educating the children, demonstrating that the new educational system can earn respect within families and communities. Although Kapsalang himself resents the wider political transformation, his need to learn the alphabet shows how the new system also creates practical demands that people must confront.

Nevertheless, Beishenaliev does not portray the transformation as a simple process in which everyone immediately abandons the past. Traditional beliefs and practices continue alongside the new Soviet institutions. For example, after Kychan is cleared of the accusations surrounding the fire, Kymka performs a traditional ritual intended to ward off misfortune. This detail suggests that villagers can participate in the new social order without entirely giving up familiar cultural practices. Social change is therefore uneven: some customs persist, while other traditions and hierarchies come under increasing pressure.

Illustrative moment: Kapsalang and Mairyk Mullah become angry when the students prepare a play about the conflict between the wealthy and the working class. When Kerez dresses as a mullah to practice his role, Kapsalang beats both Kerez and his sister, Kanym. Similarly, Asylgul's mother comes to the school to protest against her daughter's participation in the play, mistakenly believing that she is actually going to be married off as the wealthy man's youngest wife. These incidents illustrate how unfamiliarity with theatre and resistance to new ideas create conflict in the village. While Kapsalang and Mairyk oppose the performance because it challenges traditional authority, Asylgul's mother struggles to distinguish fiction from reality. In contrast, the villagers' enjoyment of the first performance demonstrates their growing acceptance of new forms of cultural expression.

Education: A Tool for Social Transformation

In Shukurbek Beishenaliev's novella *Kychan*, education helps people gain knowledge, develop new skills, and change their lives. The novel shows how Soviet schools bring new opportunities to a village where many adults cannot read and where some people distrust new ideas. Through Kychan, his father Jakyp, and other villagers, the author shows that learning is not only for children but can benefit the whole community.

Kychan is a hardworking student who uses what he learns at school to help his family. He teaches his father, Jakyp, to read, allowing him to read the newspaper himself. Jakyp is proud of his son's progress and thanks teacher Tenti Albanov for educating the children. This moment shows that education can bring family members closer and allow children to share their knowledge with older generations. Kychan's learning also supports his future, as he becomes skilled in his work and takes responsibility for protecting the collective farm's cattle.

Education also gives villagers practical skills. Kerez teaches Kapsalang the Latin alphabet because Kapsalang needs to do clerical work on the collective farm. The boys deliver copies of *Kyzyl Kyrgyzstan* to adults who are learning to read. These activities show that reading and writing can help people take part in village life and understand what is happening around them. Asylgul also receives the task of teaching herders to read, showing that girls can contribute to their community through education.

However, not everyone welcomes these changes. Mairyk Mullah dislikes the Soviet school and believes it corrupts children's morals. He becomes angry when Kychan explains that wealthy people and mullahs are treated as enemies of the Soviet state. His reaction shows his fear of losing his influence as young people gain knowledge and learn new ideas.

Overall, the novel presents education as a force that changes everyday life. It helps people read, work, think for themselves, and contribute to their community. Through Kychan and his classmates, Beishenaliev shows how learning can open doors that were previously closed to many villagers.

Illustrative Moment: One clear example occurs when Kychan teaches his father, Jakyp, to read. Jakyp is a carpenter who makes tools for the collective farm. After learning from his son, he can read the newspaper himself. When teacher Tenti Albanov visits the family's workshop, Jakyp thanks him for teaching the children and proudly explains Kychan's progress at school. This scene shows that education benefits more than the student alone. Kychan uses his new skills to help his father gain knowledge, while Jakyp begins to value his son's schooling even more. Their experience shows how learning can improve family life and work.

Religion: Abuse of Religious Authority

The abuse of religious authority is shown through Mairyk Mullah, who uses his position as a religious leader to control others and protect his own interests. Rather than showing kindness and patience, he threatens and harms people who upset him. His actions reveal how a person can misuse religious status to gain obedience and force others to follow his demands.

When Jakyp becomes seriously ill and his relative Aktan asks Mairyk Mullah to visit him. Although the mullah knows about Jakyp's condition, he initially refuses to travel to the poor family because Jakyp has little to offer as payment. He eventually visits, but when three-year-old Duishoke touches his prayer beads, healing stick, and turban, Mairyk becomes furious. He shouts at the child, strikes him and his mother, Turdukan, and refuses to forgive them until the family promises to give him their young foal. He also demands that the child's name be changed from Duishoke to Kychan. Jakyp and Turdukan agree because they are frightened and feel they have no choice. This incident shows Mairyk using the family's weakness to impose his will.

Mairyk's behavior continues when Kychan grows older. He condemns the Soviet school, calls skating a "devil's game," and disapproves of the children's activities. When Kychan performs the role of a mullah in a school play, Mairyk complains to his parents that their son has insulted him. Instead of accepting that the performance is acting, he treats it as a personal attack on his position.

The novel also shows Mairyk working with Kapsalang and Jumaaly to steal collective farm grain and plan the burning of the hay shed. These actions contrast with the moral behavior expected of a religious leader. Through Mairyk, Beishenaliev criticizes people who use religious authority to frighten others, demand gifts, and protect their own power rather than help those in need.

Illustrative Moment: When Jakyp becomes seriously ill, Mairyk Mullah initially refuses to visit because the poor family cannot offer him payment. During his visit, three-year-old Duishoke touches the mullah's prayer beads and other belongings. Mairyk loses his temper, beats the child and his mother, and demands a young foal in exchange for forgiveness. He also orders the parents to change their son's name to Kychan. Afraid of the mullah, Jakyp and Turdukan accept his conditions. This incident illustrates the abuse of religious authority because Mairyk uses the family's fear and poverty to force them to obey his personal demands.

Ethics

Appearance vs. Reality: Hypocrisy and Deception

Hypocrisy and deception are shown through Jumaaly, Mairyk Mullah, and Kapsalang, who hide their real intentions behind respectable appearances. They try to gain the trust of the villagers while secretly working against the collective farm and the new social order. Through their actions, the novel shows how dishonest people can use lies, false reputations, and fear to protect their interests.

Jumaaly is a clear example of deception. When Mairyk introduces him to the schoolchildren, he presents him as a former Red Army soldier who fought for the Soviet government. The boys, especially

Kychan, admire his strength and believe he is a brave hero. However, Jumaaly's public image hides his criminal activities. He works with Kapsalang and Mairyk to steal grain from the collective farm and helps set fire to the hay shed. His actions reveal that his claims of loyalty do not match his behavior.

Mairyk Mullah also shows hypocrisy through the difference between his religious position and his treatment of others. As a mullah, he is expected to guide people and show kindness, but he refuses to help the seriously ill Jakyp until he is pressured to visit. During the visit, he beats Jakyp's young son, Duishoke, and his mother, Turdukan, then demands a foal and forces the parents to change their child's name. Later, he joins Jumaaly and Kapsalang in planning crimes. These actions show that he uses his religious position to control people rather than serve them.

Kapsalang also deceives others by hiding stolen grain and pretending that the grain is simply being moved. When Kychan and Atai question him, he acts friendly and offers them wheat, even though he is involved in wrongdoing. His behavior helps him conceal his actions and avoid suspicion.

Through these characters, Beishenaliev shows that appearances can be misleading. Their lies harm the community and put innocent people at risk. In contrast, Kychan and his friends show honesty by revealing the hidden grain and refusing to remain silent about the crimes they witness.

Illustrative Moment: Jumaaly's deception becomes clear when he is introduced to the schoolchildren as a former Red Army soldier. Kychan and his friends admire him and believe he is a brave man who served the Soviet government. Later, however, Kychan discovers Jumaaly handling grain suspiciously at the collective farm's storage facility. He eventually learns that Jumaaly, Mairyk Mullah, and Kapsalang have been stealing grain and planning to burn the hay shed. Jumaaly's image hides his criminal behavior. This incident shows how he uses a false reputation to gain trust while secretly harming the village.

Justice vs. Injustice: The Tragic Cost of Fighting for Justice

Throughout the story, Kychan stands up for what is right, even when he faces threats from people who want to protect their own interests. His actions show that defending justice requires courage, but it can also come with serious consequences.

One important example is when Kychan discovers that Kapsalang is hiding grain stolen from the collective farm. Instead of keeping quiet, Kychan tells his teacher, Tenti Albanov, about what he has found. He understands that stealing from the collective farm harms the whole community. Although the criminals try to hide their actions and avoid punishment, Kychan continues to support the truth. His decision shows that he values honesty and the well-being of others more than his own safety.

Kychan also faces danger when he works as a cowherd and protects the collective farm's cattle. Jumaaly, who is involved in stealing collective property, attacks him while attempting to take the cattle. Kychan refuses to surrender what he has been trusted to protect. As a result, he is killed. His death is the most tragic example of the price he pays for standing up against injustice.

Kychan's death also shows the difference between his character and the criminals' behavior. While Jumaaly, Kapsalang, and Mairyk act to protect their own interests, Kychan remains loyal to his community. He does not abandon his responsibilities even when his life is in danger. His final act of signing his name, "Kychan Jakyp uulu," also connects his personal identity with the education and progress he has worked toward.

Ultimately, *Kychan* presents justice as something worth defending, even when the struggle is dangerous. Kychan's death is tragic because an honest young person loses his life while protecting others. Through his story, the author shows both the courage required to oppose wrongdoing and the terrible cost that such courage can sometimes bring.

Illustrative Moment: Suddenly, Kychan heard rustling in the tall grass and saw Jumaaly, the one-eyed fugitive hiding in the mountains. Jumaaly seized his horse's reins and demanded Kychan's *kalpak* hat, horse, and the spotted brown cow. Realizing that Jumaaly intended to steal the kolkhoz's property, Kychan refused. "These belong to the kolkhoz, you devil! I will not give you any of them!" he cried.

Enraged, Jumaaly dragged Kychan from his horse. The boy struggled and struck him with his herding whip, but Jumaaly overpowered him. Pulling out a large knife, the fugitive demanded the cattle again. Kychan still refused, shouting that Jumaaly could not take the kolkhoz's property. Furious, Jumaaly stabbed him repeatedly, declaring that he was taking revenge for Kapsalang and Mairyk. Kychan fell into the grass, covered in blood, and cried out for help as clouds darkened the sky.