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## Notes for the Teacher



### General

- Learning a language means using it for a wide variety of purposes. Language is best acquired when attention is focused on meaning, not on form.
- Words and phrases not closely related to objects and action remain empty and lifeless to young learners. Language comes alive when presented in meaning-making contexts.
- Words/phrases that are used to accomplish many useful purposes follow a certain system inherent in the language itself.
- Learners become familiar with the system through continuous exposure to the language in meaning-focused situations.
- Interaction, discussion and sharing of ideas among learners provide opportunities that elicit 'real' information about them and their experiences and opinions.
- Encourage learners to work in pairs and small groups and let them go beyond the textbook by providing a variety of language inputs for spontaneous and natural use of language.
- Build on the exercises given in the textbook and design more tasks/activities in keeping with learners' interests, needs and surroundings. Employ free-response exercises (with more than one possible response).
- Promote reading habits through story reading (not merely teaching stories as texts), story retelling, choral reading, shared reading, etc.
- Create class libraries for exchange of books and shared reading. The library may also move with children to the next higher class.
- Poems need not be taught line by line, word by word. You may give a model reading but let every child read the poem on her/his own to feel the richness of language, rhythm and music of words. Exercises accompanying the poem are more for understanding the poem as a whole than for teaching language items.



- Encourage learners to tell new stories, narrate anecdotes, compose short poems in English or their own language, talk about pictures, illustrations in the book and cartoons in newspapers/magazines. Don't get anxious about the errors they will make. Constant exposure, practice and correction in the form of feedback will help them improve themselves by and by.
- Every page has a column for words and meanings. Encourage children to write down other words they find difficult, along with their meanings, in this column.

### UNITS 1-3

## 📖 The Best Christmas Present in the World 📖

Some suggestions given below are applicable to all prose lessons in the book.

- A war story against the backdrop of Christmas, a festival marked by family reunion, exchange of presents and universal bonhomie. Connie, aged 101, receives a present from a stranger whom she mistakes for her long-awaited husband. What is the present — the letter or the mistaken identity of the visitor?
- Spend about 20 minutes discussing the dates and events given under *Before you read*. Since the answers are given later in the book, the focus should be on the nature of each event — whether, in human terms, the event recalls defeat and destruction or endeavour and success. Let children express their own views. Even if their observations do not reveal any understanding of the nature of events, the discussion session will provide an excellent base for initiating work on the story under reference.
- The story is sectioned into three parts. Parts II and III may be sectioned further according to convenience and time available.
- Discuss each illustration with reference to the story. Illustrations are given for better comprehension and sharper visual appeal.
- *Comprehension Check* at the end of each section is a recall of what children have read so far. Design while-reading comprehension exercises in the form of factual comprehension questions, multiple choice questions and/or completion of sentences, etc.

- Here is one example in three formats:
  - Factual or inferential comprehension (Answer the question in your own words.)
 

Why is Jim 'ashamed to say' that Fritz 'began it'?
  - Multiple choice (Mark the right answer.)
 

Jim is 'ashamed to say' that Fritz 'began it' because

    - (i) he didn't know how to do it.
    - (ii) he wishes he had done it first.
    - (iii) he didn't want to do it.
  - Sentence completion : (Choose the right item and complete the sentence.)
 

But it is true, \_\_\_\_\_ that Fritz began it.  
(much to my delight / shame / dismay)
- A related item here is the use of 'begin' and 'start' in appropriate contexts.
 

Use 'begin' or 'start' appropriately in the following sentences.

  - (i) What time do you \_\_\_\_\_ work in the morning?
  - (ii) If we want to get there, we should \_\_\_\_\_ now.
  - (iii) The film \_\_\_\_\_ at 7 pm.
  - (iv) No matter how you try, the car won't \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Very often 'begin' and 'start' can be used in the same way, though 'start' is more common in informal speech. [See sentences (i) and (iii)]
  - In some constructions only 'start' can be used. [See sentences (ii) and (iv)].
- Questions under *working with the text* to be answered orally, later to be written in the copy book.
- At the end of the lesson, draw children's attention to the two quotations given in the box. Let them discuss how the story illustrates the same ideas. Then, ask them to find sentences in the story which appeal to them most. Here are some examples:
  - We agreed about everything and he was my enemy.
  - No one dies in a football match. No children are orphaned. No wives become widows.
  - I know from all that happened today how much both armies long for peace. We shall be together again, I'm sure of it. (It's a good example of the use of 'irony' in the story.)





## ☐ The Ant and the Cricket ☐

- ◆ Spend about 15 minutes eliciting, and listening to, fables or fable-like stories from children, preferably in their own language(s). Help them retell one or two in English by providing appropriate words and phrases.
- ◆ The story about the Sun and the Wind at the end of 'Glimpses of the Past' may be used here. Ask them if it's a fable, though there are no animals in it.
- ◆ Try the following writing task.  
Rearrange the following sentences to construct a story. Start with sentence 4.
  1. One cold day, a hungry grasshopper came to the anthill and begged for a little something to eat.
  2. He replied, "Alas! I spent all my time singing and playing and dancing, and never thought about winter."
  3. One ant asked him how he had spent his time during summer and whether he had saved anything for winter.
  4. A nest of ants had been occupied all through the summer and autumn collecting food for winter.
  5. They carefully stored it in the underground chambers of their home.
  6. Then we have nothing to give you.
  7. Thus, when winter came, they had plenty to eat.
  8. People who play and sing all summer should only dance in winter.
  9. The ant answered.
- ◆ Find three adjectives in the first stanza associated with summer and spring.
- ◆ Find four phrases/lines in the same stanza associated with the onset of winter.
- ◆ Suppose the last line of the first stanza were to be rewritten as '*Oh! What will become of me? Says the cricket.*' Would you find it acceptable in the poem? If not, why not?
- ◆ Speak the words given below. Ask children to write the word, and against it two new words that rhyme.

- sing \_\_\_\_\_
- crumb \_\_\_\_\_
- through \_\_\_\_\_
- wished \_\_\_\_\_

(Last sound in 'crumb' is 'm'. In 'wished' it is 't'.)

- Activity 4 under *working with language* needs patience and time. Punctuation in writing sentences is an important teaching point. Since the activity is to be taken up in groups, there will be several versions of each sentence to begin with. Encourage children to discuss why only one version is grammatically acceptable and not the other.

## 📖 The Tsunami 📖

- A natural calamity causing huge destruction and loss of life and property. Alongside the story of deep sorrow are reassuring details of courage, survival and resilience.
- While covering sections and sub sections of the text, focus on situations in which children realise the importance of doing whatever possible to save human and animal life, to participate in relief work and to understand the concept of disaster management.
- Elicit their comments on, and reactions to, the stories of Meghna and Almas. Focus on values such as courage, care and compassion in the bitter struggle for survival and rehabilitation.
- The activity under *Before you read* is like an elementary geography lesson. Map reading along with language work (asking/answering questions, spotting location/ direction and describing them with precision) is a good example of softening subject boundaries and conforming to the idea of language across the curriculum. Use other maps from the geography/ history textbook for further practice.
- While dealing with 'Active/Passive voice' (working with language: Activity 3), provide samples of texts exemplifying the use of passive voice such as short newspaper reports and descriptions of processes/experiments. As far as possible, avoid a mechanical transformation exercise confined to isolated sentences. Try a simple exercise given here.





Complete the passage using passive forms of the verbs given in brackets.

Olive oil \_\_\_\_\_ (use) for cooking, salad dressing, etc. Olives \_\_\_\_\_ (pick) in autumn when they are ripe. They \_\_\_\_\_ (shake) from the trees and \_\_\_\_\_ (gather) up, usually by hand. Then they \_\_\_\_\_ (grind) to a thick paste which \_\_\_\_\_ (spread) onto special mats. The mats then \_\_\_\_\_ (layer) up on the pressing machine which will gently squeeze them to produce olive oil.

- The last activity under **speaking** and **writing** is a step towards reducing the gap between children's life at school and their life outside the school.

### 📖 Geography Lesson 📖

- Children already know words like 'aeroplane, airport', etc. Draw their attention to words like 'jetliner', 'jet engine' and 'jetlag' in the following activity.

(i) Match items under **A** with those under **B**

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
Jetliner	• Fatigue/tiredness after a long flight
Jetlag	• rich social group flying around the world for business or pleasure
Jet engine	• aircraft powered by a jet engine
(the) jet set	• engine that emits high-speed hot gases at the back when it moves forward.

(ii) Check the meaning of 'jet black' and 'jetsam' in the dictionary. Complete the idiom : jetsam and \_\_\_\_\_

- Today, if there is a border dispute or any other contentious issue between two countries, an organisation called the United Nations acts as a mediator to keep peace and order in the world. Encourage children to gather information about the UN and its constituent bodies.
- Peace Memorial Park is the only park of its kind in the world. It is in Hiroshima, Japan, and marks the spot where the first atomic bomb was dropped on \_\_\_\_\_ (Children will remember the date and event if they recall the activity under

Before you read in *The Best Christmas Present in the World*).  
A mini project could be planned on this.

- Ask children to draw a map of their locality/village depicting its physical features and distances between places, etc.
- Recite and write on the blackboard the following poem and discuss the items given at the end of the poem.

*Wake  
gently this morning  
to a different day.*

*Listen  
There is no bray  
of buses,  
no horns blow.*

*There is only  
the silence  
of a city  
hushed  
with snow.*

- ▣ Name a few cities in India which the poem reminds you of.
- ▣ Which words/phrases in the poem evoke images different from those suggested by 'the silence of the city'?

## ▣ Glimpses of the Past ▣

- 'Glimpses' of the history of our country to be understood through pictures with strips of text for support. Children have a natural enthusiasm for this kind of material in the textbook.
- Children may read the comic strip aloud. Then they break up into small groups, discuss what they have read and write a summary. Each group presents its summary one by one. The whole class then enters into a general discussion, and a consolidated draft of the composition is prepared with the active support of the teacher.
- Conversely, divide the class into small groups. Let each group look at and describe a set of pictures (assigned to them) and construct their own text. Texts thus produced can be put together to form a coherent story, to be edited for accuracy.







- ❖ If necessary, texts may first be produced in the child's own language and the teacher can help them to reformulate these in English. For children fluent in English, this may be an opportunity to formulate equivalent texts in their own languages.
- ❖ Some details of each 'glimpse' of the past may be had from the history textbook of the same class. The history teacher may be invited to facilitate the activity.
- ❖ Picture reading under *speaking* and *writing* to be attempted in the same manner.
- ❖ Creating a comic (Activity 5) will be great fun if children can be persuaded to draw/learn to draw matchstick figures. Enlist the help of the art teacher.

### 📖 Macavity - The Mystery Cat 📖

- ❖ Have you ever wondered why people generally communicate with their pet dog mainly in English?
- ❖ What would you say to persuade your cat to leave the mouse alone? Try to say it in English.
- ❖ Which sentence about Macavity has been repeated four times in the poem? Why has it been repeated? Think about it.
- ❖ Mention a couple of 'crimes' discovered in the kitchen, and your Macavity was nowhere to be seen.
- ❖ *a fiend in feline shape*  
Does it remind you of a similar expression about a wolf? What is it, and what does it mean?
- ❖ Here are four lines about someone's cat. Read them and say whether it is a mystery cat.

*My kitten walks on velvet feet  
And makes no sound at all.  
And in the doorway nightly sits  
To watch the darkness fall.*

## Notes for the Teacher

### UNITS 4-7

#### Bepin Choudhury's Lapse of Memory

- A Satyajit Ray story with a surprise ending that brings in its wake the much needed psychological relief to the sophisticated executive beleaguered by a conspiracy, which is a humorous take after all.
- Before asking children to read the text, tell the story part by part, each part ending where the listener wonders what comes next.
- Activity 3 under *working with language* is about two tense forms — *simple past* and *present perfect*. Notice how both have been used in conjunction with each other. The following explanatory notes may be useful.
  - The *present perfect* tense is used to refer to an action initiated and completed in the past and is associated with the present. It has its effect on the present situation.
    - I have seen the Taj. (I know what it looks like.)
    - He has arrived. (He is here.)
    - I have finished my work. (I am free now.)
- *Present perfect* tense is usual with *already, so far, not yet, ever, never* etc.
- It is not used with *ago, yesterday, last week/month/year, etc.*

#### The Last Bargain

- Here is a method of teaching that may be tried.
  - (a) Let children read the first stanza silently.
    - Ask the following questions.
    - (i) How many persons/characters are there?
    - (ii) Who are they?
    - (iii) Who is big and who is small?
    - (iv) What does the person in the first line say?
    - (v) What does the other one in the fourth line say?
    - (vi) Do they stay together or part company? Why?





(b) Now reconstruct the episode. Begin like this.

I was walking on the road looking for work. I saw the king in his chariot. He had a sword in his hand. He was very kind to me. He shook my hand and offered to hire me. I did not accept his offer. To me, power is not a valuable thing. It is not permanent. It won't make me happy. I was looking for something else as a reward for my work.

What is he looking for?

Let us read the next stanza.

(c) Do the other stanzas in the same way.

- ❖ The clue to what the person is looking for lies in the last line. The operative phrases are 'the child's play' and 'a free man'.
- ❖ The child and her/his play is a metaphor for innocence and inward happiness, which gives this person a sense of fulfilment and freedom from stress and strife. He feels genuinely free and happy in the company of the child.
- ❖ Recite each stanza with feeling, pausing at the right places.
- ❖ The method suggested may work better for a poem with a story.

### ❖ The Summit Within ❖

- ❖ Adventure and the world of nature – the arduous task of reaching the highest summit in the world makes the climber reflect on the 'internal summits' which are, perhaps, higher than the Everest. The text underscores the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of the adventure in a single perspective.
- ❖ Divide the text into three parts. A convenient division is suggested here.
  - ❖ '.....that mountains are a means of communion with God'. (end of Part-I)
  - ❖ 'It is emotional. It is spiritual'. (end of Part-II)
  - ❖ The remaining is Part-III.
- ❖ Design while-reading comprehension questions for each part. The multiple choice items are given at the end of the lesson. You may try the following as additional questions.
  - ❖ What is the author's personal answer to the question as to why people climb mountains?
  - ❖ How is the same question answered in Part-II in a different way?

- ❖ Famous climbers have recorded how they needed *just that help*? Explain the italicised phrase.
- ❖ Looking round from the summit, you tell yourself that \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Complete this sentence using the same words as in the text without referring to the book.
- (b) Now complete it using a clause/phrase of your own without changing meaning.
- ❖ Activities 2 and 3 under *working with language* provide ample opportunities for vocabulary development. Extend Activity 2 by choosing new words from the text to cover their adjective and/or adverb forms.
  - remark – remarkable – remarkably
  - type – typical – typically
 Use each item in a meaningful context, involving more than one sentence.
  - ‘What you say is not appropriate, though it’s a good remark.’
  - ‘Isn’t that remarkable?’
  - ‘It may be so, but it doesn’t mean you are remarkably objective.’
- ❖ You may not find the dialogue above remarkable enough, but it meets the immediate requirement appropriately.
- ❖ Re-read and discuss passages where the author’s admiration for the mountains and passion for adventure comes through.

## 📖 The School Boy 📖

- ❖ A school is a place where children and teachers assemble every morning to learn from one another. Find out if any child would like to describe school in a different way.
- ❖ An interesting discussion on different types of schools, supported by pictures from magazines/newspapers, may ensue — a village school where children are sitting on the floor; another school where they are sitting at long desks; an outdoor lesson under a tree, etc.
- ❖ Ask children how they reach school. Do they walk or take a bus, etc.? What problems others in remote areas may face in reaching school on time?
- ❖ Any suggestions as to how to make school an interesting and enjoyable place!





## ☐ This is Jody's Fawn ☐

- ☘ A story about a child's emotional preoccupation with the fawn whose mother had to be killed to save his father's life. The story highlights values such as compassion and justice, care and concern for human and animal life.
- ☘ Spend some time on a discussion about 'home remedies' for commonplace health problems/ailments. Should we see a doctor about every little thing, or should we talk to the grandmother first?
- ☘ The growing concern about preservation of environment and protection of animal life has gone a long way in persuading schools to refrain from dissecting animals for experiment. Elicit children's comments on the issue and on the law that punishes humans for hurting animals.
- ☘ Activity 1 under *working with language* is about reporting questions – yes/no and wh-questions. The use of 'if/whether' in the case of yes/no type questions should be explicitly explained. Devise separate exercises for teaching the use of 'if/whether', the appropriate reporting verb, the changes in pronominals in the reported speech and the sequence of tenses.

Here is a simple exercise to exemplify some of these points.

Choose the correct word to complete statements in indirect speech given below. Write words in the blanks given.

- (a) "Where do you come from?"  
I \_\_\_\_\_ (said/asked) him where \_\_\_\_\_ (he/you) come from.
- (b) "What is your name?"  
He asked me what \_\_\_\_\_ (my/his) name. (is/was)
- (c) "Are you happy?"  
I asked him \_\_\_\_\_ (if/whether) he \_\_\_\_\_ (is/was) happy.
- (d) "Do you live here?"  
He asked me \_\_\_\_\_ (whether/if) I \_\_\_\_\_ (live/lived) \_\_\_\_\_ (here/there).
- (e) "Why are you crying?"  
The teacher asked the child \_\_\_\_\_ (if/why) she \_\_\_\_\_ (is/was/were) crying.

Here is another exercise.

Read the following dialogue between Jody and his father. Rewrite their conversation in indirect speech.

Penny lay quiet, staring at the ceiling.

“Boy, you’ve got me hemmed in.”

“It won’t take much to raise the fawn.

It will soon start eating leaves.”

“You are smarter than boys of your age.”

“We took its mother, and it wasn’t to blame.”

“It seems ungrateful to leave it to starve.”

Begin like this:

Penny lay quiet staring at the ceiling. He said to Jody that \_\_\_\_\_ . Jody replied that it wouldn’t \_\_\_\_\_

- Activity 2 under *working with language* deals with transitive and intransitive verbs.

Ask children to underline the direct object in the following sentences.

He brought me a colourful umbrella.

I will write a letter to him.

You should give yourself a chance.

- Activity 3 under *writing* may be linked with the first task covering home remedies under ‘Before you read,’ It will be useful to take it up separately also.

## The Duck and the Kangaroo

- Try the method suggested for *The Last Bargain*.
- Before taking up the text and the activities given, let children talk about ‘unusual’ activities they want to do such as walking on the moon, floating in outer space or shaking hands with an octopus. Take every idea seriously, no matter how improbable it may seem. We may come upon enough raw material of which *The Duck and the Kangaroo* is made.
- It may be suggested that a story/poem like the present one need not be factually correct or ‘real’. We enjoy reading them because they appeal to our imagination, curiosity and sense of the music of words.





- ❖ Children should be encouraged to attempt short poems such as the following.

1. *Once I knew  
A Kangaroo  
Named Sue  
How about you?*
2. *'There is a man  
called Peter Pan',  
I know another  
who's neither Pan nor Peter.  
You haven't met him, have you?  
It's my friend Kanga Roo'.*

- ❖ Sample two is impromptu as you rightly guessed, did you?

### 📖 A Visit to Cambridge 📖

- ❖ Excerpt from a travelogue highlighting exchange of views between two extraordinary persons on what it means to be 'differently abled'. A tour through Cambridge had a surprise, both pleasant and poignant, for the author. He met the brilliant and completely paralysed author of *A Brief History of Time*, and talked to him for a full half-hour.
- ❖ Activity 2 under *working with language* is about the *present participle* (dancing/walking) used as adjective.
- ❖ Running on the road, he saw \_\_\_\_\_. (participle)
- ❖ The train is running. \_\_\_\_\_ (verb)
- ❖ The running train \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective)
- ❖ The use of *past participle* as adjective may also be illustrated here.
- ❖ He has broken the window. (verb)
- ❖ The window was broken when the almirah was taken out (verb — in passive)
- ❖ See the broken window. (adjective)
- ❖ Activity 3 under *speaking and writing* may be done as a project. Lot of oral work to precede the writing task. The final draft should be edited and improved before it is put up on the board.

- Activities 1 and 2 under *speaking* and *writing* are about word stress. Stressed syllables to be pronounced clearly and loudly. Some words of more than one syllable from the text may also be listed according to whether the stress falls on the first or the second syllable.

## When I Set Out for Lyonnaise

- The poem has a clear beginning-middle-end structure. The beginning is 'setting out', the middle is 'sojourn' and the end is 'return'.
- Draw children's attention to appropriate words/phrases/lines that suggest and reinforce each phase of the journey.
- 'Lyonnaise' to be pronounced as *lie-an-ness*. The last syllable receives the primary stress.
- If feasible and useful, explain the rhyme scheme and its musical effect on the listener.

Stanza 1	-	A B B A A B	Lyonnaise	-	A
Stanza 2	-	A C C A A C	away	-	B
Stanza 3	-	A D D A A D	there	-	C
			eyes	-	D





## Notes for the Teacher

### UNITS 8-10

#### A Short Monsoon Diary

- Some extracts from the diary of a nature lover who enjoys the monsoon in the hills and observes the accompanying changes in the world of flora and fauna.
- Activities under *working with language* are numerous and of different types. Spend sufficient time on each activity and devise, wherever necessary, new but related exercises for further practice.
- The following project may be tried under *writing*.
  - Do you notice the changes that occur in nature as the seasons change? Write five or six sentences about what you see in nature in your part of the country during the months of May, August and December.
  - Record the daily temperature for a fortnight and note down the maximum and minimum temperatures.
  - Comment on the rise and fall in temperature.
  - Record the time of sunrise and sunset for a fortnight and check if there is any appreciable change in the time.

#### On the Grasshopper and Cricket

- This poem is relatively difficult. The difficulty lies in its brevity of expression and complexity of thought.
- The introductory note and activities under *working with the poem* should be done elaborately adding additional explanatory notes/tasks, wherever necessary.
- Compare it with *The Ant and the Cricket* to bring out differences of style and theme clearly with examples.
- To concretise 'the poetry of earth' or 'the sounds of nature', use the poem given below, which is all about animal cries.





Ask children to rearrange the lines taking note of the words that rhyme. The last line of each stanza begins with 'But'.

*Cows moo.*  
*Lions roar.*  
*But I speak.*  
*Bears snore.*  
*Doves coo.*  
*Crickets creak.*  
*Dogs growl.*  
*Horses neigh.*  
*But I talk.*  
*Wolves howl.*  
*Donkeys bray.*  
*Parrots squawk.*

### 📖 The Great Stone Face – I and II 📖

- ❖ A classic piece of American fiction juxtaposing mellowness of humanism with magnificence of art. Ernest, an unschooled dweller of the valley, has close affinity with the 'Stone Face' atop the hills beyond. Who resembles the splendid Stone Face — not someone for all his wealth, not someone else for all his heroic deeds, and not someone else yet again for his poetry and sublime ideas. It is none other than Ernest who personifies a rare blend of basic simplicity, practical wisdom and deep love for humanity.
- ❖ The original story has been heavily abridged. Simplification has been avoided in the interest of authenticity. You may like to read the unabridged text for pleasure and edification.
- ❖ Design three or four while-reading comprehension questions for each section of the text (parts I and II)
- ❖ The writing activity (Part-II : IV) is for further practice in language analysis. Rearranging phrases to construct sentences and then rearranging sentences to construct a paragraph will provide many opportunities for thinking about cohesion and coherence.
- ❖ Activities 1 and 2 under *working with language* (Part I) on adding *-ness* and *-ity* for forming nouns and adding *-ly* to adjectives for forming adverbs should be completed in three or four sessions. One period may be devoted to each item including resolving intermittent queries and offering explanations and the writing work involved.



# 1

## The Best Christmas Present in the World

### Before you read

*There are some dates or periods of time in the history of the world that are so significant that everyone knows and remembers them. The story you will read mentions one such date and event: a war between the British and the Germans in 1914. Can you guess which war it was?*

*Do you know which events the dates below refer to?*

- (a) 4 July 1776                      (b) 17 December 1903  
(c) 6 August 1945                  (d) 30 January 1948  
(e) 12 April 1961                  (f) 20 July 1969

*The answers are on page 23.*

### I

I spotted it in a junk shop in Bridport, a roll-top desk. The man said it was early nineteenth century, and oak. I had wanted one, but they were far too expensive. This one was in a bad condition, the roll-top in several pieces, one leg clumsily mended, scorch marks all down one side. It was going for very little money. I thought I could restore it. It would be a risk, a challenge, but I had to have it. I paid the man and brought it back to my workroom at the back of the garage. I began work on it on Christmas Eve.

I removed the roll-top completely and pulled out the drawers. The veneer had lifted almost everywhere — it

spotted it:  
saw it; found it  
(informal)

scorch marks:  
burn marks  
was going for:  
was selling for  
(informal)

restore:  
(here) repair

veneer:  
a thin layer of  
plastic or  
decorative  
wood on  
furniture of  
cheap wood

taken their  
toll on:  
damaged  
stuck fast:  
shut tight



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scruples:  
feelings that  
make you  
hesitate to do  
something  
wrong



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looked like water damage to me. Both fire and water had clearly taken their toll on this desk. The last drawer was stuck fast. I tried all I could to ease it out gently. In the end I used brute force. I struck it sharply with the side of my fist and the drawer flew open to reveal a shallow space underneath, a secret drawer. There was something in there. I reached in and took out a small black tin box. Sello-taped to the top of it was a piece of lined notepaper, and written on it in shaky handwriting: "Jim's last letter, received January 25, 1915. To be buried with me when the time comes." I knew as I did it that it was wrong of me to open the box, but curiosity got the better of my scruples. It usually does.



Inside the box there was an envelope. The address read: "Mrs Jim Macpherson, 12 Copper Beeches, Bridport, Dorset." I took out the letter and unfolded it. It was written in pencil and dated at the top — "December 26, 1914".

### Comprehension Check

1. What did the author find in a junk shop?
2. What did he find in a secret drawer? Who do you think had put it in there?

## II

Dearest Connie,  
I write to you in a much happier frame of mind because something wonderful has just happened that I must tell

you about at once. We were all standing to in our trenches yesterday morning, Christmas morning. It was crisp and quiet all about, as beautiful a morning as I've ever seen, as cold and frosty as a Christmas morning should be.

I should like to be able to tell you that we began it. But the truth, I'm ashamed to say, is that Fritz began it. First someone saw a white flag waving from the trenches opposite. Then they were calling out to us from across no man's land, "Happy Christmas, Tommy! Happy Christmas!" When we had got over the surprise, some of us shouted back, "Same to you, Fritz! Same to you!" I thought that would be that. We all did. But then suddenly one of them was up there in his grey greatcoat and waving a white flag. "Don't shoot, lads!" someone shouted. And no one did. Then there was another Fritz up on the parapet, and another. "Keep your heads down," I told the men, "it's a trick." But it wasn't.

One of the Germans was waving a bottle above his head. "It is Christmas Day, Tommy. We have schnapps. We have sausage. We meet you? Yes?" By this time there were dozens of them walking towards us across no man's land and not a rifle between them. Little Private Morris was the first up. "Come on, boys. What are we waiting for?" And then there was no stopping them. I was the officer. I should have stopped them there and then, I suppose, but the truth is that it never even occurred to me I should. All along their line and ours I could see men walking slowly towards one another, grey coats, khaki coats meeting in the middle. And I was one of them. I was part of this. In the middle of the war we were making peace.

You cannot imagine, dearest Connie, my feelings as I looked into the eyes of the Fritz officer, who approached me, hand outstretched. "Hans Wolf," he said, gripping my hand warmly and holding it. "I am from Dusseldorf. I play the cello in the orchestra. Happy Christmas."

standing to:  
taking up  
positions  
trenches:  
long deep  
ditches in the  
ground where  
soldiers hide  
from the  
enemy

Fritz:  
(*here*), a name  
for a German  
soldier (Fritz is  
a common  
German name)

Tommy:  
a common  
English name,  
used here to  
refer to British  
soldiers

that would be  
that:  
that was all;  
that was the  
end of the  
matter

schnapps  
(pronounced,  
*sh-naps*):  
a German  
drink made  
from grain

cello:  
a musical  
instrument  
like a large  
violin



marzipan:  
a sweet  
covering on a  
cake made  
from sugar,  
eggs and  
almonds



“Captain Jim Macpherson,” I replied. “And a Happy Christmas to you too. I’m a school teacher from Dorset, in the west of England.”

“Ah, Dorset,” he smiled. “I know this place. I know it very well.” We shared my rum ration and his excellent sausage. And we talked, Connie, how we talked. He spoke almost perfect English. But it turned out that he had never set foot in Dorset, never even been to England. He had learned all he knew of England from school, and from reading books in English. His favourite writer was Thomas Hardy, his favourite book *Far from the Madding Crowd*. So out there in no man’s land we talked of Bathsheba and Gabriel Oak and Sergeant Troy and Dorset. He had a wife and one son, born just six months ago. As I looked about me there were huddles of khaki and grey everywhere, all over no man’s land, smoking, laughing, talking, drinking, eating. Hans Wolf and I shared what was left of your wonderful Christmas cake, Connie. He thought the marzipan was the best he had ever tasted. I agreed. We agreed about everything, and he was my enemy. There never was a Christmas party like it, Connie.

Then someone, I don’t know who, brought out a football. Greatcoats were dumped in piles to make goalposts, and the next thing we knew it was Tommy against Fritz out in the middle of no man’s land. Hans Wolf and I looked on and cheered, clapping our hands and stamping our feet, to keep out the cold as much as anything. There was a moment when I noticed our breaths mingling in the air between us. He saw it too and smiled. “Jim Macpherson,” he said after a while, “I think this is how we should resolve this war. A football match. No one dies in a football match. No children are orphaned. No wives become widows.”

“I’d prefer cricket,” I told him. “Then we Tommies could be sure of winning, probably.” We laughed at that, and together we watched the game. Sad to say,



Connie, Fritz won, two goals to one. But as Hans Wolf generously said, our goal was wider than theirs, so it wasn't quite fair.

The time came, and all too soon, when the game was finished, the schnapps and the rum and the sausage had long since run out, and we knew it was all over. I wished Hans well and told him I hoped he would see his family again soon, that the fighting would end and we could all go home.

"I think that is what every soldier wants, on both sides," Hans Wolf said. "Take care, Jim Macpherson. I shall never forget this moment, nor you." He saluted and walked away from me slowly, unwillingly, I felt. He turned to wave just once and then became one of the hundreds of grey-coated men drifting back towards their trenches.

That night, back in our dugouts, we heard them singing a carol, and singing it quite beautifully. It was *Stille Nacht*, Silent Night. Our boys gave them a rousing chorus of *While Shepherds Watched*. We exchanged carols for a while and then we all fell silent. We had had our time of peace and goodwill, a time I will treasure as long as I live.

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dugout:  
a shelter for  
soldiers made  
by digging a  
hole in the  
ground and  
covering it







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\_\_\_\_\_

Dearest Connie, by Christmas time next year, this war will be nothing but a distant and terrible memory. I know from all that happened today how much both armies long for peace. We shall be together again soon, I'm sure of it.

Your loving, Jim.

**Comprehension Check**

1. Who had written the letter, to whom, and when?
2. Why was the letter written — what was the wonderful thing that had happened?
3. What jobs did Hans Wolf and Jim Macpherson have when they were not soldiers?
4. Had Hans Wolf ever been to Dorset? Why did he say he knew it?
5. Do you think Jim Macpherson came back from the war? How do you know this?



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**III**

I folded the letter again and slipped it carefully back into its envelope. I kept awake all night. By morning I knew what I had to do. I drove into Bridport, just a few miles away. I asked a boy walking his dog where Copper Beeches was. House number 12 turned out to be nothing but a burned-out shell, the roof gaping, the windows boarded-up. I knocked at the house next door and asked if anyone knew the whereabouts of a Mrs Macpherson. Oh yes, said the old man in his slippers, he knew her well. A lovely old lady, he told me, a bit muddle-headed, but at her age she was entitled to be, wasn't she? A hundred and one years old. She had been in the house when it caught fire. No one really knew how the fire had started, but it could well have been candles. She used candles rather than electricity, because she always thought electricity was too expensive. The fireman had got her out just in time. She was in a nursing home now, he told me, Burlington House, on the Dorchester road, on the other side of town.

burned out:  
destroyed by fire

boarded-up:  
covered with wooden boards

muddle-headed:  
confused





### Comprehension Check

1. Why did the author go to Bridport?
2. How old was Mrs Macpherson now? Where was she?

I found Burlington House Nursing Home easily enough. There were paper chains up in the hallway and a lighted Christmas tree stood in the corner with a lopsided angel on top. I said I was a friend come to visit Mrs Macpherson to bring her a Christmas present. I could see through into the dining room where everyone was wearing a paper hat and singing. The matron had a hat on too and seemed happy enough to see me. She even offered me a mince pie. She walked me along the corridor. "Mrs Macpherson is not in with the others," she told me. "She's rather confused today so we thought it best if she had a good rest. She has no family you know, no one visits. So I'm sure she'll be only too pleased to see you." She took me into a conservatory with wicker chairs and potted plants all around and left me.

The old lady was sitting in a wheelchair, her hands folded in her lap. She had silver white hair pinned into a wispy bun. She was gazing out at the garden. "Hello," I said. She turned and looked up at me vacantly. "Happy Christmas, Connie," I went on. "I found this. I think it's yours." As I was speaking her eyes never left my face. I opened the tin box and gave it to her. That was the moment her eyes lit up with recognition and her face became suffused with a sudden glow of happiness. I explained about the desk, about how I had found it, but I don't think she was listening. For a while

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lit up:  
became bright with happiness, excitement

suffused with:  
(glow of happiness)  
spread all over her face



\_\_\_\_\_ she said nothing, but stroked the letter tenderly with her  
\_\_\_\_\_ fingertips.  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Suddenly she reached out and took my hand. Her  
\_\_\_\_\_ eyes were filled with tears. "You told me you'd come home  
\_\_\_\_\_ by Christmas, dearest," she said. "And here you are,  
\_\_\_\_\_ the best Christmas present in the world. Come closer,  
\_\_\_\_\_ Jim dear, sit down."

I sat down beside her, and she kissed my cheek. "I read your letter so often Jim, every day. I wanted to hear your voice in my head. It always made me feel you were with me. And now you are. Now you're back you can read it to me yourself. Would you do that for me, Jim dear? I just want to hear your voice again. I'd love that so much. And then perhaps we'll have some tea. I've made you a nice Christmas cake, marzipan all around. I know how much you love marzipan."

MICHAEL MORPURGO

### **Comprehension Check**

1. Who did Connie Macpherson think her visitor was?
2. Which sentence in the text shows that the visitor did not try to hide his identity?

### **working with the text**

1. For how long do you think Connie had kept Jim's letter? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Why do you think the desk had been sold, and when?
3. Why do Jim and Hans think that games or sports are good ways of resolving conflicts? Do you agree?
4. Do you think the soldiers of the two armies are like each other, or different from each other? Find evidence from the story to support your answer.
5. Mention the various ways in which the British and the German soldiers become friends and find things in common at Christmas.
6. What is Connie's Christmas present? Why is it "the best Christmas present in the world"?
7. Do you think the title of this story is suitable for it? Can you think of any other title(s)?

working with language

1. Look at these sentences from the story.

I *spotted* it in a junk shop in Bridport... The man *said* it was made in the early nineteenth century... This one *was* in bad condition...

The *italicised verbs* are in the past tense. They tell us what happened in the past, before now.

- (i) Read the passage below and underline the verbs in the past tense.

A man got on the train and sat down. The compartment was empty except for one lady. She took her gloves off. A few hours later the police arrested the man. They held him for 24 hours and then freed him.

Now look at these sentences.

The veneer *had lifted* almost everywhere. Both fire and water *had taken* their toll on this desk.

Notice the verb forms *had lifted*, *had taken* (their toll).

The author found and bought the desk in the past.

The desk was damaged before the author found it and bought it.

Fire and water *had damaged* the desk *before* the author found it and bought it.

• We use verb forms like *had damaged* for an event in the 'earlier past'. If there are two events in the past, we use the 'had...' form for the event that occurred first in the past.

• We also use the past perfect tense to show that something was wished for, or expected before a particular time in the past. For example, *I had always wanted one...*

• Discuss with your partner the difference in meaning in the sentences below.

When I reached the station, the train left.

When I reached the station, the train had left.

- (ii) Fill in the blanks using the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

My little sister is very naughty. When she \_\_\_\_\_ (come) back from school yesterday, she had \_\_\_\_\_ (tear) her dress.

We \_\_\_\_\_ (ask) her how it had \_\_\_\_\_ (happen). She \_\_\_\_\_ (say) she \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ (have, quarrel) with a boy. She

\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ (have, beat) him in a race and he \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ (have, try) to push her. She \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ (have,



tell) the teacher and so he \_\_\_\_\_ (have, chase) her,  
and she \_\_\_\_\_ (have, fall) down and \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (have, tear) her dress.

(iii) Underline the verbs and arrange them in two columns, Past and Earlier past.

- (a) My friends set out to see the caves in the next town, but I stayed at home, because I had seen them already.
- (b) When they arrived at the station, their train had left. They came back home, but by that time I had gone out to see a movie!
- (c) So they sat outside and ate the lunch I had packed for them.
- (d) By the time I returned, they had fallen asleep!

Past	Earlier past

## 2. Dictionary work

By the end of the journey, we had run out of drinking water.

Look at the verb *run out of* in this sentence. It is a phrasal verb: it has two parts, a verb and a preposition or an adverb. Phrasal verbs often have meanings that are different from the meanings of their parts.

Find these phrasal verbs in the story.

burn out    light up    look on    run out    keep out

Write down the sentences in which they occur. Consult a dictionary and write down the meaning that you think matches the meaning of the phrasal verb in the sentence.

## 3. Noun phrase

Read the following sentence.

I took out a *small black tin box*.

• The phrase in *italics* is a noun phrase.

• It has the noun — *box* — as the head word, and three adjectives preceding it.

- Notice the order in which the adjectives occur — *size* (small), *colour* (black) and *material* (tin) of which it is made.
- We rarely use more than four adjectives before a noun and there is no rigid order in which they are used, though there is a preferred order of modifiers/adjectives in a noun phrase, as given below.

determiner	modifier 1 (opinion, feeling)	modifier 2 (size, shape, age)	modifier 3 (colour)	modifier 4 (material)	head word
a/an/ the	nice/lazy/ beautiful	tall/ round/ old/young	red/white/ light/dark	silk/cotton/ woollen	woman man/ table/chair

4. The table below contains a list of nouns and some adjectives. Use as many adjectives as you can to describe each noun. You might come up with some funny descriptions!

Nouns	Adjectives
elephant	circular, striped, enormous, multicoloured, round, cheerful, wild, blue, red, chubby, large, medium-sized, cold
face	
building	
water	

### 🗣️ speaking 🗣️🗣️

1. In groups discuss whether wars are a good way to end conflicts between countries. Then present your arguments to the whole class.
2. What kind of presents do you like and why? What are the things you keep in mind when you buy presents for others? Discuss with your partner. (For example, you might buy a book because it can be read and re-read over a period of time.)



 writing   

1. Imagine that you are Jim. You have returned to your town after the war. In your diary record how you feel about the changes you see and the events that occur in your town. You could begin like this

25 December, 1919

*It's Christmas today, but the town looks....*

Or

Suppose you are the visitor. You are in a dilemma. You don't know whether to disclose your identity and disappoint the old lady or let her believe that her dear Jim has come back. Write a letter to a friend highlighting your anxiety, fears and feelings.

2. Given below is the outline of a story. Construct the story using the outline.

A young, newly married doctor \_\_\_\_\_ freedom fighter \_\_\_\_\_ exiled to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands by the British \_\_\_\_\_ infamous Cellular Jail \_\_\_\_\_ prisoners tortured \_\_\_\_\_ revolt by inmates \_\_\_\_\_ doctor hanged \_\_\_\_\_ wife waits for his return \_\_\_\_\_ becomes old \_\_\_\_\_ continues to wait with hope and faith.



*War is the greatest plague that can afflict humanity; it destroys religion, it destroys states, it destroys families.*

— Martin Luther

*This book is to be neither an accusation nor a confession, and least of all an adventure, for death is not an adventure to those who stand face to face with it. It will try simply to tell of a generation of men who, even though they may have escaped shells, were destroyed by the war.*

— Erich Maria Remarque, author of *All Quiet on the Western Front*

## The Ant and the Cricket

*A fable is a story, often with animals as characters, that conveys a moral. This poem about an ant and a cricket contains an idea of far-reaching significance, which is as true of a four-legged cricket as of a 'two-legged one'. Surely, you have seen a cricket that has two legs!*

A silly young cricket, accustomed to sing  
Through the warm, sunny months of gay summer and spring,  
Began to complain when he found that, at home,  
His cupboard was empty, and winter was come.

Not a crumb to be found  
On the snow-covered ground;  
Not a flower could he see,  
Not a leaf on a tree.

“Oh! what will become,” says the cricket, “of me?”

At last by starvation and famine made bold,  
All dripping with wet, and all trembling with cold,  
Away he set off to a miserly ant,  
To see if, to keep him alive, he would grant

Him shelter from rain,  
And a mouthful of grain.  
He wished only to borrow;  
He'd repay it tomorrow;

If not, he must die of starvation and sorrow.





Says the ant to the cricket, "I'm your servant and friend,  
But we ants never borrow; we ants never lend.  
But tell me, dear cricket, did you lay nothing by  
When the weather was warm?" Quoth the cricket,  
"Not I!

My heart was so light  
That I sang day and night,  
For all nature looked gay."

"You sang, Sir, you say?

Go then," says the ant, "and dance the winter away."

Thus ending, he hastily lifted the wicket,  
And out of the door turned the poor little cricket.  
Folks call this a fable. I'll warrant it true:  
Some crickets have four legs, and some have two.

adapted from *Aesop's Fables*

### glossary

accustomed to sing: used to singing; in the habit of singing

famine: scarcity of food; having nothing to eat

lay nothing by: save nothing

quoth: (old English) said



working with the poem

1. The cricket says, "Oh! what will become of me?" When does he say it, and why?
2. (i) Find in the poem the lines that mean the same as "Neither a borrower nor a lender be" (Shakespeare).  
(ii) What is your opinion of the ant's principles?
3. The ant tells the cricket to "dance the winter away". Do you think the word 'dance' is appropriate here? If so, why?
4. (i) Which lines in the poem express the poet's comment? Read them aloud.  
(ii) Write the comment in your own words.

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If you know a fable in your own language, narrate it to your classmates.

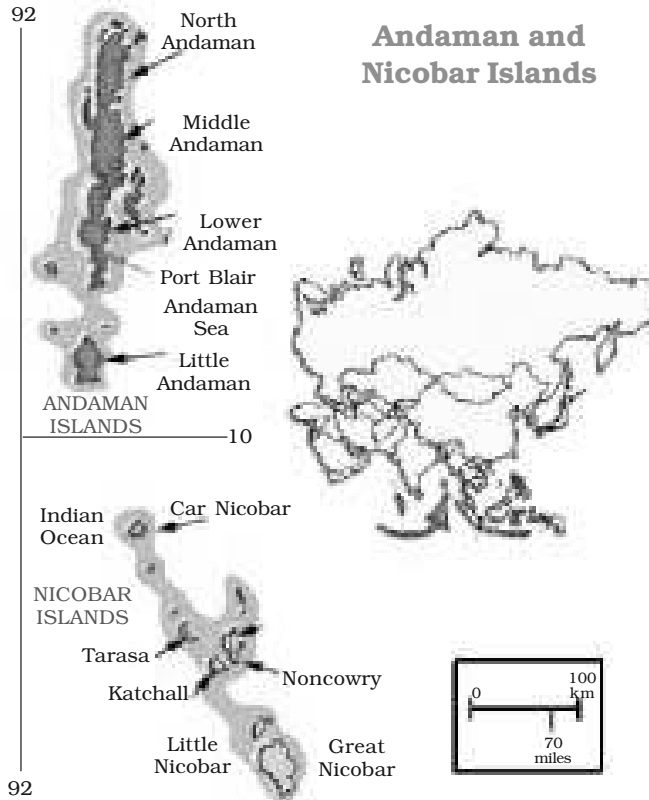
*Answers to Questions on page 9.*

- (a) American Declaration of Independence.
- (b) Wilbur and Orville Wright made the first flight, remaining in the air for 12 seconds and covering 120 feet.
- (c) Hiroshima Day: an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima in Japan on this day.
- (d) Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.
- (e) Yuri A. Gagarin became the first human to orbit the Earth.
- (f) Neil Armstrong became the first human to set foot on the Moon.

# 2 The Tsunami

## Before you read

Look at the map of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands given here.



Now read the sentences below. Rewrite the incorrect ones after correcting the mistakes.

1. Katchall is an island.
2. It is part of the Andaman group of islands.
3. Nancowry is an island in the Nicobar group.
4. Katchall and Nancowry are more than a hundred miles apart. (Hint: the scale of the map is given.)
5. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are to the west of India.
6. The Nicobar Islands are to the north of the Andaman Islands.

*A tsunami is a very large and powerful wave caused by earthquakes under the sea. On 26 December 2004, a tsunami hit Thailand and parts of India such as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and the Tamil Nadu coast. Here are some stories of courage and survival.*

*Did animals sense that a tsunami was coming? Some stories suggest that they did.*



## I

These stories are all from the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago.

Ignesious was the manager of a cooperative society in Katchall. His wife woke him up at 6 a.m. because she felt an earthquake. Ignacious carefully took his television set off its table and put it down on the ground so that it would not fall and break. Then the family rushed out of the house.

When the tremors stopped, they saw the sea rising. In the chaos and confusion, two of his children caught hold of the hands of their mother's father and mother's brother, and rushed in the opposite direction. He never saw them again. His wife was also swept away. Only the three other children who came with him were saved.

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archipelago:  
a group of  
many islands  
and the  
surrounding  
sea

tremor:  
a slight shake  
Earth tremors:  
the earth's  
shakes during  
an earthquake

chaos:  
complete  
disorder or  
confusion  
[pronounced,  
kay-os]





Sanjeev was a policeman, serving in the Katchall island of the Nicobar group of islands. He somehow managed to save himself, his wife and his baby daughter from the waves. But then he heard cries for help from the wife of John, the guesthouse cook. Sanjeev jumped into the water to rescue her, but they were both swept away.

Thirteen year-old Meghna was swept away along with her parents and seventy-seven other people. She spent two days floating in the sea, holding on to a wooden door. Eleven times she saw relief helicopters overhead, but they did not see her. She was brought to the shore by a wave, and was found walking on the seashore in a daze.

relief  
helicopters:  
helicopters  
bringing help  
to people (e.g.  
during floods)

Almas Javed was ten years old. She was a student of Carmel Convent in Port Blair where her father had a petrol pump. Her mother Rahila's home was in Nancowry island. The family had gone there to celebrate Christmas.

When the tremors came early in the morning, the family was sleeping. Almas's father saw the sea water recede. He understood that the water would come rushing back with great force. He woke everyone up and tried to rush them to a safer place.

recede:  
move back  
from where it  
was

As they ran, her grandfather was hit on the head by something and he fell down. Her father rushed to help him. Then came the first giant wave that swept both of them away.

Almas's mother and aunts stood clinging to the leaves of a coconut tree, calling out to her. A wave uprooted the tree, and they too were washed away.

Almas saw a log of wood floating. She climbed on to it. Then she fainted. When she woke up, she was in a



hospital in Kamorta. From there she was brought to Port Blair.

The little girl does not want to talk about the incident with anyone. She is still traumatised.

### Comprehension Check

Say whether the following are true or false.

1. Ignacious lost his wife, two children, his father-in-law, and his brother-in-law in the tsunami.
2. Sanjeev made it to safety after the tsunami.
3. Meghna was saved by a relief helicopter.
4. Almas's father realised that a tsunami was going to hit the island.
5. Her mother and aunts were washed away with the tree that they were holding on to.

## II

Tilly Smith (a British school girl) was able to save many lives when the tsunami struck Phuket beach in Thailand. Though she has won a number of awards, her parents have not allowed their daughter to be interviewed on television and made into a heroine. Why do you think they took that decision?



Now here is a story from Thailand.

The Smith family from South-East England were celebrating Christmas at a beach resort in southern Thailand. Tilly Smith was a ten-year-old schoolgirl; her sister was seven years old. Their parents were Penny and Colin Smith.

It was 26 December 2004. Deadly tsunami waves were already on their way. They had been triggered by a massive earthquake off northern Sumatra earlier that morning.

“The water was swelling and kept coming in,” Penny Smith remembered. “The beach was getting smaller and smaller. I didn’t know what was happening.”

traumatised:  
greatly  
shocked and  
distrressed

resort:  
a place where  
people go on  
holiday  
triggered:  
caused  
(describes a  
sudden,  
violent  
reaction –  
here, an  
undersea  
earthquake  
caused the  
tsunami)



But Tilly Smith sensed that something was wrong. Her mind kept going back to a geography lesson she had taken in England just two weeks before she flew out to Thailand with her family.

Tilly saw the sea slowly rise, and start to foam, bubble and form whirlpools. She remembered that she had seen this in class in a video of a tsunami that had hit the Hawaiian islands in 1946. Her geography teacher had shown her class the video, and told them that tsunamis can be caused by earthquakes, volcanoes and landslides.

Tilly started to scream at her family to get off the beach. “She talked about an earthquake under the sea. She got more and more hysterical,” said her mother Penny. “I didn’t know what a tsunami was. But seeing my daughter so frightened, I thought something serious must be going on.”

Tilly’s parents took her and her sister away from the beach, to the swimming pool at the hotel. A number of other tourists also left the beach with them. “Then it was as if the entire sea had come out after them. I was screaming, ‘Run!’”

The family took refuge in the third floor of the hotel. The building withstood the surge of three tsunami waves. If they had stayed on the beach, they would not have been alive.

The Smiths later met other tourists who had lost entire families. Thanks to Tilly and her geography lesson, they had been forewarned. Tilly went back to her school in England and told her classmates her terrifying tale.

### **Comprehension Check**

*Answer the following in a phrase or sentence.*

1. *Why did Tilly’s family come to Thailand?*
2. *What were the warning signs that both Tilly and her mother saw?*
3. *Do you think Tilly’s mother was alarmed by them?*
4. *Where had Tilly seen the sea behaving in the same strange fashion?*

**hysterical:**  
when you are hysterical, you shout, laugh or cry in a wild excited way, without any control over yourself

**refuge:**  
shelter or protection from danger

**withstood:**  
endured without collapsing

**surge:**  
force; momentum

5. *Where did the Smith family and the others on the beach go to escape from the tsunami?*
6. *How do you think her geography teacher felt when he heard about what Tilly had done in Phuket?*

### III

*Look carefully at the picture of the boy and his dog, and try to describe the things that you see, using just words and phrases. Either the teacher or one of the students can write down the words and phrases on the blackboard.*

*This is how you can start —  
calm, blue sea .... ruined huts.....*

Before the giant waves slammed into the coast in India and Sri Lanka, wild and domestic animals seemed to know what was about to happen. They fled to safety. According to eyewitness accounts, elephants screamed and ran for higher ground; dogs refused to go outdoors; flamingoes abandoned their low-lying breeding areas; and zoo animals rushed into their shelters and could not be enticed to come back out.

Many people believe that animals possess a sixth sense and know when the earth is going to shake. Some experts believe that animals' more acute hearing helps them to hear or feel the earth's vibration. They can sense an approaching disaster long before humans realise what's going on.

We cannot be sure whether animals have a sixth sense or not. But the fact is that the giant waves that rolled through the Indian Ocean killed more than 150,000 people in a dozen countries; but not many animals have been reported dead.

Along India's Cuddalore coast, where thousands of people perished, buffaloes, goats and dogs were found unharmed. The Yala National Park in Sri Lanka is home to a variety of animals including elephants, leopards, and 130 species of birds. Sixty visitors were washed away from the Patanangala beach inside the park; but



*When do you think this picture was taken?*

*Did you know that very few animals actually died in the tsunami?*

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no animal carcasses were found, except for two water buffaloes. About an hour before the tsunami hit, people at Yala National Park had observed three elephants running away from the Patanangala beach.

A Sri Lankan gentleman who lives on the coast near Galle said his two dogs would not go for their daily run on the beach. "They are usually excited to go on this outing," he said. But on that day they refused to go, and most probably saved his life.

### Comprehension check

Answer using a phrase or a sentence.

1. In the tsunami 150,000 people died. How many animals died?
2. How many people and animals died in Yala National Park?
3. What do people say about the elephants of Yala National Park?
4. What did the dogs in Galle do?

### working with the text

Discuss the following questions in class. Then write your own answers.

1. When he felt the earthquake, do you think Ignacious immediately worried about a tsunami? Give reasons for your answer. Which sentence in the text tells you that the Ignacious family did not have any time to discuss and plan their course of action after the tsunami struck?
2. Which words in the list below describe Sanjeev, in your opinion?  
(Look up the dictionary for words that you are not sure of.)

cheerful   ambitious   brash   brave   careless  
heroic   selfless   heartless   humorous

Use words from the list to complete the three sentences below.

- (i) I don't know if Sanjeev was cheerful, \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (ii) I think that he was very brave, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (iii) Sanjeev was not heartless, \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
3. How are Meghna and Almas's stories similar?



4. What are the different ways in which Tilly's parents could have reacted to her behaviour? What would you have done if you were in their place?
5. If Tilly's award was to be shared, who do you think she should share it with — her parents or her geography teacher?
6. What are the two different ideas about why so few animals were killed in the tsunami? Which idea do you find more believable?

### working with language

1. Go through Part-I carefully, and make a list of as many words as you can find that indicate movement of different kinds. (There is one word that occurs repeatedly — count how many times!) Put them into three categories.

fast movement      slow movement      neither slow nor fast

Can you explain why there are many words in one column and not in the others?

2. Fill in the blanks in the sentences below (the verbs given in brackets will give you a clue).
  - (i) The earth trembled, but not many people felt the \_\_\_\_\_. (tremble)
  - (ii) When the zoo was flooded, there was a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ and many animals escaped into the countryside. (confuse)
  - (iii) We heard with \_\_\_\_\_ that the lion had been recaptured. (relieve)
  - (iv) The zookeeper was stuck in a tree and his \_\_\_\_\_ was filmed by the TV crew. (rescue)
  - (v) There was much \_\_\_\_\_ in the village when the snake charmer came visiting. (excite)

3. Study the sentences in the columns **A** and **B**.

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
Meghna was swept away.	The waves swept Meghna away.
Almas's grandfather was hit on the head.	Something hit Almas's grandfather on the head.
Sixty visitors were washed away.	The waves washed away sixty visitors.
No animal carcasses were found.	People did not find any animal carcasses.



Compare the sentences in **A** to the ones in **B**. Who is the 'doer' of the action in every case? Is the 'doer' mentioned in **A**, or in **B**?

Notice the verbs in **A**: 'was swept away', 'was hit', 'were washed away', 'were found'. They are in the passive form. The sentences are in the *Passive Voice*. In these sentences, the focus is not on the person who does the action.

In **B**, the 'doer' of the action is named. The verbs are in the active form. The sentences are in the *Active Voice*.

Say whether the following sentences are in the Active or the Passive voice. Write **A** or **P** after each sentence as shown in the first sentence.

- (i) Someone stole my bicycle.   A
- (ii) The tyres were deflated by the traffic police. \_\_\_\_\_
- (iii) I found it last night in a ditch near my house. \_\_\_\_\_
- (iv) It had been thrown there. \_\_\_\_\_
- (v) My father gave it to the mechanic. \_\_\_\_\_
- (vi) The mechanic repaired it for me. \_\_\_\_\_

### 📖 speaking and writing 📖

1. Suppose you are one of the volunteers who went to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands for relief work after the tsunami. You work in the relief camps, distributing food, water and medicine among the victims. You listen to the various stories of bravery of ordinary people even as they fight against odds to bring about some semblance of normalcy in their lives. You admire their grit and determination. Write a diary entry.

*You may start in this way.*

31 December, 2004

*The killer tsunami struck these islands five days ago. But the victims are being brought in even now. Each one has a story to tell...*

2. The story shows how a little girl saved the lives of many tourists when a tsunami struck the beach, thanks to the geography lesson that she had learnt at school. She remembered the visuals of a tsunami and warned her parents.

Do you remember any incident when something that you learnt in the classroom helped you in some way outside the classroom?

Write your experiences in a paragraph of about 90–100 words or narrate it to the whole class like an anecdote.

*Katchall is one of the largest islands in the central group. It is about 61 sq miles in area. It is slightly hilly at the centre, but otherwise remarkably flat.*

### Betty at the Party


'When I was at the party,'  
Said Betty, aged just four,  
'A little girl fell off her chair  
Right down upon the floor;  
And all the other little girls  
Began to laugh, but me –  
I didn't laugh a single bit',  
Said Betty seriously.

'Why not?' – her mother asked her,  
Full of delight to find  
That Betty – bless her little heart! –  
Had been so sweetly kind.

'Why didn't you laugh, my darling?  
Or don't you like to tell?'  
'I didn't laugh,' said Betty,  
'Because it was I that fell.'

–Unknown





## Geography Lesson

*Can you imagine what your city would look like if you saw it from ten thousand feet above the ground? Neatly planned and perfect in proportion like a geometric design, it would strike you as something very different from what it actually is while you are in the thick of it.*

*Here is a poet's description of just such a view of the city, and some questions that come to his mind.*

When the jet sprang into the sky,  
it was clear why the city  
had developed the way it had,  
seeing it scaled six inches to the mile.  
There seemed an inevitability  
about what on ground had looked haphazard,  
unplanned and without style  
When the jet sprang into the sky.

When the jet reached ten thousand feet,  
it was clear why the country  
had cities where the rivers ran  
and why the valleys were populated.  
The logic of geography —  
that land and water attracted man —  
was clearly delineated  
When the jet reached ten thousand feet.

When the jet rose six miles high,  
it was clear the earth was round  
and that it had more sea than land.

But it was difficult to understand  
that the men on the earth found  
causes to hate each other, to build  
walls across cities and to kill.  
From that height, it was not clear why.

ZULFIKAR GHOSE

### 📖 glossary 📖📖📖

inevitable: that cannot be avoided

haphazard: without plan or order

delineated: shown

### 📖 working with the poem 📖📖📖

1. Find three or four phrases in stanzas one and two which are likely to occur in a geography lesson.
2. Seen from the window of an aeroplane, the city appears
  - (i) as haphazard as on ground.
  - (ii) as neat as a map.
  - (iii) as developed as necessary.Mark the right answer.
3. Which of the following statements are examples of “the logic of geography”?
  - (i) There are cities where there are rivers.
  - (ii) Cities appear as they are not from six miles above the ground.
  - (iii) It is easy to understand why valleys are populated.
  - (iv) It is difficult to understand why humans hate and kill one another.
  - (v) The earth is round, and it has more sea than land.
4. Mention two things that are
  - (i) clear from the height.
  - (ii) not clear from the height.



**Before you read**

Here are some pictorial glimpses of the history of our country from 1757 to 1857. These pictures and 'speech bubbles' will help clarify your understanding of the conditions that led to the event known as the First War of Independence in 1857.

**1. The Martyrs**

At a function in Delhi



## 2. The Company's conquests (1757-1849)

With its superior weapons, the British East India Company was extending its power in 18th century India.

INDIA 1765

Indian Princes  
British Territory

Indian princes were short-sighted.

That upstart Rajah Bah! Call the English merchants. They will help me to defeat him.

The people had no peace due to such constant fights.

The rivalries helped the East India Company and it could easily subdue Indian princes one by one.

A far-seeing ruler like the brave Tipu of Mysore fought the British till he died fighting!

Thank God, there is peace in the country now! No more wars and no looting by thugs!

It is God who sent the British!

Our destiny is linked with them!

How did Indians react to these conquests?

The white man has killed or dethroned our kings.

Some kings were not good, but after all, they were of this land.

Now we have become slaves of foreigners!



### 3. British Rule (1765-1836)

Religious leaders preached ideas like untouchability and child marriage.



Anyone who crosses the seas loses his religion.



All the misery in the world is due to women.

The truth was that Indians had lost self-respect. The British scorned them.



The natives are unworthy of trust, incapable of honesty-

True, your honour, but I am honest.

Being merchants, the British wanted quick profits, their heavy taxes forced farmers to abandon their fields.



But your men are taking all my crop!

You are still in arrears. If you don't pay next week, I will send you to jail.

Still, the British invented other methods which gave them more profits.



The goods manufactured in England should not have any import duty when brought into India.

A good idea!

The East India Company's laws began to cripple Indian industries.

Inevitably famines followed. Between 1822 and 1836 fifteen lakh Indians died of starvation.



The British policies ruined the expert artisans and their business.



#### 4. Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833)



## 5. Oppression (1765-1835)

But the British continued to oppress Indians. In 1818, they had passed Regulation III. Under it, an Indian could be jailed without trial in a court.



All the time British officers in India drew big salaries and also made fortunes in private business.



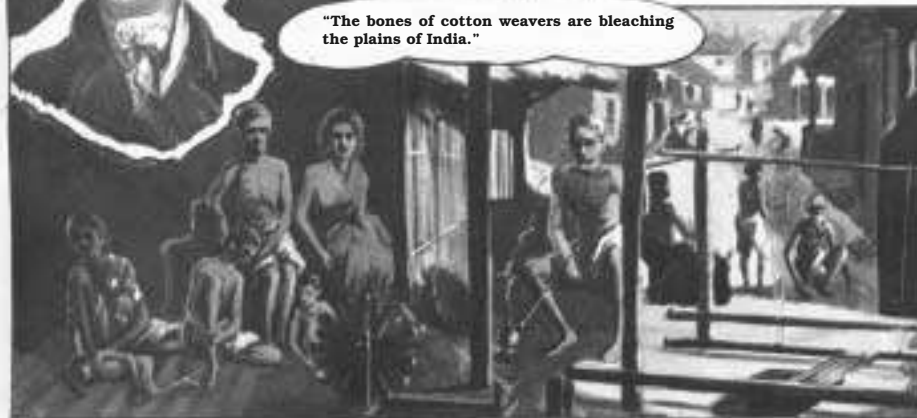
By 1829, Britain was exporting British goods worth seven crore rupees to India.



Governor-General Bentinck reported back home -

The British prospered on the Company's loot while Indian industries began to die.

"The bones of cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India."



## 6. Dissatisfaction (1835-56)

Education in India was in Persian and Sanskrit. In 1835, a Englishman named Macaulay suggested a change.

We should teach the natives through the English language.

I agree.

English education produced clerks to whom the British gave petty jobs under them. Incidentally, it also produced a new generation of intellectuals.

We must educate our brothers.

And try to improve their material conditions.

For that we must convey our grievances to the British Parliament.

By 1856, the British had conquered the whole of India.

States

British area

They cared little about the needs of Indians.

Our kings have become puppets, and we have lost our old jobs.

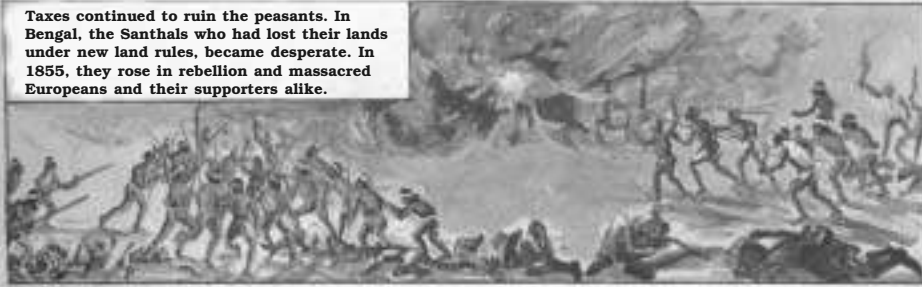
And lands.

They are converting our brothers!

You only talk! Do something to drive them out!

## 7. The Sparks (1855-57)

Taxes continued to ruin the peasants. In Bengal, the Santhals who had lost their lands under new land rules, became desperate. In 1855, they rose in rebellion and massacred Europeans and their supporters alike.



Discontent was brewing in the East India Company's army too.

The white soldier gets huge pay, mansions to live in, servants.

While we get a pittance and slow promotions!

The Angrez asks us to cross the sea which is against our religion. Who is the topiwala to abolish our age-old customs?



We must drive out the Angrez.

Sepoy Mangal Pande attacked the adjutant of his regiment and was executed.

Thousands of other sepoys revolted. They were stripped of their uniforms,



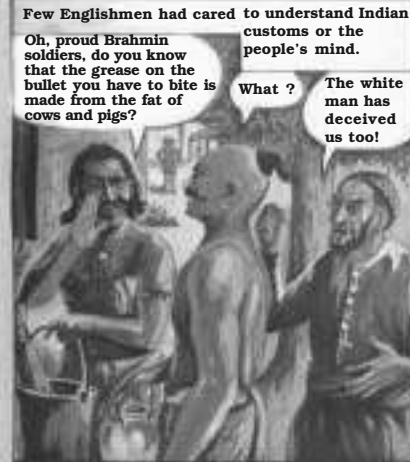
humiliated and put in irons.

Few Englishmen had cared to understand Indian customs or the people's mind.

Oh, proud Brahmin soldiers, do you know that the grease on the bullet you have to bite is made from the fat of cows and pigs?

What?

The white man has deceived us too!



Soon, chapaties were sent from village to village to tell the people that their emperor would want their services.



Yes, all my village men will be ready.

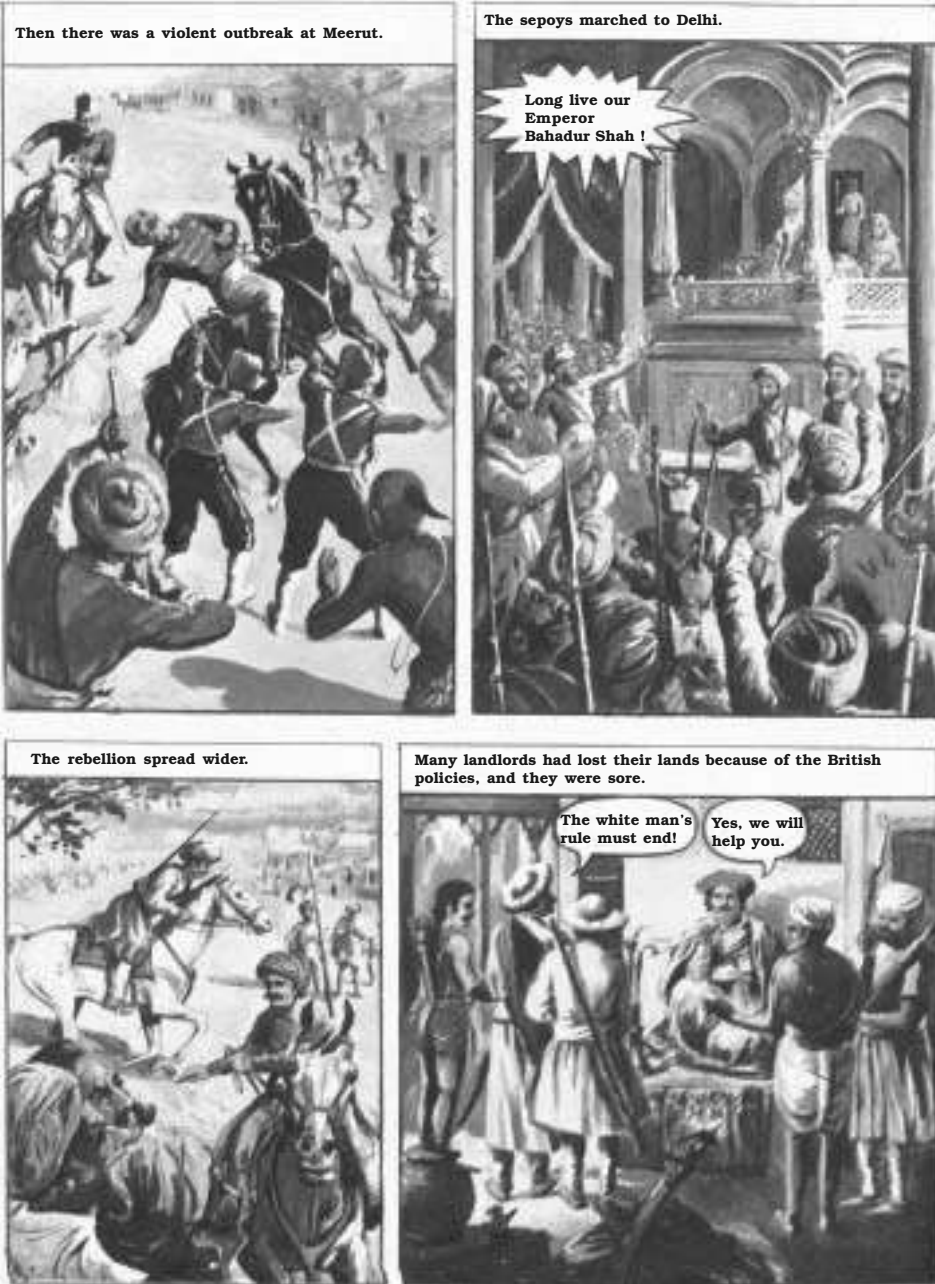
Similarly lotus flowers circulated among Indian soldiers.

Death to the foreigner!



The masses gave all help and shelter to the patriots.

## 8. Revolt (1857)



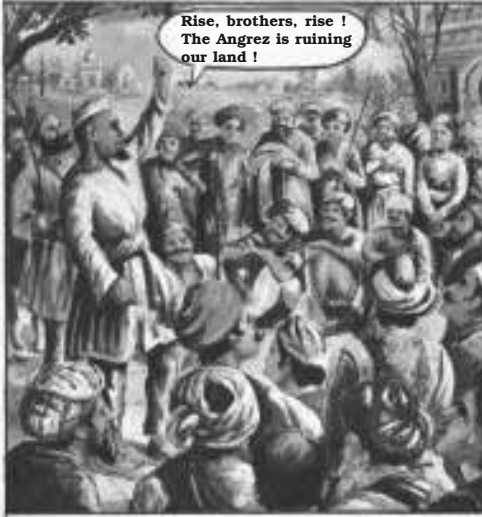
## 9. The Fight for Freedom (1857)

Many former rulers like Begum Hazrat Mahal of Lucknow were bitter.



They joined the upsurge against the foreigner.

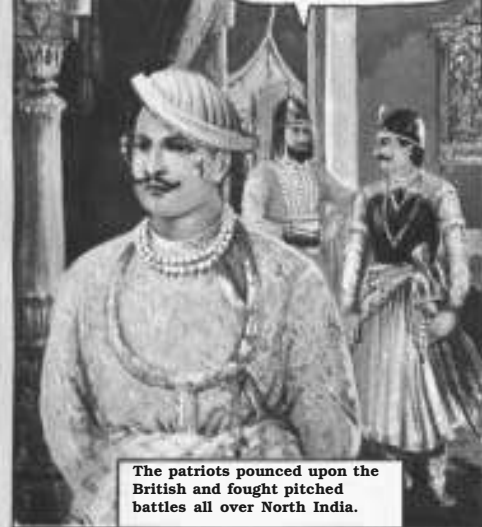
Popular leaders like Maulvi Ahmedulla of Faizabad told the people -



The people rose everywhere, in Bareilly, Kanpur and Allahabad.

Azimulla Khan told Tatyia Tope

We should have Peshwa Nana Saheb as our leader in this war of independence



Eighty-year old Kunwar Singh of Bihar received a bullet in his wrist.



from *Our Freedom Movement*  
S.D. SAWANT

### Comprehension Check

1. Look at picture 1 and recall the opening lines of the original song in Hindi. Who is the singer? Who else do you see in this picture?
2. In picture 2 what do you understand by the Company's "superior weapons"?
3. Who is an artisan? Why do you think the artisans suffered? (picture 3)
4. Which picture, according to you, reveals the first sparks of the fire of revolt?

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### working with the text

Answer the following questions.

1. Do you think the Indian princes were short-sighted in their approach to the events of 1757?
2. How did the East India Company subdue the Indian princes?
3. Quote the words used by Ram Mohan Roy to say that every religion teaches the same principles.
4. In what ways did the British officers exploit Indians?
5. Name these people.
  - (i) The ruler who fought pitched battles against the British and died fighting.
  - (ii) The person who wanted to reform the society.
  - (iii) The person who recommended the introduction of English education in India.
  - (iv) Two popular leaders who led the revolt (Choices may vary.)
6. Mention the following.
  - (i) Two examples of social practices prevailing then.
  - (ii) Two oppressive policies of the British.
  - (iii) Two ways in which common people suffered.
  - (iv) Four reasons for the discontent that led to the 1857 War of Independence.

### working with language

In comics what the characters speak is put in bubbles. This is direct narration. When we report what the characters speak, we use the method of indirect narration.





Study these examples.

*First farmer:* Why are your men taking away the entire crop?

*Second farmer:* Your men have taken away everything.

*Officer:* You are still in arrears. If you don't pay tax next week, I'll send you to jail.

- The first farmer asked the officer why his men were taking away the entire crop.
- The second farmer said that their men had taken away everything.
- The officer replied that they were still in arrears and warned them that if they did not pay tax the following week, he (the officer) would send them (the farmers) to jail.

1. Change the following sentences into indirect speech.

(i) *First man:* We must educate our brothers.

*Second man:* And try to improve their material conditions.

*Third man:* For that we must convey our grievances to the British Parliament.

The first man said that \_\_\_\_\_

The second man added that \_\_\_\_\_

The third man suggested that \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) *First soldier:* The white soldier gets huge pay, mansions and servants.

*Second soldier:* We get a pittance and slow promotions.

*Third soldier:* Who are the British to abolish our customs?

The first soldier said that \_\_\_\_\_

The second soldier remarked that \_\_\_\_\_

The third soldier asked \_\_\_\_\_

### 🎤 speaking and writing 🎤

1. Playact the role of farmers who have grievances against the policies of the government. Rewrite their 'speech bubbles' in dialogue form first.



2. Look at the pictures.



Fox accidentally falls into a well



“How do I get out of here?”



“Hello! Is this water sweet?”





“Too sweet! I’ve had so much, I might faint.”



“Let me taste it.”



“Thanks for the help. Come out when you can.”



“My mother used to say: Be careful how you take the advice of people you don’t know.”

(i) Ask one another questions about the pictures.

- Where is the fox?
- What is the fox thinking?
- What does she want to know?
- What happens next?
- Where is the fox now?
- How did it happen?
- Who is the visitor?
- What is the fox’s reply?
- Where is the goat?
- What is the goat thinking?

(ii) Write the story in your own words. Give it a title.

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3. Read the following news item.

### History becomes fun at this school

Mumbai: Students in the sixth grade of a certain school in Navi Mumbai love their history lessons thanks to a novel teaching aid. It is not surprising given the fact that their study material includes comic books and they use their textbooks for reference to put things into perspective. Besides, students are encouraged to tap other sources of information as well. During history classes, students pore over comic strips of historical periods, enact characters of emperors and tyrants, and have animated discussions on the subject. History has become fun.

In the class students are asked to read the comic strip aloud, after which they break up into groups of four, discuss what they have heard and write a summary. Each group leader reads his group's summary aloud and the whole class jumps into discussion and debate, adding points, disagreeing and qualifying points of view. A sixth grade student says, "It's a lot of fun because everyone gets a chance to express themselves and the summary takes everyone's ideas into account."

According to the school principal the comic strip format and visuals appeal to students. A historian feels that using comics in schools is a great idea. Comics and acting help students understand what characters in the story are actually thinking.

(adapted from *The Times of India*, New Delhi, October 2007)

Based on this news item, write a paragraph on what you think about this new method of teaching history.

4. Find the chapters in your history book that correspond to the episodes and events described in this comic. Note how the information contained in a few chapters of history has been condensed to a few pages with the help of pictures and 'speech bubbles'.
5. Create a comic of your own using this story.

Once the Sun and the Wind began to quarrel, each one saying that he was stronger than the other. At last they decided to test each other's strength. A man with a cloak around his shoulders was passing by. The Wind boasted, "Using my strength I can make that man take off the cloak." The Sun agreed. The Wind blew hard. The man felt so cold that he clasped his cloak round his body as tightly as possible.

Now it was the turn of the Sun which shone very hot indeed. The man felt so hot that he at once removed the cloak from his body. Seeing the man taking off the cloak, the Wind conceded defeat.

## Macavity : The Mystery Cat

*Do you have a pet cat? Have you ever noticed anything mysterious about it? It is not easy to say whether every cat is a mystery, but Macavity is one, for sure. What is it that makes him a perfect mystery cat? Read the poem and find out.*

Macavity's a Mystery Cat: he's called the Hidden Paw —  
For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law.  
He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying Squad's despair:  
For when they reach the scene of crime — Macavity's not there!



Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like  
Macavity,  
He's broken every human law, he breaks  
the law of gravity.  
His powers of levitation would make a fakir  
stare,  
And when you reach the scene of crime  
— Macavity's not there!  
You may seek him in the basement, you  
may look up in the air —  
But I tell you once and once again,  
Macavity's not there!

Macavity's a ginger cat, he's very tall and  
thin;  
You would know him if you saw him, for  
his eyes are sunken in.  
His brow is deeply lined with thought, his  
head is highly domed;

His coat is dusty from neglect, his whiskers are uncombed.  
He sways his head from side to side, with movements  
like a snake;  
And when you think he's half asleep, he's always wide awake.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
For he's a fiend in feline shape, a monster of depravity.  
You may meet him in a by-street, you may see him in  
the square —  
But when a crime's discovered, then Macavity's not there!

T.S. ELIOT

### 📖 glossary 📖

defy: disobey or resist openly

Scotland Yard: the headquarters of the London police force

Flying Squad: a group of police or soldiers ready to move into action quickly

levitation: floating in the air without support

fiend: devil

feline: of, or relating to, a cat

depravity: moral corruption

### 📖 working with the poem 📖

1. Read the first stanza and think.
  - (i) Is Macavity a cat really?
  - (ii) If not, who can Macavity be?
2. Complete the following sentences.
  - (i) A master criminal is one who \_\_\_\_\_
  - (ii) The Scotland Yard is baffled because \_\_\_\_\_
  - (iii) \_\_\_\_\_ because Macavity moves much faster than them.
3. "A cat, I am sure, could walk on a cloud without coming through".  
(Jules Verne)

Which law is Macavity breaking in the light of the comment above?



4. Read stanza 3, and then, describe Macavity in two or three sentences of your own.
5. Say 'False' or 'True' for each of the following statements.
  - (i) Macavity is not an ordinary cat.
  - (ii) Macavity cannot do what a *fakir* can easily do.
  - (iii) Macavity has supernatural powers.
  - (iv) Macavity is well-dressed, smart and bright.
  - (v) Macavity is a spy, a trickster and a criminal, all rolled in one.
6. Having read the poem, try to guess whether the poet is fond of cats. If so, why does he call Macavity a fiend and monster?
7. Has the poet used exaggeration for special effect? Find a few examples of it and read those lines aloud.



Rick: What did Papa Firefly tell Mama Firefly?

Hick: I don't know.

Rick: Isn't our child bright for his age!

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Mary: Why isn't a nose twelve inches long?

Jo: I don't know. Why?

Mary: Because if it was twelve inches long it would be a foot.

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Anita: I got a hundred in school today.

Mother: That's wonderful. What did you get a hundred in?

Anita: Forty in Maths and sixty in English.



4 Bepin Choudhury's Lapse of Memory

**Before you read**

*Do you have a good memory? Has your memory ever played any tricks on you?*

*Forgetfulness often puts you in a tight spot. But forgetting a part of your life completely may drive you crazy. In this story, Bepin Babu goes nearly crazy because he cannot recollect his stay at Ranchi. He has never been to Ranchi, he insists, though there are many witnesses to the contrary. What is the suspense all about?*

**I**

Every Monday, on his way back from work, Bepin Choudhury would drop in at Kalicharan's in New Market to buy books. Crime stories, ghost stories and thrillers. He had to buy at least five at a time to last him through the week. He lived alone, was not a good mixer, had few friends, and didn't like spending time in idle chat. Today, at Kalicharan's, Bepin Babu had the feeling that someone was observing him from close quarters. He turned round and found himself looking at a round faced, meek looking man who now broke into a smile.

"I don't suppose you recognise me."

"Have we met before?" asked Bepin Babu.

The man looked greatly surprised. "We met every day for a whole week. I arranged for a car to take you to the Hudroo falls.

idle chat:  
unnecessary,  
routine  
conversation

meek:  
quiet; humble





In 1958. In Ranchi. My name is Parimal Ghose.”  
“Ranchi?”

Now Bepin Babu realised that it was not he but this man who was making a mistake. Bepin Babu had never been to Ranchi. He had been at the point of going several times, but never made it. He smiled and said, “Do you know who I am?”

The man raised his eyebrows, bit his tongue and said, “Do I know you? Who doesn’t know Bepin Choudhury?”

Bepin Babu now turned towards the bookshelves and said, “Still you’re making a mistake. One often does. I’ve never been to Ranchi.”

The man now laughed aloud.

“What are you saying, Mr Choudhury? You had a fall in Hudroo and cut your right knee. I brought you iodine. I had fixed up a car for you to go to Netarhat the next day, but you couldn’t because of the pain in the knee. Can’t you recall anything? Someone else you know was also in Ranchi at that time. Mr Dinesh Mukerji. You stayed in a bungalow. You said you didn’t like hotel food and would prefer to have your meals cooked by a

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*bawarchi*. Mr Mukerji stayed with his sister. You had a big argument about the moon landing, remember? I'll tell you more: you always carried a bag with your books in it on your sight-seeing trips. Am I right or not?"

Bepin Babu spoke quietly, his eyes still on the books. "Which month in '58 are you talking about?"

The man said, "October."

"No, sir," said Bepin Babu. "I spent Puja in '58 with a friend in Kanpur. You're making a mistake. Good day."

But the man didn't go, nor did he stop talking.

"Very strange. One evening I had tea with you in a veranda of your bungalow. You spoke about your family. You said you had no children, and that you had lost your wife ten years ago. Your only brother had died insane, which is why you didn't want to visit the mental hospital in Ranchi..."

When Bepin Babu had paid for the books and was leaving the shop, the man was still looking at him in utter disbelief.

utter disbelief:  
complete  
surprise

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Comprehension Check**

1. Why did the man stare at Bepin Babu in disbelief?
2. Where did Bepin Babu say he went in October '58?
3. Mention any three (or more) things that Parimal Ghose knew about Bepin Babu.

**II**

Bepin Babu's car was safely parked in Bertram Street by the Lighthouse Cinema. He told the driver as he got into the car, "Just drive by the Ganga, will you, Sitaram." Driving up the Strand Road, Bepin Babu regretted having paid so much attention to the intruder. He had never been to Ranchi — no question about it. It was inconceivable that he should forget such an incident which took place only six or seven years ago. He had an excellent memory. Unless — Bepin Babu's head reeled.

his) head  
reeled:  
he was  
shocked and  
confused

Was he losing his mind? But how could that be? He was working daily in his office. It was a big firm, and he was doing a responsible job. He wasn't aware of anything ever going seriously wrong. Only today he spoke for half an hour at an important meeting. And yet...

And yet the man knew a great deal about him. How? He even seemed to know some intimate details. The bag of books, wife's death, brother's insanity... The only mistake was about his having gone to Ranchi. Not a mistake; a deliberate lie. In '58, during the Pujas, he was in Kanpur at his friend Haridas Bagchi's place. All Bepin Babu had to do was write to — no, there was no way of writing to Haridas. Bepin Babu suddenly remembered that Haridas had left with his wife for Japan some weeks ago, and he didn't have his address.

But where was the need for proof? He himself was fully aware that he hadn't been to Ranchi — and that was that.

The river breeze was bracing, and yet a slight discomfort lingered in Bepin Babu's mind.

Around Hastings, Bepin Babu decided to roll up his trousers and take a look at his right knee.

There was the mark of an old inch-long cut. It was impossible to tell when the injury had occurred.



losing his  
mind:  
becoming  
mad

intimate:  
very personal  
and private

bracing:  
stimulating

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

going nuts:  
going mad/  
crazy

getting into  
people's hair:  
interfering  
with and  
annoying  
people.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Had he never had a fall as a boy and cut his knee? He tried to recall such an incident, but couldn't.

Then Bepin Babu suddenly thought of Dinesh Mukerji. The man had said that Dinesh was in Ranchi at the same time. The best thing surely would be to ask him. He lived quite near — in Beninandan Street. What about going right now? But then, if he had really never been to Ranchi, what would Dinesh think if Bepin Babu asked for a confirmation? He would probably conclude Bepin Babu was going nuts. No; it would be ridiculous to ask him.

And he knew how ruthless Dinesh's sarcasm could be.

Sipping a cold drink in his air-conditioned living room, Bepin Babu felt at ease again. Such a nuisance! Just because they have nothing else to do, they go about getting into other people's hair.

After dinner, snuggling in bed with one of the new thrillers, Bepin Babu forgot all about the man in New Market.

Next day, in the office, Bepin Babu noticed that with every passing hour, the previous day's encounter was occupying more and more of his mind. If the man knew so much about Bepin Babu, how could he make such a mistake about the Ranchi trip?

Just before lunch Bepin Babu decided to ring up Dinesh Mukerji. It was better to settle the question over the phone; at least the embarrassment on his face wouldn't show.

Two-Three-Five-Six-One-Six. Bepin Babu dialled the number.

"Hallo."

"Is that Dinesh? This is Bepin here."

"Well, well — what's the news?"

"I just wanted to find out if you recalled an incident which took place in '58."

“’58? What incident?”

“Were you in Calcutta right through that year? That’s the first thing I’ve got to know.”

“Wait just a minute... ’58... just let me check in my diary.”

For a minute there was silence. Bepin Babu could feel that his heartbeat had gone up. He was sweating a little.

“Hallo.”

“Yes.”

“I’ve got it. I’d been out twice.”

“Where?”

“Once in February — nearby — to Krishnanagar to a nephew’s wedding. And then... but you’d know about this one. The trip to Ranchi. You were there too. That’s all. But what’s all this sleuthing about?”

“No. I just wanted to — anyway, thanks.”

Bepin Babu slammed the receiver down and gripped his head with his hands. He felt his head swimming. A chill seemed to spread over his body. There were sandwiches in his tiffin box, but he didn’t eat them. He had lost his appetite.

### Comprehension Check

1. Why did Bepin Babu worry about what Parimal Ghose had said?
2. How did he try to decide who was right—his memory or Parimal Ghose?
3. Why did Bepin Babu hesitate to visit Mr Mukerji? Why did he finally decide to phone him?
4. What did Mr Mukerji say? Did it comfort Bepin Babu, or add to his worries?

### III

After lunch-time, Bepin Babu realised that he couldn’t possibly carry on sitting at his desk and working. This had never happened in the twenty-five years he had been with the firm. He had a reputation for being a

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sleuthing:  
investigating  
(an event)

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carry on:  
continue





conscientious:  
careful and  
correct  
head was in a  
whirl:  
(here)  
confused and  
unable to  
think clearly  
gather his wits  
together:  
make an effort  
to become  
calm and  
think clearly

having a  
rough time:  
having a lot of  
problems  
turning up  
like a bad  
penny:  
appearing at a  
place where  
one is not  
welcome

didn't beat  
about the  
bush:  
came straight  
to the point  
off and on:  
now and then  
throw your  
mind back:  
think back  
and recall a  
past event

tireless, conscientious worker. But today his head was in a whirl.

Back home at two-thirty, Bepin Babu lay down in bed and tried to gather his wits together. He knew that it was possible to lose one's memory through an injury in the head, but he didn't know of a single instance of someone remembering everything except one particular incident — and a fairly recent and significant one at that. He had always wanted to go to Ranchi; to have gone there, done things, and not to remember was something utterly impossible.

At seven thirty, Bepin Babu's servant came and announced, "Chuni Babu, sir. Says it's very important."

Bepin Babu knew what Chuni had come for. Chuni had been at school with him. He'd been having a rough time lately and had been coming to see him about a job. Bepin Babu knew it was not possible to do anything for him and, in fact, told him so. But Chuni kept turning up like a bad penny.

Bepin Babu sent word that not only was it not possible for him to see Chuni now, but not in several weeks.

But as soon as the servant stepped out of the room, it struck Bepin Babu that Chuni might remember something about the '58 trip. There was no harm in asking him.

Bepin Babu hurried down the stairs and into the living room. Chuni was about to leave, but seeing Bepin Babu appear, he turned round hopefully.

Bepin Babu didn't beat about the bush.

"Listen, Chuni - I want to ask you something. You have a good memory, and you've been seeing me off and on for a long time. Just throw your mind back and tell me - did I go to Ranchi in '58?"

Chuni said, "'58? It must have been '58. Or was it '59?"

“You’re sure that I did go to Ranchi?”

Chuni’s look of amazement was not unmixed with worry.

“D’ you mean you have doubts about having gone at all?”

“Did I go? Do you remember clearly?”

Chuni sat down on the sofa, fixed Bepin Babu with a long, hard stare and said, “Bepin, have you taken to drugs or something? As far as I know, you had a clean record where such things were concerned. I know that old friendships don’t mean much to you, but at least you had a good memory. You can’t really mean that you’ve forgotten about the Ranchi trip?”

Bepin Babu had to turn away from Chuni’s incredulous stare.

“Do you remember what my last job was?” asked Chunilal.

“Of course. You worked in a travel agency.”

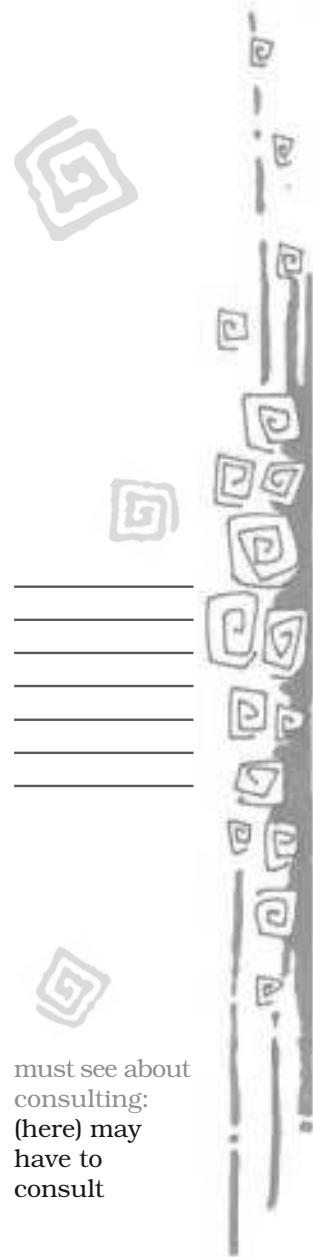
“You remember that and you don’t remember that it was I who fixed up your railway booking for Ranchi? I went to the station to see you off; one of the fans in your compartment was not working — I got an electrician to fix it. Have you forgotten everything? Whatever is the matter with you? You don’t look too well, you know.”

Bepin Babu sighed and shook his head.

“I’ve been working too hard,” he said at last. “That must be the reason. Must see about consulting a specialist.”

Doubtless it was Bepin’s condition which made Chunilal leave without mentioning anything about a job.

Paresh Chanda was a young physician with a pair of bright eyes and a sharp nose. He became thoughtful when he heard about Bepin Babu’s symptoms. “Look, Dr Chanda,” said Bepin Babu desperately, “You must cure me of this horrible illness. I can’t tell you how it’s affecting my work.”



must see about  
consulting:  
(here) may  
have to  
consult



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Dr Chanda shook his head.

“You know what, Mr Choudhury,” he said. “I’ve never had to deal with a case such as yours. Frankly, this is quite outside my field of experience. But I have one suggestion. I don’t know if it’ll work, but it’s worth a try. It can do no harm.”

Bepin Babu leaned forward anxiously.

“As far as I can make out,” said Dr Chanda, “And I think you’re of the same opinion — you must have been to Ranchi, but due to some unknown reason, the entire episode has slipped out of your mind. What I suggest is that you go to Ranchi once again. The sight of the place may remind you of your trip. This is not impossible. More than that I cannot do at the moment. I’m prescribing a nerve tonic and a tranquilliser. Sleep is essential, or the symptoms will get more pronounced.”

Bepin Babu felt somewhat better the next morning.

After breakfast, he rang up his office, gave some instructions and then procured a first class ticket for Ranchi for the same evening.

tranquilliser:  
a medicine to  
reduce stress  
and anxiety

procured:  
got (with a  
little difficulty)

### Comprehension Check

1. Who was Chunilal? What did he want from Bepin Babu?
2. Why was Dr Chanda puzzled? What was unusual about Bepin Babu’s loss of memory?

## IV

Getting off the train at Ranchi next morning, he realised at once that he had never been there before.

He came out of the station, took a taxi and drove around the town for a while. He realised that the streets, the buildings, the hotels, the bazaars, the Morabadi Hill — with none of these had he the slightest acquaintance. Would a trip to the Hudroo Falls help? He didn’t believe so, but, at the same time, he didn’t wish to leave with the feeling that he hadn’t tried enough. So he arranged for a car and left for Hudroo in the afternoon.

At five o'clock the same afternoon in Hudroo, two Gujarati gentlemen from a group of picnickers discovered Bepin Babu lying unconscious beside a boulder. When he came round, the first thing Bepin Babu said was, "I'm finished. There's no hope left."

came round:  
regained  
consciousness

Next morning, Bepin Babu was back in Calcutta. He realised that there was truly no hope for him. Soon he would lose everything: his will to work, his confidence, his ability, his balance of mind. Was he going to end up in the asylum at...? Bepin Babu couldn't think any more.

Back home, he rang up Dr Chanda and asked him to come over. Then, after a shower, he got into bed with an ice bag clamped on his head. Just then the servant brought him a letter which someone had left in the letter box. A greenish envelope with his name in red ink on it.



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Above the name it said 'Urgent and Confidential'. In spite of his condition, Bepin Babu had a feeling that he ought to go through the letter. He tore open the envelope and took out the letter. This is what he read —





in retribution  
of:  
as a  
punishment  
for

Dear Bepin,

*I had no idea that affluence would bring about the kind of change in you that it has done. Was it so difficult for you to help out an old friend down on his luck? I have no money, so my resources are limited. What I have is imagination, a part of which I used in retribution of your unfeeling behaviour.*

*Well, you'll be all right again now. A novel I've written is being considered by a publisher. If he likes it enough, it'll see me through the next few months.*

Yours, Chunilal

When Dr Chanda came, Bepin Babu said, "I'm fine. It all came back as soon as I got off the train at Ranchi."

"A unique case," said Dr Chanda. "I shall certainly write about it in a medical journal."

"The reason why I sent for you," said Bepin Babu, "is that I have a pain in the hip from a fall I had in Ranchi. If you could prescribe a pain killer..."

SATYAJIT RAY

### Comprehension Check

1. Had Bepin Babu really lost his memory and forgotten all about a trip to Ranchi?
2. Why do you think Chunilal did what he did? Chunilal says he has no money; what is it that he does have?

### working with the text

1. The author describes Bepin Babu as a serious and hardworking man. What evidence can you find in the story to support this?
2. Why did Bepin Babu change his mind about meeting Chunilal? What was the result of this meeting?
3. Bepin Babu lost consciousness at Hudroo Falls. What do you think was the reason for this?
4. How do you think Bepin Babu reacted when he found out that Chunilal had tricked him?

 working with language 

1. Look at these two sentences.

- He had to buy at least five books to last him through the week.
- Bepin had to ask Chuni to leave.

*Had to* is used to show that it was very important or necessary for Bepin Babu to do something. He had no choice. We can also use 'have to' / 'has to' in the same way.

Fill in the blanks below using 'had to' / 'have to' / 'has to'.

- (i) I \_\_\_\_\_ cut my hair every month.
  - (ii) We \_\_\_\_\_ go for swimming lessons last year.
  - (iii) She \_\_\_\_\_ tell the principal the truth.
  - (iv) They \_\_\_\_\_ take the baby to the doctor.
  - (v) We \_\_\_\_\_ complain to the police about the noise.
  - (vi) Romit \_\_\_\_\_ finish his homework before he could come out to play.
  - (vii) I \_\_\_\_\_ repair my cycle yesterday.
2. Here are a few idioms that you will find in the story. Look for them in the dictionary in the following way.

First, arrange them in the order in which you would find them in a dictionary.

(Clue: An idiom is usually listed under the first noun, verb, adjective or adverb in it. Ignore articles or prepositions in the idiom).

To help you, we have put in bold the word under which you must look for the idiom in the dictionary.)

- (i) at/**from** close quarters (close: adjective)
- (ii) **break** into a smile (break: verb; look under 'break into something')
- (iii) carry on (carry: verb)
- (iv) have a **clean** record (you may find related meanings under both these words)
- (v) **beat** about the bush (verb)

Now refer to your dictionary and find out what they mean.



3. Study the sentences in the columns below.

A	B
I saw this movie yesterday.	I have seen this movie already.
Bepin Babu worked here for a week last year.	Bepin Babu has worked here since 2003.
Chunilal wrote to a publisher last week.	Chunilal has written to a publisher.
I visited Ranchi once, long ago.	I have visited Ranchi once before.

Compare the sentences in the two columns, especially the verb forms. Answer the following questions about each pair of sentences.

- Which column tells us that Bepin Babu is still working at the same place?
  - Which column suggests that Chunilal is now waiting for a reply from the publisher?
  - Which column suggests that the person still remembers the movie he saw?
  - Which column suggests that the experience of visiting Ranchi is still fresh in the speaker's mind?
4. Given below are jumbled sentences. Working in groups, rearrange the words in each sentence to form correct sentences.

You will find that each sentence contains an idiomatic expression that you have come across in the lesson. Underline the idiom and write down its meaning. Then use your dictionary to check the meaning.

One sentence has been worked out for you as an example.

*Jumbled sentence:* vanished/ The car/ seemed to/ into thin/ have/ air.

*Ans:* The car seemed to have vanished into thin air.

*Idiom:* vanished into thin air: disappeared or vanished in a mysterious way

- Stop/and tell me/beating about/what you want/the bush

*Ans:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Idiom:* \_\_\_\_\_

(ii) don't pay/If you/ attention/you might/the wrong train/to the announcement/board

Ans: \_\_\_\_\_

Idiom: \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) The villagers/tried/the crime/on the young woman/to pin

Ans: \_\_\_\_\_

Idiom: \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) Bepin Babu/orders to/telling people/under/loved/doctor's/eat early/that he was

Ans: \_\_\_\_\_

Idiom: \_\_\_\_\_

(v) the students/The teacher/his eyebrows/when/said that/all their lessons/raised/they had revised

Ans: \_\_\_\_\_

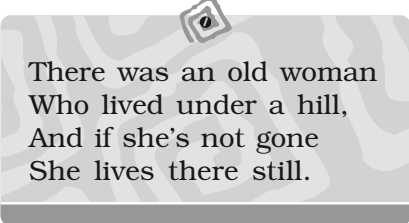
Idiom: \_\_\_\_\_

### speaking and writing

1. What do you think happened after Bepin Babu came to know the truth? Was he angry with this friend for playing such a trick on him? Or do you think he decided to help a friend in need?
2. Imagine you are Bepin Choudhury. You have received Chunilal's letter and feel ashamed that you did not bother to help an old friend down on his luck. Now you want to do something for him. Write a letter to Chunilal promising to help him soon.

**Or**

A prank is a childish trick. Do you remember any incident when someone played a prank on you or your friends? Describe the prank in a paragraph.



There was an old woman  
Who lived under a hill,  
And if she's not gone  
She lives there still.



## The Last Bargain



*A bargain is an agreement in which both parties promise to do something for each other. Someone is looking for work, waiting to be hired. He strikes a bargain but thinks it worthless. He tries twice again but doesn't like either. Finally, in the last bargain, when he is hired for nothing whatever, he is happy as never before. What is the bargain, and why is it the best?*



“Come and hire me,” I cried, while in the morning  
I was walking on the stone-paved road.  
Sword in hand the King came in his chariot.  
He held my hand and said, “I will hire you with  
my power,”  
But his power counted for naught, and he went away in  
his chariot.

In the heat of the mid-day the houses stood with  
shut doors.  
I wandered along the crooked lane.  
An old man came out with his bag of gold.  
He pondered and said, “I will hire you with my money.”  
He weighed his coins one by one, but I turned away.

It was evening. The garden hedge was all aflower.  
The fair maid came out and said, "I will hire you with  
a smile."  
Her smile paled and melted into tears, and she went  
back alone into the dark.

The sun glistened on the sand, and the sea waves broke  
waywardly.  
A child sat playing with shells.  
He raised his head and seemed to know me and said,  
"I hire you with nothing."  
From henceforward that bargain struck in child's play  
made me a free man.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

working with the poem

1. Who is the speaker in the poem?
2. "The king, sword in hand" suggests
  - (i) wealth
  - (ii) power
  - (iii) more power than wealth.Mark the appropriate item in the context of stanza 1.
3. The old man offered the speaker a lot of money.  
Why did he turn down the offer?
4. Find in the poem, lines that match the following. Read both one after another.
  - (i) I have nothing to give you  
except goodwill and cheer.
  - (ii) Her happiness was no more  
than sorrow in disguise.
  - (iii) The king's might was not worth much.
5. How did the speaker feel after talking to the child on the beach?





# 5

## The Summit Within

### Before you read

*Major H.P.S. Ahluwalia was a member of the first successful Indian expedition to Mount Everest in 1965. How did he feel when he stood on the highest point in the world? Let us hear his story in his words — climbing the summit and, then, the more difficult task of climbing the summit within.*

surged:  
arose  
suddenly and  
intensely

panorama:  
view of a wide  
area

jubilant:  
very happy  
because of  
success

tinge:  
trace/shade

Of all the emotions which surged through me as I stood on the summit of Everest, looking over miles of panorama below us, the dominant one I think was humility. The physical in me seemed to say, "Thank God, it's all over!" However, instead of being jubilant, there was a tinge of sadness. Was it because I had already done the 'ultimate' in climbing and there would be nothing higher to climb and all roads hereafter would lead down?

By climbing the summit of Everest you are overwhelmed by a deep sense of joy and thankfulness. It is a joy which lasts a lifetime. The experience changes you completely. The man who has been to the mountains is never the same again.

As I look back at life after climbing Everest I cannot help remarking about the other summit — the summit of the mind — no less formidable and no easier to climb.

Even when getting down from the summit, once the physical exhaustion had gone, I began asking myself the question why I had climbed Everest. Why did the act of reaching the summit have such a hold on my imagination? It was already a thing of the past, something done yesterday. With every passing day, it would become more remote. And then what would remain? Would my memories fade slowly away?

All these thoughts led me to question myself as to why people climb mountains. It is not easy to answer the question. The simplest answer would be, as others have said, "Because it is there." It presents great difficulties. Man takes delight in overcoming obstacles. The obstacles in climbing a mountain are physical. A climb to a summit means endurance, persistence and will power. The demonstration of these physical qualities is no doubt exhilarating, as it was for me also.

I have a more personal answer to the question. From my childhood I have been attracted by mountains. I had been miserable, lost, when away from mountains, in the plains. Mountains are nature at its best. Their beauty and majesty pose a great challenge, and like many, I believe that mountains are a means of communion with God.

Once having granted this, the question remains: Why Everest? Because it is the highest, the mightiest and has defied many previous attempts. It takes the last ounce of one's energy. It is a brutal struggle with rock and ice. Once taken up, it cannot be given up halfway even when one's life is at stake. The passage back is as difficult as the passage onwards. And then, when the summit is climbed, there is the exhilaration, the joy of having done something, the sense of a battle fought and won. There is a feeling of victory and of happiness.

Glimpsing a peak in the distance, I get transported to another world. I experience a change within myself

exhaustion:  
fatigue;  
tiredness



exhilarating:  
very exciting

communion:  
state or feeling  
of close relationship  
defied:  
frustrated;  
resisted



mystical:  
spiritual

which can only be called mystical. By its beauty, aloofness, might, ruggedness, and the difficulties encountered on the way, the peak draws me to it — as Everest did. It is a challenge that is difficult to resist.



Looking back I find that I have not yet fully explained why I climbed Everest. It is like answering a question why you breathe. Why do you help your neighbour? Why do you want to do good acts? There is no final answer possible.

And then there is the fact that Everest is not just a physical climb. The man who has been to the mountain-top becomes conscious in a special manner of his own smallness in this large universe.

The physical conquest of a mountain is only one part of the achievement. There is more to it than that. It is followed by a sense of fulfilment. There is the satisfaction of a deep urge to rise above one's surroundings. It is the eternal love for adventure in man. The experience is not merely physical. It is emotional. It is spiritual.

firm in:  
make yourself  
firm  
belays:  
fixes a rope

ascent:  
climb

Consider a typical climb, towards the summit on the last heights. You are sharing a rope with another climber. You firm in. He cuts the steps in the hard ice. Then he belays and you inch your way up. The climb is grim. You strain every nerve as you take every step. Famous climbers have left records of the help given by others. They have also recorded how they needed just that help. Else they might have given up. Breathing is difficult. You curse yourself for having let yourself in for this. You wonder why you ever undertook the ascent. There are moments when you feel like going back. It would be sheer relief to go down, instead of up. But almost at once you snap out of that mood. There is something in you that does not let you give up the

struggle. And you go on. Your companion keeps up with you. Just another fifty feet. Or a hundred, maybe. You ask yourself: Is there no end? You look at your companion and he looks at you. You draw inspiration from each other. And then, without first being aware of it, you are at the summit.

Looking round from the summit you tell yourself that it was worthwhile. Other silvery peaks appear through the clouds. If you are lucky the sun may be on them. The surrounding peaks look like a jewelled necklace around the neck of your summit. Below, you see vast valleys sloping into the distance. It is an ennobling, enriching experience to just look down from the summit of a mountain. You bow down and make your obeisance to whichever God you worship.

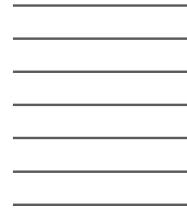
I left on Everest a picture of Guru Nanak. Rawat left a picture of Goddess Durga. Phu Dorji left a relic of the Buddha. Edmund Hillary had buried a cross under a cairn (a heap of rocks and stones) in the snow. These are not symbols of conquest but of reverence.



*The author and Phu-Dorji on the summit of Mount Everest*

The experience of having climbed to the summit changes you completely.

There is another summit. It is within yourself. It is in your own mind. Each man carries within himself his own mountain peak. He must climb it to reach to a fuller knowledge of himself. It is fearful, and unscalable. It cannot be climbed by anyone else. You yourself have to do it. The physical act of climbing to the summit of a mountain



make your obeisance: show your obedience or submission





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ordeals:  
painful  
experiences  
resolutely:  
with  
determination  
or firmness

outside is akin to the act of climbing the mountain within. The effects of both the climbs are the same. Whether the mountain you climb is physical or emotional and spiritual, the climb will certainly change you. It teaches you much about the world and about yourself.

I venture to think that my experience as an Everest climber has provided me with the inspiration to face life's ordeals resolutely. Climbing the mountain was a worthwhile experience. The conquest of the internal summit is equally worthwhile. The internal summits are, perhaps, higher than Everest.

H.P.S. AHLUWALIA





### Comprehension Check

1. *Standing on Everest, the writer was*
  - (i) overjoyed.
  - (ii) very sad.
  - (iii) jubilant and sad.

Choose the right item.
2. *The emotion that gripped him was one of*
  - (i) victory over hurdles.
  - (ii) humility and a sense of smallness.
  - (iii) greatness and self importance.
  - (iv) joy of discovery.

Choose the right item.
3. *"The summit of the mind" refers to*
  - (i) great intellectual achievements.
  - (ii) the process of maturing mentally and spiritually.
  - (iii) overcoming personal ambition for common welfare.
  - (iv) living in the world of thought and imagination.
  - (v) the triumph of mind over worldly pleasures for a noble cause.
  - (vi) a fuller knowledge of oneself.

Mark the item(s) not relevant.

 working with the text   

1. Answer the following questions.
  - (i) What are the three qualities that played a major role in the author's climb?
  - (ii) Why is adventure, which is risky, also pleasurable?
  - (iii) What was it about Mount Everest that the author found irresistible?
  - (iv) One does not do it (climb a high peak) for fame alone. What does one do it for, really?
  - (v) "He becomes conscious in a special manner of his own smallness in this large universe." This awareness defines an emotion mentioned in the first paragraph. Which is the emotion?
  - (vi) What were the "symbols of reverence" left by members of the team on Everest?
  - (vii) What, according to the writer, did his experience as an Everester teach him?
2. Write a sentence against each of the following statements. Your sentence should explain the statement. You can pick out sentences from the text and rewrite them. The first one has been done for you.
  - (i) The experience changes you completely.  
One who has been to the mountains is never the same again.
  - (ii) Man takes delight in overcoming obstacles.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - (iii) Mountains are nature at its best.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - (iv) The going was difficult but the after-effects were satisfying.  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - (v) The physical conquest of a mountain is really a spiritual experience.  
\_\_\_\_\_



 working with language 

1. Look at the italicised phrases and their meanings given in brackets.

Mountains are nature *at its best*. (nature's best form and appearance)

Your life is *at risk*. (in danger; you run the risk of losing your life.)

He was *at his best/worst* in the last meeting. (it was his best/worst performance.)

Fill in the blanks in the following dialogues choosing suitable phrases from those given in the box.

 at hand    at once    at all    at a low ebb    at first sight 

(i) *Teacher*: You were away from school without permission. Go to the principal \_\_\_\_\_ and submit your explanation.

*Pupil*: Yes, Madam. But would you help me write it first?

(ii) *Arun*: Are you unwell?

*Ila*: No, not \_\_\_\_\_. Why do you ask?

*Arun*: If you were unwell, I would send you to my uncle.

He is a doctor.

(iii) *Mary*: Almost every Indian film has an episode of love \_\_\_\_\_.

*David*: Is that what makes them so popular in foreign countries?

(iv) *Asif*: You look depressed. Why are your spirits \_\_\_\_\_ today?  
(Use such in the phrase)

*Ashok*: I have to write ten sentences using words that I never heard before.

(v) *Shieba*: Your big moment is close \_\_\_\_\_.

*Jyoti*: How should I welcome it?

*Shieba*: Get up and receive the trophy.

2. Write the noun forms of the following words adding *-ance* or *-ence* to each.

(i) endure \_\_\_\_\_ (ii) persist \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) signify \_\_\_\_\_ (iv) confide \_\_\_\_\_

(v) maintain \_\_\_\_\_ (vi) abhor \_\_\_\_\_

3. (i) Match words under **A** with their meanings under **B**.

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
remote	difficult to overcome
means	most prominent
dominant	be overcome/overpowered
formidable	method(s)
overwhelmed	far away from

- (ii) Fill in the blanks in the sentences below with appropriate words from under **A**.
- (a) There were \_\_\_\_\_ obstacles on the way, but we reached our destination safely.
- (b) We have no \_\_\_\_\_ of finding out what happened there.
- (c) Why he lives in a house \_\_\_\_\_ from any town or village is more than I can tell.
- (d) \_\_\_\_\_ by gratitude, we bowed to the speaker for his valuable advice.
- (e) The old castle stands in a \_\_\_\_\_ position above the sleepy town.

### speaking and writing

Write a composition describing a visit to the hills, or any place which you found beautiful and inspiring.

Before writing, work in small groups. Discuss the points given below and decide if you want to use some of these points in your composition.

- Consider this sentence  
*Mountains are a means of communion with God.*
- Think of the act of worship or prayer. You believe yourself to be in the presence of the divine power. In a way, you are in communion with that power.
- Imagine the climber on top of the summit—the height attained; limitless sky above; the climber's last ounce of energy spent; feelings of gratitude, humility and peace.
- The majesty of the mountains does bring you close to nature and the spirit and joy that lives there, if you have the ability to feel it.

Some composition may be read aloud to the entire class afterwards.



## The School Boy



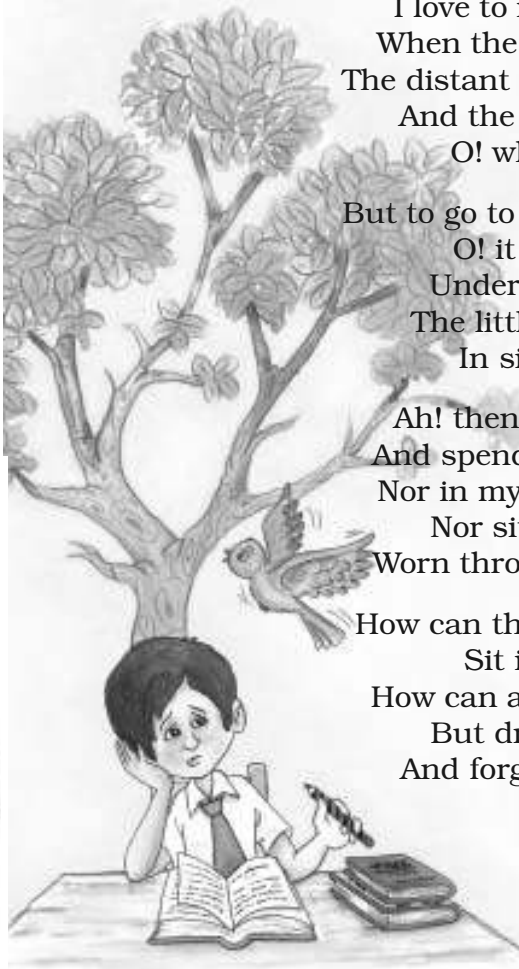
*The school boy in the poem is not a happy child. What makes him unhappy? Why does he compare himself to a bird that lives in a cage, or a plant that withers when it should blossom.*

I love to rise in a summer morn,  
When the birds sing on every tree;  
The distant huntsman winds his horn,  
And the skylark sings with me.  
O! what sweet company.

But to go to school in a summer morn,  
O! it drives all joy away;  
Under a cruel eye outworn,  
The little ones spend the day,  
In sighing and dismay.

Ah! then at times I drooping sit,  
And spend many an anxious hour.  
Nor in my book can I take delight,  
Nor sit in learning's bower,  
Worn thro' with the dreary shower.

How can the bird that is born for joy,  
Sit in a cage and sing.  
How can a child when fears annoy,  
But droop his tender wing,  
And forget his youthful spring.



O! Father and Mother, if buds are nip'd,  
And blossoms blown away,  
And if the tender plants are strip'd  
Of their joy in the springing day,  
By sorrow and cares dismay,  
  
How shall the summer arise in joy,  
Or the summer fruits appear?

WILLIAM BLAKE

### glossary

nip'd: (nipped) 'to nip something in the bud' is to stop or  
destroy it at an early stage of its development

strip'd: stripped

plants strip'd of joy: if joy is taken away from plants

### working with the poem

1. Find three or four words/phrases in stanza 1 that reflect the child's happiness and joy.
2. In stanza 2, the mood changes. Which words/phrases reflect the changed mood?
3. 'A cruel eye outworn' (stanza 2) refers to
  - (i) the classroom which is shabby/noisy.
  - (ii) the lessons which are difficult/uninteresting.
  - (iii) the dull/uninspiring life at school with lots of work and no play.Mark the answer that you consider right.

4. 'Nor sit in learning's bower  
worn thro' with the dreary shower'

Which of the following is a close paraphrase of the lines above?

- (i) Nor can I sit in a roofless classroom when it is raining.
- (ii) Nor can I learn anything at school though teachers go on lecturing and explaining.
- (iii) Nor can I sit in the school garden for fear of getting wet in the rain.





Read the following poem and compare it with *The School Boy*.

### **The One Furrow**

When I was young, I went to school  
With pencil and footrule  
Sponge and slate,  
And sat on a tall stool  
At learning's gate.

When I was older, the gate swung wide;  
Clever and keen-eyed  
In I pressed,  
But found in the mind's pride  
No peace, no rest.

Then who was it taught me back to go  
To cattle and barrow,  
Field and plough:  
To keep to the one furrow,  
As I do now?

R.S. THOMAS

### **The Other Way Round**

- ☐ Quicksand works slowly.
- ☐ There is no egg in eggplant, no ham in hamburger and neither apple nor pine in pineapple.
- ☐ Boxing rings are square.
- ☐ There are noses that run and feet that smell.



### Before you read

*Often, instead of rushing to the doctor to treat a small cut or burn, we find quick and effective cures using things available at home. Can you think of some such 'home remedies' for*

- a cut on your knee?
- a burn on your arm?
- a bee sting?

*In this story, Jody's father has been bitten by a rattlesnake. He quickly kills a doe and uses its heart and liver to draw out the poison. Jody wonders what will happen to the little fawn left without a mother.*

### I

Jody allowed his thoughts to drift back to the fawn. He could not keep it out of his mind. He had held it, in his dreams, in his arms. He slipped from the table and went to his father's bedside. Penny lay at rest. His eyes were open and clear, but the pupils were still dark and dilated.

Jody said, "How are you feeling, Pa?"

"Just fine, son. Old Death has gone thieving elsewhere. But wasn't it a close shave!"

"I agree."

Penny said, "I'm proud of you, boy, the way you kept your head and did what was needed."

drift back to:  
go back to  
dilated:  
enlarged  
a close shave:  
a narrow  
escape  
kept your  
head:  
stayed calm in  
a difficult  
situation



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“Pa-”

“Yes, son.”

“Pa, do you recollect the doe and the fawn?”



“I can never forget them. The poor doe saved me, that’s certain.”

“Pa, the fawn may be out there yet. It might be hungry and very scared.”

“I suppose so.”

“Pa, I’m a big boy now and don’t need to drink milk. Why don’t I go and see if I can find the fawn?”

“And bring it here?”

“And raise it.”

Penny lay quiet, staring at the ceiling.

“Boy, you’ve got me hemmed in.”

“It won’t take much to raise it, Pa. It’ll soon start eating leaves and acorns.”

“You are smarter than boys of your age.”

“We took its mother, and it wasn’t to blame.”

“Surely it seems ungrateful to leave it to starve. Son, I can’t say ‘No’ to you. I never thought I’d live to see another day.”

hemmed in:  
(here) caught  
in a situation  
where one  
can’t say ‘no’

acorns:  
small brown  
nuts

“Can I ride back with Mill-wheel and see if I can find it?”

“Tell your Ma I said you can go.”

He sidled back to the table and sat down. His mother was pouring coffee for everyone.

He said, “Ma, Pa says I can go bring back the fawn.” She held the coffee pot in mid-air.

“What fawn?”

“The fawn belonging to the doe we killed. We used the doe’s liver to draw out the poison and save Pa.”

She gasped.

“Well, for pity sake—”

“Pa says it would be ungrateful to leave it to starve.”

Doc Wilson said, “That’s right, Ma’am. Nothing in the world comes quite free. The boy’s right and his daddy’s right.”

Mill-wheel said, “He can ride back with me. I’ll help him find it.”

She set down the pot helplessly.

“Well, if you’ll give it your milk—we’ve got nothing else to feed it.”

Mill-wheel said, “Come on, boy. We’ve got to get riding.”

Ma Baxter asked anxiously, “You’ll not be gone long?”

Jody said, “I’ll be back before dinner for sure.”

Mill-wheel mounted his horse and pulled Jody up behind him.

He said to Mill-wheel, “Do you think the fawn’s still there? Will you help me find him?”

“We’ll find him if he’s alive. How you know it’s a he?”

sidled back:  
walked back  
quietly, trying  
not to be  
noticed



every which way:  
in different directions



makes a bearing:  
acts as a compass and helps to identify directions

“The spots were all in a line. On a doe-fawn, Pa says the spots are every which way...”

### **Comprehension Check**

1. *What had happened to Jody's father?*
2. *How did the doe save Penny's life?*
3. *Why does Jody want to bring the fawn home?*
4. *How does Jody know that the fawn is a male?*

## **II**

Jody gave himself over to thoughts of the fawn. They passed the abandoned clearing.

He said, “Cut to the north, Mill-wheel. It was up here that Pa got bitten by the snake and killed the doe and I saw the fawn.”

Suddenly Jody was unwilling to have Mill-wheel with him. If the fawn was dead, or could not be found, he could not have his disappointment seen. And if the fawn was there, the meeting would be so lovely and so secret that he could not endure to share it.

He said, “It’s not far now, but the scrub is very thick for a horse. I can make it on foot.”

“But I’m afraid to leave you, boy. Suppose you got lost or got bitten by the snake, too?”

“I’ll take care. It might take me a long time to find the fawn, if he’s wandered. Leave me off right here.”

“All right, but you take it easy now. You know north here, and east?”

“There, and there. That tall pine makes a bearing.”

“So long.”

“So long, Mill-wheel. I’m obliged.”

He waited for the sound of the hooves to end, then cut to the right. The scrub was still. Only his own crackling of twigs sounded across the silence. He wondered for an instant if he had mistaken his direction.

Then a buzzard rose in front of him and flapped into the air. He came into the clearing under the oaks. Buzzards sat in a circle around the carcass of the doe. They turned their heads on their long scrawny necks and hissed at him. He threw his bough at them and they flew into an adjacent tree. The sand showed large cat prints but the big cats killed fresh, and they had left the doe to the carrion birds.

He parted the grass at the place where he had seen the fawn. It did not seem possible that it was only yesterday. The fawn was not there. He circled the clearing. There was no sound, no sign. The buzzards clacked their wings, impatient to return to their business. He returned to the spot where the fawn had emerged and dropped on all fours, studying the sand for the small hoof prints. The night's rain had washed away all tracks except those of cat and buzzards.

### Comprehension Check

1. Jody didn't want Mill-wheel with him for two reasons. What were they?
2. Why was Mill-wheel afraid to leave Jody alone?

### III

Movement directly in front of him startled him so that he tumbled backward. The fawn lifted its face to his. It turned its head with a wide, wondering motion and shook him through with the stare of its liquid eyes. It was quivering. It made no effort to rise or run. Jody could not trust himself to move.

He whispered, "It's me."

The fawn lifted its nose, scenting him. He reached out one hand and laid it on the soft neck. The touch made him delirious. He moved forward on all fours until he was close beside it. He put his arms around its body. A light convulsion passed over it but it did not stir.

buzzard:  
a large bird  
like the  
vulture that  
eats the flesh  
of dead  
animals

adjacent:  
nearby

parted:  
moved or  
pushed aside

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quivering:  
shaking  
slightly

delirious:  
(here)  
extremely  
excited

convulsion:  
shiver





a china deer:  
a clay deer  
that is easily  
broken

sleek:  
smooth and  
shiny

hoist:  
pull up higher

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light-headed:  
unable to  
think clearly

He stroked its sides as gently as though the fawn were a china deer and he might break it. Its skin was very soft. It was sleek and clean and had a sweet scent of grass. He rose slowly and lifted the fawn from



the ground. Its legs hung limply. They were surprisingly long and he had to hoist the fawn as high as possible under his arm.

He was afraid that it might kick and bleat at sight and smell of its mother. He skirted the clearing and pushed his way into the thicket. It was difficult to fight through with his burden. The fawn's legs caught in the bushes and he could not lift his own with freedom. He tried to shield its face from prickling vines. Its head bobbed with his stride. His heart thumped with the marvel of its acceptance of him. He reached the trail and walked as fast as he could until he came to the intersection with the road home. He stopped to rest and set the fawn down on its dangling legs. It wavered on them. It looked at him and bleated.

He said, enchanted, "I'll carry you after I get my breath."

He remembered his father saying that a fawn would follow if it had first been carried. He started away slowly. The fawn stared after him. He came back to it and stroked it and walked away again. It took a few wobbling steps toward him and cried piteously. It was willing to follow him. It belonged to him. It was his own. He was light-headed with his joy. He wanted to fondle it, to run



and romp with it, to call to it to come to him. He dared not alarm it. He picked it up and carried it in front of him over his two arms. It seemed to him that he walked without effort.

romp:  
play  
alarm:  
frighten

His arms began to ache and he was forced to stop again. When he walked on, the fawn followed him at once. He allowed it to walk a little distance, then picked it up again. The distance home was nothing. He could have walked all day and into the night, carrying it and watching it follow. He was wet with sweat but a light breeze blew through the June morning, cooling him. The sky was as clear as spring water in a blue china cup. He came to the clearing. It was fresh and green after the night's rain. He fumbled with the latch and was finally obliged to set down the fawn to manage it. Then, he had an idea — he would walk into the house, into Penny's bedroom, with the fawn walking behind him. But at the steps, the fawn balked and refused to climb them. He picked it up and went to his father. Penny lay with closed eyes.

balked:  
(also baulked)  
was unwilling  
(to do  
something)

Jody called, "Pa! Look!"

Penny turned his head. Jody stood beside him, the fawn clutched hard against him. It seemed to Penny that the boy's eyes were as bright as the fawn's. He said, "I'm glad you found him."

Jody then went to the kitchen. The fawn wobbled after him. A pan of morning's milk stood in the kitchen safe. The cream had risen on it. He skimmed the cream into a jug. He poured milk into a small gourd. He held it out to the fawn. It butted it suddenly, smelling the milk. He saved it precariously from spilling over the floor. It could make nothing of the milk in the gourd.

He dipped his fingers in the milk and thrust them into the fawn's soft wet mouth. It sucked greedily. When he withdrew them, it bleated frantically and butted him. He dipped his fingers again and as the fawn sucked, he lowered them slowly into the milk. The fawn blew and

\_\_\_\_\_

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sucked and snorted. It stamped its small hoofs impatiently. As long as he held his fingers below the level of the milk, the fawn was content. It closed its eyes dreamily. It was ecstasy to feel its tongue against his hand. Its small tail flicked back and forth. The last of the milk vanished in a swirl of foam and gurgling.

MARJORIE KINNAN RAWLINGS

### Comprehension Check

1. How did Jody bring the fawn back home?
2. Jody was filled with emotion after he found the fawn. Can you find at least three words or phrases which show how he felt?
3. How did the deer drink milk from the gourd?
4. Why didn't the fawn follow Jody up the steps as he had thought it would?

### working with the text

1. Why did Penny Baxter allow Jody to go find the fawn and raise it?
2. What did Doc Wilson mean when he said, "Nothing in the world ever comes quite free"?
3. How did Jody look after the fawn, after he accepted the responsibility for doing this?
4. How does Jody's mother react when she hears that he is going to bring the fawn home? Why does she react in this way?

### working with language

1. Look at these pairs of sentences.  
Penny said to Jody, "Will you be back before dinner?"  
Penny asked Jody if he would be back before dinner.  
"How are you feeling, Pa?" asked Jody.  
Jody asked his father how he was feeling.

Here are some questions in direct speech. Put them into reported speech.

- (i) Penny said, "Do you really want it son?"
- (ii) Mill-wheel said, "Will he ride back with me?"
- (iii) He said to Mill-wheel, "Do you think the fawn is still there?"
- (iv) He asked Mill-wheel, "Will you help me find him?"
- (v) He said, "Was it up here that Pa got bitten by the snake?"

2. Look at these two sentences.

He tumbled backward.

It turned its head.

The first sentence has an **intransitive** verb, a verb without an object.

The second sentence has a **transitive** verb. It has a direct object. We can ask: "What did it turn?" You can answer: "Its head. It turned its head."

Say whether the verb in each sentence below transitive or intransitive. Ask yourself a 'what' question about the verb, as in the example above. (For some verbs, the object is a person, so ask the question 'who' instead of 'what').

- (i) Jody then went to the kitchen.
- (ii) The fawn wobbled after him.
- (iii) You found him.
- (iv) He picked it up.
- (v) He dipped his fingers in the milk.
- (vi) It bleated frantically and butted him.
- (vii) The fawn sucked his fingers.
- (viii) He lowered his fingers slowly into the milk.
- (ix) It stamped its small hoofs impatiently.
- (x) He held his fingers below the level of the milk.
- (xi) The fawn followed him.
- (xii) He walked all day.
- (xiii) He stroked its sides.
- (xiv) The fawn lifted its nose.
- (xv) Its legs hung limply.



3. Here are some words from the lesson. Working in groups, arrange them in the order in which they would appear in the dictionary. Write down some idioms and phrasal verbs connected to these words. Use the dictionary for more idioms and phrasal verbs.

close	draw	make	wonder	scrawny
parted	clearing	sweet	light	pick

### speaking

1. Do you think it is right to kill an animal to save a human life? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Imagine you wake up one morning and find a tiny animal on your doorstep. You want to keep it as a pet but your parents are not too happy about it. How would you persuade them to let you keep it? Discuss it in groups and present your arguments to the class.

### writing

1. Imagine you have a new pet that keeps you busy. Write a paragraph describing your pet, the things it does, and the way it makes you feel. Here are some words and phrases that you could use.  
frisky, smart, disobedient, loyal, happy, enthusiastic, companion, sharing, friend, rolls in mud, dirties the bed, naughty, lively, playful, eats up food, hides the newspaper, drinks up milk, runs away when called, floats on the water as if dead
2. Human life is dependent on nature (that's why we call her Mother Nature). We take everything from nature to live our lives. Do we give back anything to nature?
  - (i) Write down some examples of the natural resources that we use.
  - (ii) Write a paragraph expressing your point of view regarding our relationship with nature.
3. In *This is Jody's Fawn*, Jody's father uses a 'home remedy' for a snake bite. What should a person now do if he or she is bitten by a snake? Are all snakes poisonous? With the help of your teacher and others, find out answers to such questions. Then write a short paragraph on — What to do if a snake chooses to bite you.

## The Duck and the Kangaroo

*Two friends, the Duck and the Kangaroo, are about to set out on a long pleasure trip. The Kangaroo, though happy to carry the Duck all the way on the tip of his tail, is wary of her wet feet. What will the Duck do to make the Kangaroo feel comfortable over land and sea? Let us find out how they go about it.*



Said the Duck to the Kangaroo,  
'Good gracious! how you hop!  
Over the fields and the water too,  
As if you never would stop!  
My life is a bore in this nasty pond,  
And I long to go out in the world beyond!  
I wish I could hop like you!  
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.

'Please give me a ride on your back!  
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.  
'I would sit quite still, and say nothing but "Quack,"



The whole of the long day through!  
And we'd go to the Dee, and the Jelly Bo Lee,  
Over the land, and over the sea; —  
Please take me on a ride! O do!  
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.

Said the Kangaroo to the Duck,  
'This requires a little reflection;  
Perhaps on the whole it might bring me luck,  
And there seems but one objection,  
Which is, if you'll let me speak so bold,  
Your feet are unpleasantly wet and cold,  
And would probably give me the roo-  
Matiz!' said the Kangaroo.

Said the Duck, 'As I sat on the rocks,  
I have thought over that completely,  
And I bought four pairs of worsted socks  
Which fit my web-feet neatly.  
And to keep out the cold I've bought a cloak,  
And every day a cigar I'll smoke,  
All to follow my own dear true  
Love of a Kangaroo!'

Said the Kangaroo, 'I'm ready!  
All in the moonlight pale,  
But to balance me well, dear Duck, sit steady!  
And quite at the end of my tail!  
So away they went with a hop and a bound,  
And they hopped the whole world three times round;  
And who so happy, — O who,  
As the Duck and the Kangaroo?

EDWARD LEAR



glossary

worsted socks: woollen socks

📖 working with the poem 📖📖

1. Taking words that come at the end of lines, write five pairs of rhyming words. Read each pair aloud  
For example, pond – beyond
2. Complete the dialogue.  
Duck : Dear Kangaroo! Why don't you  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kangaroo : With pleasure, my dear Duck,  
though \_\_\_\_\_  
Duck : That won't be a problem. I will  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The Kangaroo does not want to catch 'rheumatism'. Spot this word in stanza 3 and say why it is spelt differently. Why is it in two parts? Why does the second part begin with a capital letter?
4. Do you find the poem humorous? Read aloud lines that make you laugh.

📖  
**A February Surprise**

The trees are still asleep today  
And do not seem to know  
A storm came by last night and heaped  
Their branches full of snow.

See how they start up with surprise  
As one by one they wake.  
"Why, gracious me!" they seem to say,  
And give themselves a shake.

—Ralph Marcellino





# 7

## A Visit to Cambridge

### Before you read


*This is the story of a meeting between two extraordinary people, both of them 'disabled', or 'differently abled' as we now say. Stephen Hawking is one of the greatest scientists of our time. He suffers from a form of paralysis that confines him to a wheelchair, and allows him to 'speak' only by punching buttons on a computer, which speaks for him in a machine-like voice. Firdaus Kanga is a writer and journalist who lives and works in Mumbai. Kanga was born with 'brittle bones' that tended to break easily when he was a child. Like Hawking, Kanga moves around in a wheelchair.*

*The two great men exchange thoughts on what it means to live life in a wheelchair, and on how the so called 'normal' people react to the disabled.*

Cambridge was my metaphor for England, and it was strange that when I left it had become altogether something else, because I had met Stephen Hawking there.

It was on a walking tour through Cambridge that the guide mentioned Stephen Hawking, 'poor man, who is quite disabled now, though he is a worthy successor to Issac Newton, whose Chair he has at the university.'

And I started, because I had quite forgotten that this most brilliant and completely paralysed astrophysicist,



astrophysicist:  
scholar of  
astrophysics  
— branch of  
physics  
dealing with  
stars, planets,  
etc.

the author of *A Brief History of Time*, one of the biggest best-sellers ever, lived here.

When the walking tour was done, I rushed to a phone booth and, almost tearing the cord so it could reach me outside, phoned Stephen Hawking's house. There was his assistant on the line and I told him I had come in a wheelchair from India (perhaps he thought I had propelled myself all the way) to write about my travels in Britain. I had to see Professor Hawking — even ten minutes would do. "Half an hour," he said. "From three-thirty to four."



And suddenly I felt weak all over. Growing up disabled, you get fed up with people asking you to be brave, as if you have a courage account on which you are too lazy to draw a cheque. The only thing that makes you stronger is seeing somebody like you, achieving something huge. Then you know how much is possible and you reach out further than you ever thought you could.

"I haven't been brave," said his disembodied computer-voice, the next afternoon. "I've had no choice."

Surely, I wanted to say, living creatively with the reality of his disintegrating body was a choice? But I kept quiet, because I felt guilty every time I spoke to him, forcing him to respond. There he was, tapping at the little switch in his hand, trying to find the words on his computer with the only bit of movement left to him, his long, pale fingers. Every so often, his eyes would shut in frustrated exhaustion. And sitting opposite him I could feel his anguish, the mind buoyant with thoughts that came out in frozen phrases and sentences stiff as corpses.

"A lot of people seem to think that disabled people are chronically unhappy," I said. "I know that's not true myself. Are you often laughing inside?"



buoyant:  
intensely  
active and  
vibrant







torso:  
upper part of  
the body

incandescence:  
inner glow or  
light

accessory:  
not essential  
but extra,  
though  
decorative

inflection:  
rise and fall of  
the voice in  
speaking

102 *Honeydew*

About three minutes later, he responded, "I find it amusing when people patronise me."

"And do you find it annoying when someone like me comes and disturbs you in your work?"

The answer flashed. "Yes." Then he smiled his one-way smile and I knew, without being sentimental or silly, that I was looking at one of the most beautiful men in the world.

A first glimpse of him is shocking, because he is like a still photograph — as if all those pictures of him in magazines and newspapers have turned three-dimensional.

Then you see the head twisted sideways into a slump, the torso shrunk inside the pale blue shirt, the wasted legs; you look at his eyes which can speak, still, and they are saying something huge and urgent — it is hard to tell what. But you are shaken because you have seen something you never thought could be seen.

Before you, like a lantern whose walls are worn so thin you glimpse only the light inside, is the incandescence of a man. The body, almost irrelevant, exists only like a case made of shadows. So that I, no believer in eternal souls, know that this is what each of us is; everything else an accessory.

"What do you think is the best thing about being disabled?" I had asked him earlier.

"I don't think there is anything good about being disabled."

"I think," I said, "you do discover how much kindness there is in the world."

"Yes," he said; it was a disadvantage of his voice synthesiser that it could convey no inflection, no shades or tone. And I could not tell how enthusiastically he agreed with me.

Every time I shifted in my chair or turned my wrist to watch the time — I wanted to make every one of our thirty minutes count — I felt a huge relief and exhilaration in the possibilities of my body. How little it mattered then that I would never walk, or even stand.

I told him how he had been an inspiration beyond cliché for me, and, surely, for others — did that thought help him?

“No,” he said; and I thought how foolish I was to ask. When your body is a claustrophobic room and the walls are growing narrower day by day, it doesn’t do much good to know that there are people outside smiling with admiration to see you breathing still.

“Is there any advice you can give disabled people, something that might help make life better?”

“They should concentrate on what they are good at; I think things like the disabled Olympics are a waste of time.”

“I know what you mean.” I remembered the years I’d spent trying to play a Spanish guitar considerably larger than I was; and how gleefully I had unstrung it one night.

The half-hour was up. “I think I’ve annoyed you enough,” I said, grinning. “Thank you for...”

“Stay.” I waited. “Have some tea. I can show you the garden.”

The garden was as big as a park, but Stephen Hawking covered every inch, rumbling along in his motorised wheelchair while I dodged to keep out of the way. We couldn’t talk very much; the sun made him silent, the letters on his screen disappearing in the glare.

An hour later, we were ready to leave. I didn’t know what to do. I could not kiss him or cry. I touched his shoulder and wheeled out into the summer evening. I looked back; and I knew he was waving, though he wasn’t. Watching him, an embodiment of my bravest self, the one I was moving towards, the one I had believed in for so many years, alone, I knew that my journey was over. For now.



cliché:  
phrase or idea  
used so often  
that it loses  
its meaning

claustrophobic:  
very small and  
suffocating  
(‘Claustrophobia’  
is abnormal  
fear of being  
in an enclosed  
space)

gleefully:  
very happily

FIRDAUS KANGA  
from *Heaven on Wheels*




### Comprehension Check

Which is the right sentence?

1. "Cambridge was my metaphor for England." To the writer,
  - (i) Cambridge was a reputed university in England.
  - (ii) England was famous for Cambridge.
  - (iii) Cambridge was the real England.
2. The writer phoned Stephen Hawking's house
  - (i) from the nearest phone booth.
  - (ii) from outside a phone booth.
  - (iii) from inside a phone booth.
3. Every time he spoke to the scientist, the writer felt guilty because
  - (i) he wasn't sure what he wanted to ask.
  - (ii) he forced the scientist to use his voice synthesiser.
  - (iii) he was face to face with a legend.
4. "I felt a huge relief... in the **possibilities of my body**." In the given context, the highlighted words refer to
  - (i) shifting in the wheelchair, turning the wrist.
  - (ii) standing up, walking.
  - (iii) speaking, writing.



### working with the text



Answer the following questions.

1. (i) Did the prospect of meeting Stephen Hawking make the writer nervous? If so, why?  
(ii) Did he at the same time feel very excited? If so, why?
2. Guess the first question put to the scientist by the writer.
3. Stephen Hawking said, "I've had no choice." Does the writer think there was a choice? What was it?
4. "I could feel his anguish." What could be the anguish?
5. What endeared the scientist to the writer so that he said he was looking at one of the most beautiful men in the world?
6. Read aloud the description of 'the beautiful' man. Which is the most beautiful sentence in the description?

7. (i) If 'the lantern' is the man, what would its 'walls' be?  
(ii) What is housed within the thin walls?  
(iii) What general conclusion does the writer draw from this comparison?
8. What is the scientist's message for the disabled?
9. Why does the writer refer to the guitar incident? Which idea does it support?
10. The writer expresses his great gratitude to Stephen Hawking. What is the gratitude for?
11. Complete the following sentences taking their appropriate parts from both the boxes below.
  - (i) There was his assistant on the line ...
  - (ii) You get fed up with people asking you to be brave, ...
  - (iii) There he was, ...
  - (iv) You look at his eyes which can speak, ...
  - (v) It doesn't do much good to know ...



**A**

- ◆ tapping at a little switch in his hand
- ◆ and I told him
- ◆ that there are people
- ◆ as if you have a courage account
- ◆ and they are saying something huge and urgent

**B**

- ◆ trying to find the words on his computer.
- ◆ I had come in a wheelchair from India.
- ◆ on which you are too lazy to draw a cheque.
- ◆ smiling with admiration to see you breathing still.
- ◆ it is hard to tell what.





 working with language 

1. Fill in the blanks in the sentences below using the appropriate forms of the words given in the following box.

 guide    succeed    chair    travel    pale    draw    true 

- (i) I met a \_\_\_\_\_ from an antique land.  
(ii) I need special \_\_\_\_\_ in mathematics. I can't count the number of times I have failed in the subject.  
(iii) The guide called Stephen Hawking a worthy \_\_\_\_\_ to Issac Newton.  
(iv) His other problems \_\_\_\_\_ into insignificance beside this unforeseen mishap.  
(v) The meeting was \_\_\_\_\_ by the youngest member of the board.  
(vi) Some people say 'yours \_\_\_\_\_' when they informally refer to themselves.  
(vii) I wish it had been a \_\_\_\_\_ match. We would have been spared the noise of celebrations, at least.

2. Look at the following words.


 walk    stick 

Can you create a meaningful phrase using both these words?

(It is simple. Add *-ing* to the verb and use it before the noun. Put an article at the beginning.)

*..a walking stick*

Now make six such phrases using the words given in the box.

 read/session    smile/face    revolve/chair  
walk/tour    dance/doll    win/chance

3. Use *all* or *both* in the blanks. Tell your partner why you chose one or the other.




- (i) He has two brothers. \_\_\_\_\_ are lawyers.  
(ii) More than ten persons called. \_\_\_\_\_ of them wanted to see you.  
(iii) They \_\_\_\_\_ cheered the team.  
(iv) \_\_\_\_\_ her parents are teachers.  
(v) How much have you got? Give me \_\_\_\_\_ of it.

4. Complete each sentence using the right form of the adjective given in brackets.
- (i) My friend has one of the \_\_\_\_\_ cars on the road. (fast)
  - (ii) This is the \_\_\_\_\_ story I have ever read. (interesting)
  - (iii) What you are doing now is \_\_\_\_\_ than what you did yesterday. (easy)
  - (iv) Ramesh and his wife are both \_\_\_\_\_. (short)
  - (v) He arrived \_\_\_\_\_ as usual. Even the chief guest came \_\_\_\_\_ than he did. (late, early)

### speaking and writing

1. Say the following words with correct stress. Pronounce the parts given in colour loudly and clearly.

camel	balloon
decent	opinion
fearless	enormous
careful	fulfil
father	together
govern	degree
bottle	before

-  In a word having more than one syllable, the stressed syllable is the one that is **more prominent** than the other syllable(s)
-  A word has as many syllables as it has vowels.  
man (one syllable)  
ˈmanner (two syllables)
-  The mark (ˈ) indicates that the first syllable in 'manner' is more prominent than the other.

2. Underline stressed syllables in the following words. Consult the dictionary or ask the teacher if necessary.

artist	mistake	accident	moment
compare	satisfy	relation	table
illegal	agree	backward	mountain

3. Writing a notice for the School Notice Board.

**Step 1**

Discuss why notices are put up on the notice board.

What kinds of 'notices' have you lately seen on the board?

How is a notice different from a letter or a descriptive paragraph?

**Step 2**

Suppose you have lost or found something on the campus.

What have you lost or found?

You want to write a notice about it. If you have lost something, you want it restored to you in case someone has found it. If you have found something, you want to return it to its owner.

**Step 3**

Write a few lines describing the object you have lost or found. Mention the purpose of the notice in clear terms. Also write your name, class, section and date.

**Step 4**

Let one member of each group read aloud the notice to the entire class.

Compare your notice with the other notices, and make changes, if necessary, with the help of the teacher.

**or**

- ❁ Imagine that you are a journalist.
- ❁ You have been asked to interview the president of the village panchayat.
- ❁ Write eight to ten questions you wish to ask.
- ❁ The questions should elicit comments as well as plans regarding water and electricity, cleanliness and school education in the village.

**A Crooked Rhyme**

There was a crooked man, and he walked a crooked mile,  
He found a crooked coin against a crooked stile;  
He bought a crooked cat, which caught a crooked mouse,  
And they all lived together in a little crooked house.

## When I set out for Lyonesse

*As a young apprentice architect, British poet and novelist Thomas Hardy once visited a parish to supervise the restoration of a church. On his return from the parish, people noticed two things about him — a new glow in his eyes and a crumpled piece of paper sticking out of his coat pocket. That paper, it is recorded in one of his biographies, contained the draft of a poem. You are going to read that very poem inspired by a visit to a place which the poet calls Lyonesse.*

When I set out for Lyonesse  
A hundred miles away,  
The rime was on the spray;  
And starlight lit my lonesomeness  
When I set out for Lyonesse  
A hundred miles away.

What would bechance at Lyonesse  
While I should sojourn there,  
No prophet durst declare;  
Nor did the wisest wizard guess  
What would bechance at Lyonesse  
While I should sojourn there.

When I returned from Lyonesse  
With magic in my eyes,  
All marked with mute surmise  
My radiance rare and fathomless,  
When I returned from Lyonesse  
With magic in my eyes.

THOMAS HARDY





## glossary

Lyonnesse: (in Arthurian legend) the mythical birthplace of Sir Tristram, in England, believed to have been submerged by the sea; here an imaginary place.

rime: frost

the spray: leaves and branches of trees; foliage

durst: (poetic word for) dared

bechance: happen/chance to happen

sojourn: stay

radiance: glow

fathomless: so deep that the depth can't be measured

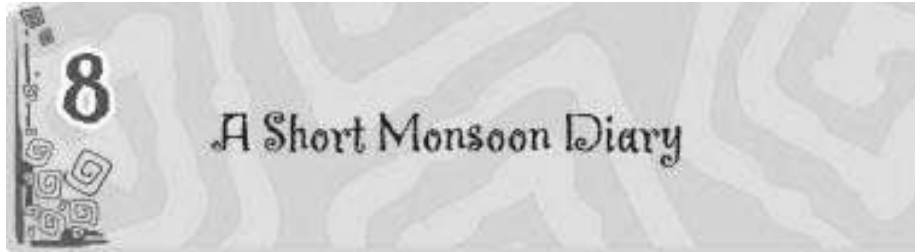
## working with the poem

1. In the first stanza, find words that show
  - (i) that it was very cold.
  - (ii) that it was late evening.
  - (iii) that the traveller was alone.
2. (i) Something happened at Lyonnesse. It was
  - (a) improbable.
  - (b) impossible.
  - (c) unforeseeable.(ii) Pick out two lines from stanza 2 to justify your answer.
3. (i) Read the line (stanza 3) that implies the following.  
'Everyone noticed something, and they made guesses, but didn't speak a word'.
  - (ii) Now read the line that refers to what they noticed,

### Springtime

Question: Why is it unsafe to walk about in spring?

Answer: Because the grass has blades, the flowers have pistils and the trees are shooting.



# 8 A Short Monsoon Diary

## Before you read

*Do you know what a diary is? It is a record of personal experiences written day after day over a long period of time. You can also use a diary to note down things you plan to do immediately or in future.*

*One of the most famous diaries published as a book is The Diary of Anne Frank.*



*Here are a few extracts from Ruskin Bond's diary in which he portrays the silent miracles of nature and life's little joys and regrets. Read on.*

## I

### June 24

The first day of monsoon mist. And it's strange how all the birds fall silent as the mist comes climbing up the hill. Perhaps that's what makes the mist so melancholy; not only does it conceal the hills, it blankets them in silence too. Only an hour ago the trees were ringing with birdsong. And now the forest is deathly still as though it were midnight.

Through the mist Bijju is calling to his sister. I can hear him running about on the hillside but I cannot see him.



melancholy:  
very sad (the  
mist is called  
melancholy  
because it  
makes people  
feel  
melancholy)



blankets:  
covers



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fern:  
a flowerless  
plant with  
feathery green  
leaves



heralded:  
announced or  
brought the  
news of

imprecations:  
curses

bloodletting:  
losing blood  
(Decades ago,  
leeches were  
used to  
remove blood  
from a  
patient's body)

scarlet  
minivet:  
bright red bird  
like a cuckoo

drongo:  
a song-bird  
with a stout  
bill

**June 25**

Some genuine early-monsoon rain, warm and humid, and not that cold high-altitude stuff we've been having all year. The plants seem to know it too, and the first cobra lily rears its head from the ferns as I walk up to the bank and post office.

The mist affords a certain privacy.

A school boy asked me to describe the hill station and valley in one sentence, and all I could say was: "A paradise that might have been."



**June 27**

The rains have heralded the arrival of some seasonal visitors—a leopard, and several thousand leeches.

Yesterday afternoon the leopard lifted a dog from near the servants' quarter below the school. In the evening it attacked one of Bijju's cows but fled at the approach of Bijju's mother, who came screaming imprecations.

As for the leeches, I shall soon get used to a little bloodletting every day.

Other new arrivals are the scarlet minivets (the females are yellow), flitting silently among the leaves like brilliant jewels. No matter how leafy the trees, these brightly coloured birds cannot conceal themselves, although, by remaining absolutely silent, they sometimes contrive to go unnoticed. Along come a pair of drongos, unnecessarily aggressive, chasing the minivets away.

A tree creeper moves rapidly up the trunk of the oak tree, snapping up insects all the way. Now that the rains are here, there is no dearth of food for the insectivorous birds.

### Comprehension Check

1. Why is the author not able to see Bijju?
2. What are the two ways in which the hills appear to change when the mist comes up?

## II

### August 2

All night the rain has been drumming on the corrugated tin roof. There has been no storm, no thunder, just the steady swish of a tropical downpour. It helps me to lie awake; at the same time, it doesn't keep me from sleeping.

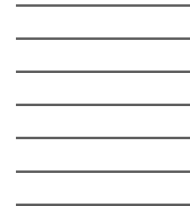
It is a good sound to read by — the rain outside, the quiet within — and, although tin roofs are given to springing unaccountable leaks, there is a feeling of being untouched by, and yet in touch with, the rain.

### August 3

The rain stops. The clouds begin to break up, the sun strikes the hill on my left. A woman is chopping up sticks. I hear the tinkle of cowbells. In the oak tree, a crow shakes the raindrops from his feathers and caws disconsolately. Water drips from a leaking drainpipe. And suddenly, clean and pure, the song of the whistling thrush emerges like a dark sweet secret from the depths of the ravine.

### August 12

Endless rain, and a permanent mist. We haven't seen the sun for eight or nine days. Everything damp and soggy. Nowhere to go. Pace the room, look out of the window at a few bobbing umbrellas. At least it isn't cold



drumming:  
falling noisily



disconsolately:  
unhappily

ravine:  
valley





rain. The hillsides are lush as late-monsoon flowers begin to appear — wild balsam, dahlias, begonias and ground orchids.

### **August 31**

It is the last day of August, and the lush monsoon growth has reached its peak. The seeds of the cobra lily are turning red,

signifying that the rains are coming to an end.

In a few days the ferns will start turning yellow, but right now they are still firm, green and upright. Ground orchids, mauve lady's slipper and the white butterfly orchids put on a fashion display on the grassy slopes of Landour. Wild dahlias, red, yellow and magenta, rear their heads from the rocky crevices where they have taken hold.

Snakes and rodents, flooded out of their holes and burrows, take shelter in roofs, attics and godowns. A shrew, weak of eyesight, blunders about the rooms, much to the amusement of the children.

"Don't kill it," admonishes their grandmother. "*Chuchundars* are lucky — they bring money!"

And sure enough, I receive a cheque in the mail. Not a very large one, but welcome all the same.

### **October 3**

We have gone straight from monsoon into winter rain. Snow at higher altitudes.

After an evening hailstorm, the sky and hills are suffused with a beautiful golden light.

crevices:  
narrow  
openings or  
cracks in rock  
or wall  
shrew:  
(find its Hindi  
equivalent in  
the next  
sentence)

**January 26**

*Winter Rains in the Hills*

In the hushed silence of the house  
when I am quite alone, and my  
friend, who was here  
has gone, it is very lonely, very quiet,  
as I sit in a liquid silence, a silence  
within,  
surrounded by the rhythm of rain,  
the steady drift  
of water on leaves, on lemons, on roof,  
drumming on drenched dahlias and  
window panes,  
while the mist holds the house in a  
dark caress.

As I pause near a window, the rain stops.  
And starts again.  
And the trees, no longer green but grey,  
menace me with their loneliness.



caress:  
touching or  
holding  
lovingly

menace:  
threaten

**March 23**

Late March. End of winter.

The blackest cloud I've ever seen squatted over  
Mussoorie, and then it hailed marbles for half an hour.  
Nothing like a hailstorm to clear the sky. Even as I write,  
I see a rainbow forming.

RUSKIN BOND

**Comprehension Check**

1. When does the monsoon season begin and when does it end? How do you prepare to face the monsoon?
2. Which hill-station does the author describe in this diary entry?
3. For how many days does it rain without stopping? What does the author do on these days?
4. Where do the snakes and rodents take shelter? Why?
5. What did the author receive in the mail?

### working with the text

1. Look carefully at the diary entries for June 24-25, August 2 and March 23. Now write down the changes that happen as the rains progress from June to March.
2. Why did the grandmother ask the children not to kill the *Chuchundar*?
3. What signs do we find in Nature which show that the monsoons are about to end?
4. Complete the following sentences.
  - (i) Bijju is not seen but his voice is heard because \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (ii) The writer describes the hill station and valley as \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (iii) The leopard was successful in \_\_\_\_\_ but had to flee when \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (iv) The minivets are easily noticed because \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (v) It looks like a fashion display on the slopes when \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (vi) During the monsoon season, snakes and rodents are found in roofs and attics because \_\_\_\_\_.
5. 'Although tin roofs are given to springing unaccountable leaks, there is a feeling of being untouched by, and yet in touch with, the rain.'
  - (i) Why has the writer used the word, 'springing'?
  - (ii) How is the writer untouched by the rain?
  - (iii) How is the writer in touch with the rain at the same time?
6. Mention a few things that can happen when there is endless rain for days together.
7. What is the significance of cobra lily in relation to the monsoon season, its beginning and end?

### working with language

1. Here are some words that are associated with the monsoon. Add as many words as you can to this list. Can you find words for these in your languages?

downpour floods mist cloudy powercuts cold umbrella

2. Look at the sentences below.
  - (i) Bijju *wandered* into the garden in the evening.
  - (ii) The trees were *ringing* with birdsong.



Notice the highlighted verbs.

The verb **wandered** tells us what Bijju did that evening. But the verb **was ringing** tells us what was happening continually at same time in the past (the birds were **chirping** in the trees).

Now look at the sentences below. They tell us about something that happened in the past. They also tell us about other things that happened continually, at the same time in the past.

Put the verbs in the brackets into their proper forms. The first one is done for you.

- (i) We (get out) of the school bus. The bell (ring) and everyone (rush) to class.  
We got out of the school bus. The bell was ringing and everyone was rushing to class.
- (ii) The traffic (stop). Some people (sit) on the road and they (shout) slogans.
- (iii) I (wear) my raincoat. It (rain) and people (get) wet.
- (iv) She (see) a film. She (narrate) it to her friends who (listen) carefully.
- (v) We (go) to the exhibition. Some people (buy) clothes while others (play) games.
- (vi) The class (is) quiet. Some children (read) books and the rest (draw).
3. Here are some words from the lesson which describe different kinds of sounds.

drum    swish    tinkle    caw    drip

- (i) Match these words with their correct meanings.
- (a) to fall in small drops  
(b) to make a sound by hitting a surface repeatedly  
(c) to move quickly through the air, making a soft sound  
(d) harsh sound made by birds  
(e) ringing sound (of a bell or breaking glass, etc.)
- (ii) Now fill in the blanks using the correct form of the words given above.
- (a) Ramesh \_\_\_\_\_ on his desk in impatience.  
(b) Rain water \_\_\_\_\_ from the umbrella all over the carpet.  
(c) The pony \_\_\_\_\_ its tail.



(d) The \_\_\_\_\_ of breaking glass woke me up.

(e) The \_\_\_\_\_ of the raven disturbed the child's sleep.

4. And **sure enough**, I received a cheque in the mail.

Complete each sentence below by using appropriate phrase from the ones given below.

sure enough	colourful enough	serious enough
kind enough	big enough	fair enough
brave enough	foolish enough	anxious enough

- (i) I saw thick black clouds in the sky. And \_\_\_\_\_ it soon started raining heavily.
- (ii) The blue umbrella was \_\_\_\_\_ for the brother and sister.
- (iii) The butterflies are \_\_\_\_\_ to get noticed.
- (iv) The lady was \_\_\_\_\_ to chase the leopard.
- (v) The boy was \_\_\_\_\_ to call out to his sister.
- (vi) The man was \_\_\_\_\_ to offer help.
- (vii) The victim's injury was \_\_\_\_\_ for him to get admitted in hospital.
- (viii) That person was \_\_\_\_\_ to repeat the same mistake again.
- (ix) He told me he was sorry and he would compensate for the loss. I said, '\_\_\_\_\_.'

### speaking

1. Do you believe in superstitions? Why, or why not? Working with your partner, write down three superstitious beliefs that you are familiar with.
2. How many different kinds of birds do you come across in the lesson? How many varieties do you see in your neighbourhood? Are there any birds that you used to see earlier in your neighbourhood but not now? In groups discuss why you think this is happening.

📖 writing 📖📖📖

1. The monsoons are a time of great fun and even a few adventures: playing in the rain and getting wet, wading through knee-deep water on your way to school, water flooding the house or the classroom, powercuts and so on. Write a paragraph describing an incident that occurred during the rains which you can never forget.



or


Write a poem of your own about the season of spring when trees are in full bloom.

📖  
**The Oak**

The oak stands straight and tall,  
but not in boots,  
nor any shoes at all:  
just in roots.

—Norma Farber





## On the Grasshopper and Cricket

*Unlike The Ant and the Cricket (page 21), which tells a story, this is a nature poem. In it, the grasshopper and cricket do not appear as characters in a story. Rather, they act as symbols, each suggesting something else. Read the poem and notice how 'the poetry of earth' keeps on through summer and winter in a never-ending song. Who sings the song?*

The poetry of earth is never dead:  
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,  
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run  
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead,  
That is the grasshopper's — he takes the lead  
In summer luxury — he has never done  
With his delights, for when tired out with fun  
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.

The poetry of earth is ceasing never:  
On a lone winter evening when the frost  
Has wrought a silence, from the stone there shrills  
The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,  
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost;  
The grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

JOHN KEATS

### glossary

wrought: brought about

shrills: comes through loud and clear

### 🎧 working with the poem 🎧🎧

1. Discuss with your partner the following definition of a poem.  
A poem is made of words arranged in a beautiful order. These words, when read aloud with feeling, have a music and meaning of their own.
2. 'The poetry of earth' is not made of words. What is it made of, as suggested in the poem?
3. Find in the poem lines that match the following.
  - (i) The grasshopper's happiness never comes to an end.
  - (ii) The cricket's song has a warmth that never decreases.
4. Which word in stanza 2 is opposite in meaning to 'the frost'?
5. The poetry of earth continues round the year through a cycle of two seasons. Mention each with its representative voice.

### Same is different

- 🎧 The bandage was wound around the wound.
- 🎧 The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
- 🎧 The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
- 🎧 When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
- 🎧 The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
- 🎧 They were too close to the door to close it.
- 🎧 There is no time like the present to present the present.



9

## The Great Stone Face - I



### Before you read

*Seen from a distance, hilltops and huge rocks seem to assume various shapes. They may resemble an animal or a human figure. People attribute stories to these shapes. Some stories come true; others don't. The Great Stone Face is one such shape that reminds the inhabitants of the valley of a prophecy. What was it? Did it come true?*

One afternoon, when the sun was going down, a mother and her little boy sat at the door of their cottage, talking about the Great Stone Face. They had only to lift their eyes and there it was, plain to be seen, though miles away, with the sunshine brightening all its features.

And what was the Great Stone Face?

The Great Stone Face was a work of nature, formed on the perpendicular side of a mountain by some immense rocks, which had been thrown together so that, when viewed at a proper distance, they resembled the features of a human face. If the spectator approached too near, he lost the outline of the enormous face and could see only a heap of gigantic rocks, piled one upon another. But seen from a distance, the clouds clustering about it, the Great Stone Face seemed positively to be alive. It was the belief of many people that the valley owed much of its fertility to the benign face that was continually beaming over it.

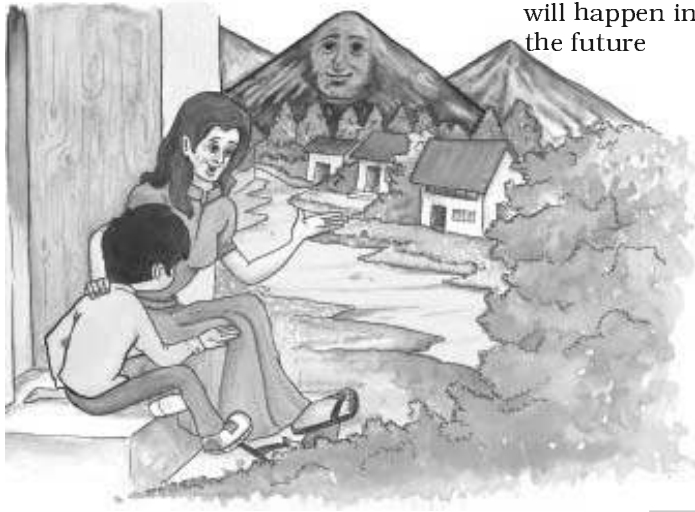
A mother and her little boy, as we said earlier, sat at the door of their cottage, gazing at the Great Stone Face and talking about it. The child's name was Ernest.

"Mother," said he, while the Great Face smiled on him, "I wish that it could speak, for it looks so very kindly that its voice must indeed be pleasant. If I ever see a man with such a face, I should love him very much."

"If an old prophecy should come to pass," answered his mother, "we may see a man some time, with exactly such a face as that."

"What prophecy do you mean, dear Mother?" eagerly inquired Ernest. "Please tell me about it."

So his mother told him a story that her own mother had told her, when she herself was younger than little Ernest; that, at some future day, a child should be born



perpendicular  
(cliff or rock-  
face) rising  
very steeply

immense:  
huge

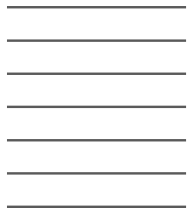
enormous:  
very big

gigantic:  
immense

clustering:  
gathering

benign:  
kind, gentle

prophecy:  
statement  
that tells what  
will happen in  
the future



pensive:  
thoughtful



near here, who was destined to become the greatest and noblest person of his time and whose face, in manhood, should bear an exact resemblance to the Great Stone Face. Many still had faith in this old prophecy. But others took it to be nothing but idle talk. At all events the great man of the prophecy had not yet appeared.

“O, Mother,” cried Ernest, clapping his hands above his head, “I do hope that I shall live to see him!”

His mother was an affectionate and thoughtful woman. It was proper, she thought, not to discourage the fanciful hopes of her little boy. So she said to him, “Perhaps you may.”

And Ernest never forgot the story that his mother told him. It was always in his mind whenever he looked upon the Great Stone Face. He spent his childhood in the log-cottage where he was born, was dutiful to his mother and helpful to her in many things, assisting her much with his little hands, and more with his loving heart. In this manner, from a happy yet often pensive child he grew up to be a mild and quiet youth.

Ernest had had no teacher, but the Great Stone Face became one to him. When the work of the day was over, he would gaze at it for hours, until he began to imagine that those vast features recognised him, and gave him a smile of kindness and encouragement.

About this time there went a rumour throughout the valley that the great man, who was to bear a resemblance to the Great Stone Face, had appeared at last. It seems that, many years before, a young man had left the valley and settled at a distant seaport. Gathergold, which was his name, had set up as a shopkeeper and, being sharp in business matters, had become so very rich that it would have taken him a hundred years only to count his wealth. In time he thought of his native valley, and decided to go back there, and end his days where he had been born.

Ernest had been deeply stirred by the idea that the great man, the noble man, the man of prophecy, after so many ages of delay, was at length to be seen in his native valley. While the boy was still gazing up the valley one day and imagining that the Great Stone Face returned his gaze, the noise of wheels was heard, and a crowd of people cried. "Here comes the great Mr Gathergold."

A carriage, drawn by four horses, dashed round the turn of the road. Within it, thrust partly out of the window appeared the face of an old man with yellow skin.

"The very image of the Great Stone Face!" shouted the people. "Sure enough, the old prophecy is true. Here we have the great man, at last!"

And, what greatly puzzled Ernest, they seemed actually to believe that here was the likeness which they spoke of. He turned away sadly from the wrinkled shrewdness of that unpleasant face, and gazed up the valley, where the Stone Face seemed to say: He will come! Fear not, Ernest; the man will come!

## II

The years went on, and Ernest grew to be a young man. He attracted little notice from the inhabitants of the valley. They saw nothing remarkable in his way of life, except that, when the labour of the day was over, he still loved to gaze upon the Great Stone Face. Their idea was that this was a folly, but pardonable, because Ernest was industrious, kind and neighbourly. They did not know that the Great Stone Face had become a teacher to him, and that the sentiment which was expressed in it would enlarge the young man's heart, and fill it with deeper sympathies than other hearts. They did not know that from this would come a better wisdom than could be learnt from books. Neither did Ernest know that the thoughts which came to him so

stirred:  
moved

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

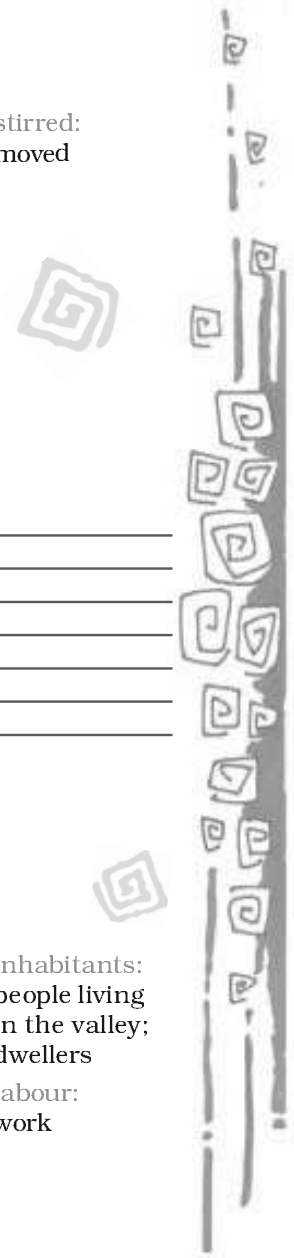
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

inhabitants:  
people living  
in the valley;  
dwellers

labour:  
work

sympathies:  
feelings (of  
sorrow,  
approval,  
understanding)







beheld:  
saw

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

renowned:  
famous

banquet:  
feast

naturally, in the fields and at the fireside, were of a higher tone than those which all men shared with him. A simple soul — simple as when his mother first told him the old story — he beheld the marvellous face looking down the valley, and still wondered, why its human likeness was so long in coming.

By this time poor Mr Gathergold was dead and buried. His wealth, which was the body and spirit of his existence, had disappeared before his death. Since the melting away of his gold, it had been generally agreed that there was no great likeness, after all, between the ruined merchant and the majestic face upon the mountain.

It so happened that another son of the valley had become a soldier many years before. After a great deal of hard fighting, he was now a famous commander. He was known on the battlefield by the name of Blood-and-Thunder. Old and tired now, he had lately expressed a desire to return to his native valley. The inhabitants, his old neighbours and their grown up children, prepared to welcome the renowned commander. It was being said that at last the likeness of the Great Stone Face had actually appeared. Great, therefore, was the excitement throughout the valley, and many people who had never once thought of glancing at the Great Stone Face now spent much time in gazing at it, for the sake of knowing exactly how General Blood-and-Thunder looked.

On the day of the general's arrival, Ernest and all the other people of the valley left their work, and proceeded to the spot where a great banquet had been prepared. Soldiers stood on guard, flags waved and the crowd roared. Ernest was standing too far back to see Blood-and-Thunder's face. However, he could hear several voices.

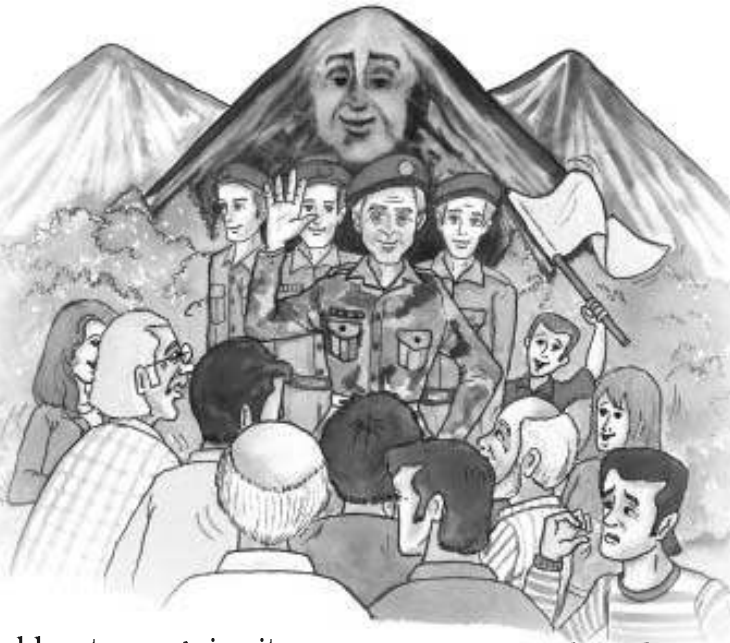
"It's the same face, exactly!" cried one man, dancing for joy.

“Wonderfully like it, that’s a fact!” replied another.

“And why not?” cried a third; “he’s the greatest man of this or any other age, beyond a doubt.”

Ernest at last could see the general’s face; and in the same glance, to the side, he could also see the Great Stone Face. If there was such a likeness as the crowd proclaimed, Ernest could not recognise it.

“Fear not, Ernest,” said his heart, as if the Great Stone Face was whispering to him, “fear not, Ernest; he will come.”



proclaimed:  
(here) said  
loudly,  
announced

### **Comprehension check**

Write ‘True’ or ‘False’ against each of the following statements.

1. The Great Stone Face stood near where Ernest and his mother lived. \_\_\_\_\_
2. One would clearly distinguish the features of the Stone Face only from a distance. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Ernest loved his mother and helped her in her work. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Though not very rich, Gathergold was a skilful merchant. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Gathergold died in poverty and neglect. \_\_\_\_\_
6. The Great Stone Face seemed to suggest that Ernest should not fear the general. \_\_\_\_\_

### working with the text

Answer the following questions.

- (i) What was the Great Stone Face?  
(ii) What did young Ernest wish when he gazed at it?
- What was the story attributed to the Stone Face?
- What gave the people of the valley the idea that the prophecy was about to come true for the first time?
- (i) Did Ernest see in Gathergold the likeness of the Stone Face?  
(ii) Who did he confide in and how was he proved right?
- (i) What made people believe General Blood-and-Thunder was their man?  
(ii) Ernest compared the man's face with the Stone Face. What did he conclude?

### working with language

- Look at the following words.

like - likeness

punctual - punctuality

The words on the left are adjectives and those on the right are their noun forms.

Write the noun forms of the following words by adding *-ness* or *-ity* to them appropriately. Check the spelling of the new words.

- |                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| (i) lofty _____   | (vi) enormous _____  |
| (ii) able _____   | (vii) pleasant _____ |
| (iii) happy _____ | (viii) dense _____   |
| (iv) near _____   | (ix) great _____     |
| (v) noble _____   | (x) stable _____     |

- Add *-ly* to each of the following adjectives, then use them to fill in the blanks.

perfect near kind pleasant eager

- Why didn't you turn up at the meeting? We all were \_\_\_\_\_ waiting for you.
- \_\_\_\_\_ write your name and address in capital letters.
- I was \_\_\_\_\_ surprised to see him at the railway station. I thought he was not coming.
- It is \_\_\_\_\_ believable that I am not responsible for this mess.
- He fell over the step and \_\_\_\_\_ broke his arm.

3. Complete each sentence below using the appropriate forms of the verbs in brackets.

- (i) I \_\_\_\_\_ (phone) you when I \_\_\_\_\_ (get) home from school.
- (ii) Hurry up! Madam \_\_\_\_\_ (be) annoyed if we \_\_\_\_\_ (be) late.
- (iii) If it \_\_\_\_\_ (rain) today, we \_\_\_\_\_ (not) go to the play.
- (iv) When you \_\_\_\_\_ (see) Mandal again, you \_\_\_\_\_ (not/recognise) him. He is growing a beard.
- (v) We are off today. We \_\_\_\_\_ (write) to you after we \_\_\_\_\_ (be) back.

🌀 speaking and writing 🌀🌀🌀

1. Imagine you are Ernest. Narrate the story that his mother told him.

*Begin like this:* My mother and I were sitting at the door of our cottage. We were looking at the Great Stone Face. I asked her if she had ever seen any one who looked like the Stone Face. Then she told me this story.

2. Imagine you are Gathergold. Write briefly the incident of your return to the valley.

*Begin like this:* My name is Gathergold. I left the valley of the Great Stone Face fifty years ago. I am now going back home. Will the people of the valley welcome me? Do they know that I am very rich?





### Before you read

*Many years passed. Ernest was now a man of middle age. To his neighbours, who never suspected that he was anything more than an ordinary and familiar face, he was only a humble and hardworking, though thoughtful, person.*

*But what about the old prophecy? Was it ever fulfilled? Let us read and find out.*

The years hurried on, and brought white hairs upon the head of Ernest, and made wrinkles across his forehead and furrows in his cheeks. He was an old man. But not in vain had he grown old; more numerous than the white hairs on his head were the wise thoughts in

furrows:  
deep lines

his mind. And Ernest had ceased to be obscure. Unsought for, undesired, had come the fame which so many seek. He had become famous beyond the limits of the valley. College professors, and even the active men of cities, came from far to see and converse with Ernest, and he received them with gentle sincerity, and spoke freely with them of whatever came uppermost, or lay deepest in his heart or their own. While they talked together, his face would brighten, unawares, and shine upon them, as with a mild evening light.

While Ernest had been growing old, God had granted a new poet to this earth. He, too, was a native of the valley, but had spent the greater part of his life in distant cities, pouring out his sweet music everywhere. Neither was the Great Stone Face forgotten, for the poet had celebrated it in a poem. The songs of this poet found their way to Ernest. He read them after his customary toil, seated on the bench before his cottage door. As he read he lifted his eyes to the mountain.

“O Great Stone Face,” he said, “is not this man worthy to be your likeness?”

The face seemed to smile, but did not answer.

Now it happened that the poet, though he lived so far away, had not only heard of Ernest but had thought much about his character and wished to meet this man whose wisdom walked hand in hand with the noble simplicity of his life. One summer day, therefore, he arrived at Ernest’s door, where he found the good old man holding a book in his hand, which he read and, then, with a finger between the leaves, looked lovingly at the Great Stone Face.

“Good evening,” said the poet. “Can you give a traveller a night’s shelter?”

“Gladly,” answered Ernest; and then he added, smiling, “I think I never saw the Great Stone Face look so hospitably at a stranger.”

obscure:  
not well  
known

unawares:  
unknowingly

customary  
toil:  
usual work

hospitably:  
(here) gently,  
kindly





The poet sat down beside him, and he and Ernest talked together. Never before had the poet talked with a man like Ernest, so wise, and gentle, and kind. Ernest, on the other hand, was moved by the living images flung out of the poet's mind.

As Ernest listened to the poet, he imagined that the Great Stone Face was bending forward to listen too. He gazed into the poet's eyes.

"Who are you, my gifted guest?" he asked.

The poet laid his finger on the book that Ernest had been reading.

"You have read these poems," said he. "You know me, then, for I wrote them."

Again and again, Ernest examined the poet's features; he turned towards the Great Stone Face then back. He shook his head and sighed.

"Why are you sad?" inquired the poet.

"Because," replied Ernest, "all through life I have awaited the fulfillment of a prophecy, and when I read these poems, I hoped that it might be fulfilled in you."

"You hoped," answered the poet, faintly smiling, "to find in me the likeness of the Great Stone Face. I am not worthy to be its likeness."

“And why not?” asked Ernest. He pointed to the book. “Are not those thoughts worthy?”

“You can hear in them the distant voice of a heavenly song. But my life, dear Ernest, has not corresponded with my thoughts. I have had grand dreams, but they have been only dreams. Sometimes I lack faith in my own thoughts. Why, then, pure seeker of the good and true, should you hope to find me in the face of the mountain?”

The poet spoke sadly and his eyes were wet with tears. So, too, were those of Ernest.

At the hour of sunset, as had long been his custom, Ernest was to speak to a group of neighbours in the open air. Together he and the poet went to the meeting place, arm in arm. From there could be seen the Great Stone Face.

Ernest threw a look of familiar kindness around upon his audience. He began to speak to the people what was in his heart and mind. His words had power, because they agreed with his thoughts; and his thoughts had reality and depth, because they harmonised with the life which he had always lived. It was not mere breath that the preacher uttered; they were the words of life. A life of good deeds and selfless love was melted into them. The poet, as he listened, felt that the life and character of Ernest were a nobler strain of poetry than he had ever written. His eyes filled with tears and he said to himself that never was there so worthy a sage as that mild, sweet, thoughtful face, with the glory of white hair diffused about it.

At a distance, but clearly to be seen, high up in the golden light of the setting sun, appeared the Great Stone Face, with white mists around it, like the white hairs around the brow of Ernest. At that moment, Ernest’s face took on an expression so grand that the poet was moved to throw his arms up and shout. “Behold! Behold! Ernest is himself the likeness of the Great Stone Face!”

corresponded:  
been in  
harmony with

custom:  
habit

harmonised  
with:  
corresponded  
with; agreed  
with

sage:  
wise man

diffused:  
spread all  
around







Then all the people looked, and saw that what the poet said was true. The prophecy was fulfilled. But Ernest, having finished what he had to say, took the poet's arm, and walked slowly homeward, still hoping that some wiser and better man than himself would by and by appear, bearing a resemblance to the Great Stone Face.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE  
(abridged)

### Comprehension Check

Write 'True' or 'False' against each of the following statements.

1. Ernest's words reminded people of the wise old sayings. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Total strangers from far away, who visited Ernest in the valley, found his face familiar. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The Great Stone Face confirmed Ernest's view that the poet could be worthy of its likeness. \_\_\_\_\_
4. When Ernest and the poet met, they respected and admired each other equally. \_\_\_\_\_
5. The poet along with Ernest addressed the inhabitants of the valley. \_\_\_\_\_
6. The poet realised that Ernest's thoughts were far nobler than his own verses. \_\_\_\_\_

### working with the text

Answer the following questions.

1. How was Ernest different from others in the valley?
2. Why did Ernest think the poet was like the Stone Face?
3. What did the poet himself say about his thoughts and poems?
4. What made the poet proclaim Ernest was the Stone Face?
5. Write 'Ernest' or 'Poet', against each statement below.
  - (i) There was a gap between his life and his words.
  - (ii) His words had the power of truth as they agreed with his thoughts.
  - (iii) His words were as soothing as a heavenly song but only as useful as a vague dream.
  - (iv) His thoughts were worthy.
  - (v) Whatever he said was truth itself.
  - (vi) His poems were noble.
  - (vii) His life was nobler than all the poems.
  - (viii) He lacked faith in his own thoughts.
  - (ix) His thoughts had power as they agreed with the life he lived.
  - (x) Greatness lies in truth. Truth is best expressed in one's actions. He was truthful, therefore he was great.
6.
  - (i) Who, by common consent, turned out to be like the Great Stone Face?
  - (ii) Did Ernest believe that the old prophecy had come true? What did he say about it?

### working with language

1. Mark the meaning that best fits the word or a phrase in the story.
  - (i) (sun) going down
    - (a) becoming smaller
    - (b) weakening
    - (c) setting
  - (ii) brightening
    - (a) making (it) look bright and cheerful
    - (b) lending (it) a special glow
    - (c) causing (it) to appear hopeful
  - (iii) spacious
    - (a) lonely and wild
    - (b) big and wide
    - (c) special and important



- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| (iv) prophecy                  | (a) proverb<br>(b) prediction<br>(c) rumour           |
| (v) marvellous                 | (a) wonderful<br>(b) surprising<br>(c) shocking       |
| (vi) proclaim                  | (a) reveal<br>(b) declare<br>(c) shout                |
| (vii) cease                    | (a) happen<br>(b) stop<br>(c) remain                  |
| (viii) (a night's) shelter     | (a) stay<br>(b) safety<br>(c) hospitality             |
| (ix) gazed                     | (a) wandered about<br>(b) stared at<br>(c) thought of |
| (x) took on<br>(an expression) | (a) challenged<br>(b) resembled<br>(c) assumed        |

2. (i) Read the following sentences.

- I do hope I'll live to see him.
- He will come! Fear not, Ernest; the man will come.
- Gathergold is arriving tomorrow, people said.
- Blood-and-Thunder starts his journey back to the valley next week, everyone proclaimed.
- The great man is going to spend his old age in his native town.

Notice that in the above sentences, verbs in bold type are in four different forms, denoting four important ways of expressing future time. None of these can be said to be exclusively used to show future time, though each is used to refer to some action in future.

(ii) Which form of the verb is more natural in these sentences? Encircle your choice.

- I'm not free this evening. I will work/am working on a project.
- Have you decided where you will go for your higher secondary? Yes, I have. I will go/am going to the Kendriya Vidyalaya.
- Don't worry about the dog. It won't hurt/isn't hurting you.

- (d) The weatherman has predicted that it will snow/is snowing in Ranikhet tonight.
- (e) Swapna can't go out this evening. Her father will come/is coming to see her.
3. (i) Complete these pieces of conversation using *will* or *going to* with the verbs given.
- (a) Rani : Why are you turning on the radio?  
Ravi : I \_\_\_\_\_ (listen) to the news.
- (b) Rani : Oh, I can't buy this book. I have no money.  
Ravi : Don't worry. I \_\_\_\_\_ (lend) you some.
- (c) Rani : Look at those dark clouds.  
Ravi : I think it \_\_\_\_\_ (rain).
- (d) Rani : What shall we have for dinner?  
Ravi : I can't decide.  
Rani : Make up your mind.  
Ravi : All right, then. We \_\_\_\_\_ (have) fried rice and dry beans.
- (e) Rani : Why are you filling the kettle with water?  
Ravi : I \_\_\_\_\_ (make) coffee.
- (f) Rani : We need some bread and butter for breakfast.  
Ravi : All right. I \_\_\_\_\_ (go) to the bakery and get some.  
*(Before he goes out, Ravi talks to their father.)*  
Ravi : I \_\_\_\_\_ (get) some bread and butter. Do you want any thing from the bakery?  
Father : Yes, I want some salt biscuits.  
Ravi : Fine, I \_\_\_\_\_ (get) you a packet.
- (ii) Let pairs of children take turns to speak aloud the dialogues.

### speaking and writing

1. Each of the following words has the sound /f/ as in feel. The words on the left have it initially. Those on the right have it finally. Speak each word clearly.
- |        |      |      |       |
|--------|------|------|-------|
| flail  | life | fact | tough |
| Philip | puff | fail | laugh |
| flowed | deaf | fast | stiff |

2. Underline the letter or letters representing /f/ in each of the following words.

file	slough	faint	lift
cough	defence	afford	enough
photograph	staff	tough	aloof
affront	philosophy	sophistry	

3. Imagine that you are the poet. You have come to your native valley to meet a famous preacher called Ernest. Narrate the incident of your first meeting with him.

4. (i) Put each of the following in the correct order to construct sentences.

- a resident of Noida near Delhi, /is visually impaired/ George Abraham,

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- confidence and competitive spirit /and infuses discipline among the participants/ It provides

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- he has helped /The brain behind the World Cup Cricket, /the disabled to dream

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- to the blind school in Delhi /It was a chance visit /that changed his life

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- sport is a powerful tool /the disabled /He believes that /for rehabilitation of

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(ii) Now rearrange the sentences above to construct a paragraph.

*George Abraham*, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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1

## *How the Camel got his hump*

### I

- The world had just begun, and the animals were working for humans.
- There was one lazy animal that did nothing, and said nothing but 'Humph'.
- Even the clever Djinn was at his wit's end.

IN the beginning, when the world was new and the Animals were just beginning to work for Man, there was a Camel, and he lived in the middle of a Howling Desert because he did not want to work. He ate sticks and thorns and prickles, and when anybody spoke to him he said "Humph!" Just "Humph!" and no more.

Presently the Horse came to him on Monday morning, with a saddle on his back and said, "Camel, O Camel, come out and trot like the rest of us."

"Humph!" said the Camel, and the Horse went away and told the Man.

Presently the Dog came to him, with a stick in his mouth, and said,



---

**Djinn:** (pronounced 'jin' and variously spelt as 'genie', 'genii', 'jinnee', 'djinni', 'djimmy'): a spirit that has strange powers and can assume any form, human or animal

“Camel, O Camel, come and fetch and carry like the rest of us.”

“Humph!” said the Camel, and the Dog went away and told the Man.

Presently the Ox came to him, with the yoke on his neck, and said, “Camel, O Camel, come and plough like the rest of us.”

“Humph!” said the Camel, and the Ox went away and told the Man.

At the end of the day the Man called the Horse and the Dog and the Ox together, and said, “Three, O Three, I’m very sorry for you;



but that Humph-thing in the Desert can’t work, or he would have been here by now, so I am going to leave him alone, and you must work double-time to make up for it.”

That made the Three very angry, and they held a panchayat on the edge of the Desert; and the Camel came chewing cud and laughed at them. Then he said “Humph!” and went away again.

Presently there came along the Djinn who was in charge of All Deserts, rolling in a cloud of dust.

**2** *It so happened...*







“Djinn of All Deserts,” said the Horse, “is it right for anyone to be idle?”

“Certainly not,” said the Djinn.

“Well,” said the Horse, “there’s a thing in the middle of your Desert with a long neck and long legs, and he hasn’t done a stroke of work since Monday morning. He won’t trot.”

“Whew!” said the Djinn whistling, “that’s my Camel. What does he say about it?”

“He says ‘Humph!’, and he won’t plough,” said the Ox.

“Very good,” said the Djinn. “I’ll humph him if you will kindly wait a minute.”

### Comprehension Check

1. What tasks, do you think, were assigned to the dog and the ox?
2. Why did the camel live in the middle of the desert?
3. What made the dog, the horse and the ox very angry?
4. How did the Djinn know the horse was complaining against the camel?

---

**I’ll humph him:** I’ll deal with him appropriately./I’ll set him right.

## II

- The Djinn remonstrated with the camel, who said “Humph”.
- The camel’s beautiful back suddenly grew a lump, which was the camel’s hump.
- The Djinn assured the camel his hump would always be a help, not a hindrance.

The Djinn rolled himself up in his dust-cloak, and took a walk across the Desert, and found the Camel looking at his own reflection in a pool of water.

“My friend,” said the Djinn, “what’s this I hear of your doing no work?”

The Djinn sat down, with his chin in his hand, while the Camel looked at his own reflection in the pool of water.

“You’ve given the Three extra work ever since Monday morning, all on account of your idleness,” said the Djinn. And he went on thinking with his chin in his hand.



**remonstrated:** protested/complained

4 *It so happened...*



“Humph!” said the Camel.

“I shouldn’t say that again if I were you,” said the Djinn; “you might say it once too often. I want you to work.”

And the Camel said “Humph!” again; but no sooner had he said it than he saw his back, that he was so proud of, puffing up and puffing up into a great big hump.

“Do you see that?” said the Djinn. “That’s your very own humph that you’ve brought upon your very own self by not working. Today is Thursday, and you’ve done no work since Monday, when the work began. Now you are going to work.”

“How can I,” said the Camel, “with this humph on my back?”

“That has a purpose,” said the Djinn, “all because you missed those three days. You will be able to work now for three days without eating, because you can live on your humph; and don’t you ever say I never did anything for you. Come out of the Desert and go to the Three, and behave.”

And the Camel went away to join the Three. And from that day to this the Camel always wears a humph (we call it ‘hump’ now, not to hurt his feelings); but he has never yet caught up with the three days that he missed at the beginning of the world, and he has never yet learned how to behave.

RUDYARD KIPLING  
(abridged)

### Comprehension Check

1. The camel was looking at this own reflection in the pool. What does it suggest to you about the camel?
2. The camel said, “Humph” repeatedly. How did it affect him?
3. What, according to the Djinn, was the use of the “humph”?
4. “...he has never yet learnt to behave”. In the light of this, what is the writer’s opinion about the camel?



## Exercise



**Discuss the following topics in groups.**

1. Can this story be factually true?
2. What, according to you, is the story about?  
Consider the following:
  - (i) How the world began.
  - (ii) Why everyone should do his/her share of work seriously.
  - (iii) How animals are important to humans.
  - (iv) How the camel got his hump.
3. What did you do over the weekend? Were you generally active or idle? Please check your back before starting to discuss or answer the question.
4. There are broadly two categories of workers — those who prefer to do today what they can do tomorrow, and those who prefer to do tomorrow what they can do today. Where do you belong?

## Think it Over

- All work is dignified: there is no such thing as 'menial work'.
- He who struggles is better than he who never attempts.
- 'All work and no play...' Is it a good idea? William Faulkner, American novelist and poet, didn't think so. In his words, "One of the saddest things is that the only thing that a man can do for eight hours a day, day after day, is work. You can't eat eight hours a day... All you can do for eight hours is work. Which is the reason why man makes himself and everybody else so miserable and unhappy".



**6** *It so happened...*



## 2

### Children at work

#### **Before you read**

*There are many reasons why children have to work. Some help their family make a livelihood. Others, who run away from unhappy homes, need to support themselves. Children who have to work can't go to school and play like other children of their age.*

#### **I**

- Velu, an eleven-year old boy, runs away from home.
- He wanders around for hours before getting on a train to Chennai without a ticket.
- Tired and hungry, he doesn't know where to go when a stranger at the station shouts a word of welcome.

WHEN the Kanyakumari Express pulled in at Chennai Central, it took Velu some time to get off. When he finally stood on the platform, his legs felt wobbly, as if he was still on a moving train.

“Oy, out of the way!” A porter went by with a loaded trolley. Velu jumped aside.

He sat on a bench on the platform, putting his small bundle down. In all his eleven years, he had never seen so many people, except once a year at the fair in his village. People walked by, bumping into him with their suitcases. A voice announced something on a loudspeaker. Near him a group of people sat on

---

**pulled in:** arrived **wobbly:** unsteady

their luggage, looking at a TV hanging from the roof. The noise was terrible.

Velu put his head down on his knees, feeling miserable and exhausted. He had run away from his village two days ago. For two days he had eaten nothing but some peanuts and a piece of jaggery. In his bundle he carried a shirt, a towel and a comb.

He had walked for most of the first day to Kanur and then got on the train to Chennai. Velu had no money for a ticket but luckily the ticket collector didn't come to the unreserved compartment. He had tried to sleep on the floor near the door. A group of men next to him had played cards and shouted all night.

"*Aiy!* What, new to town eh?" called out a rough voice.

Velu opened his eyes. There were a lot of people standing around, but nobody was looking at him.

"Here! *Aiy!*"

He turned around. Behind him was a girl around his own age, wearing a long *banian* that came down to her knees. Her hair was stiff and brownish and she had a huge sack on one shoulder. She was picking up dirty plastic cups from the floor and stuffing them



into her sack. Why is she calling me, thought Velu. And why is a girl wearing a *banian*?

“No need to stare stupidly. What’s your name?”

“Velu,” muttered Velu, looking away.

“So Mr Velu,” said the girl, looking at his bundle. “Run away from home?”

Velu didn’t answer. He didn’t want to tell some strange girl what he had done. He had run away because he couldn’t stand his father beating him for one more day. His father would snatch away all the money Velu and his sisters earned and spend it on drink.

“Don’t think I don’t know. This place is full of children like you. So what are you going to do here? Become rich?”

She sat down next to him. Velu shifted away slightly.

He felt hunger pinching him and pressed his stomach with a grimace. “Hungry?” asked the girl. “You won’t get food by sitting here glumly, making faces. I can find some if you want.”

She picked up her sack and started to walk away. Velu stayed on the bench. What should he do? Should he follow this girl? Where was she going to take him? She was disappearing into the crowd, so he had to make up his mind quickly. Alright, he decided. Anyway I have no idea where to go. He jumped up and ran after her. She wasn’t even looking back to see where he was.

### Comprehension Check

1. *Velu stood on the platform but he felt “as if he was still on a moving train”. Why?*
2. *What made him feel miserable?*
3. (i) *Velu travelled without a ticket. Why?*  
(ii) *How did he escape the ticket collector’s attention?*
4. *Why had Velu run away from home?*
5. *Why did he decide to follow the ‘strange’ girl?*

---

**grimace:** twisted expression (on the face) due to pain    **glumly:** sadly/gloomily



## II

- Velu follows his friend through the crowded streets to a big building.
- Behind the building, there is a big garbage bin.
- Velu wonders why they are there at all.

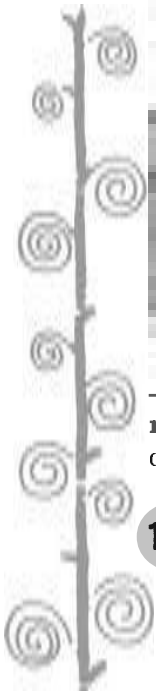
He caught up with the girl as she was leaving the station. When they got to the road, Velu found that the vehicles kept coming and never stopped for anyone. Smoke and dust flew at him from all sides, making his head spin. They had to wait for a long time before they could find a gap to run through. Velu kept hesitating and the girl finally dragged him to the other side.

“What do you think you’re doing? Grazing cows? If you stand around in the middle of the road like that, you’ll be *chutney*.”

Velu’s heart was still beating fast. He looked back at Central Station and the traffic speeding by. How had they managed to come through that? They walked along the side of the road under some



**making his head spin:** giving him a headache/making him feel dizzy **chutney:** (here) run over/killed; crushed and ground into *chutney*





huge signboards. Velu looked up at the pictures: *banians*, car tyres, pens, a woman holding a box. The writing was all in English, so he didn't know what it meant.

The girl turned onto a wide bridge and walked up. Velu stopped and peeped over the railing. Under him, the road ran into the city. In the distance he could see huge buildings and towers and more roads.

"See that big building with the wall around it? If you're not careful, you'll soon be counting bars there." The girl grinned and pointed at a huge building.

Velu squinted and read the Tamil sign, *Central Jail*.

"Why? I haven't done anything wrong."

"You don't have to do anything. Just don't get caught, that's all."

What does she mean, Velu wondered. Meanwhile the girl was already heading down the bridge with the sack on her shoulder. What was in it? He had seen her putting plastic cups into it at the station.

"What are you carrying in that bag?"

"Things. Bottles, paper."

Velu wondered what she was doing with them, but he felt shy to ask any more questions.

It was still morning but the sun blasted down on the tar and Velu's bare feet burned. It was not like walking on a mud road. He was soaked with sweat. He tried hard to walk in the shade and keep up with the girl at the same time. She walked really fast. How far away was the food?

After almost an hour of walking, they stopped in front of a big building. *Sri Rajarajeshwari Prasanna Kalyana Mandapam* read Velu slowly. A sign with letters made of flowers said, *Groom: J. V. Vinayagan, Bride: Rani*. Velu stared at the big cars parked outside. One of the cars had a flower garland and roses taped onto it. The girl looked around, pulled one off quickly and stuck it in her hair.

"Come on," she said.

"Are we going to eat here?" asked Velu, looking at the huge hall and the people inside.

“Hopes!” said the girl shaking her thumb under his nose. She led him behind the hall. There was a big garbage bin overflowing with rubbish. Two goats were standing on the pile, fighting for a banana leaf. A cloud of flies buzzed around their legs. There was a rotten smell in the air. The girl picked up a squashy banana and held it out to Velu.

“Here’s your food.”

Velu was shocked. “Are we going to eat their leftovers?”

“*Chey!* What do you think I am? A dog? I only take untouched food. Here, some more, catch!” She threw him a *vada*. Velu looked at it with distaste.

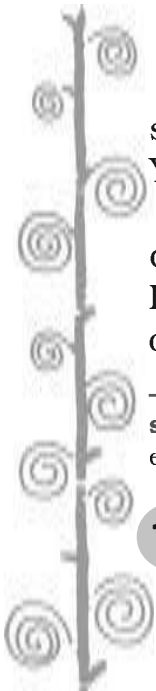


“Come on, hero, eat it! You think I like it? I told you I’ll find you something to eat. Don’t think I have money to buy food for you. You’d better eat what you get until you have your own money.”

Velu hesitated, but his stomach squeezed him again. He gulped down the banana and *vada*. His stomach felt better immediately. He could have eaten at least ten times more, but the girl could find only one more banana which she ate herself.

---

**squashy:** crushed **stomach squeezed him:** he was very hungry; his stomach, which was empty, twitched and pained **gulped down:** swallowed quickly (without chewing)



“It’s too early, they’ve only eaten tiffin. If you’re still hungry, you’ll have to wait for them to finish lunch. You can wait if you want. I have to work, I’m going.” She picked up a couple of bottles from the heap and threw it into her sack. Then she walked off.

Velu panicked. He realised that if the girl left him, he had no idea where he was and what to do. It was better to stick to her, she seemed to know her way around. He ran after her again.

“*Aiy!*” he called. He did not even know the girl’s name. “*Aiy*, what is your name?” he asked hurrying behind her.

She stopped and turned around. “Oho! So you’ve been following me around without even knowing my name. Jaya.”

“I’m not following you.”

“What then? Who got you food?”

“Can I come with you? Where are you going?”

“Come if you want. This bag is full, I have to go home to get another one.”

### Comprehension Check

1. Can Velu read Tamil and English? How do you know?
2. “If you are not careful, you will soon be counting bars there,” the girl said.
  - (i) What is she referring to?
  - (ii) What does she mean when she says “If you are not careful...”?  
(She says something a little later which means the same. Find that sentence.)
3.
  - (i) Where did the girl lead Velu to?
  - (ii) What did they get to eat?
4. What work did she do? Think of a one-word answer.

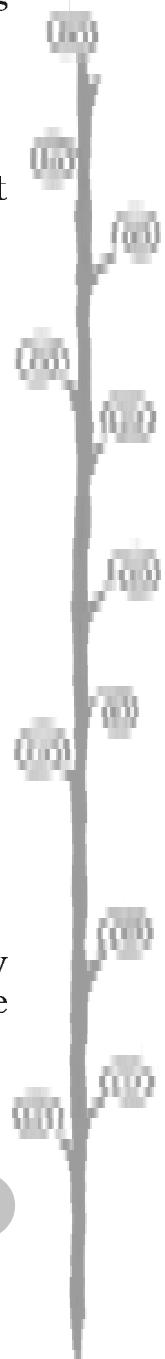
### III

- There is a row of huts near some dirty puddles.
- Outside one of the huts, Jaya dumps her sack.
- Grateful to his friend, Velu thinks of the days ahead.

Jaya and Velu walked along the roads for half an hour, until they came to a bridge across a dirty trickle of water. “We are in Triplicane now. See, that’s Buckingham Canal,” said Jaya.

---

**tiffin:** snack (not a proper meal) **panicked:** was very worried



Velu stared. This was a canal? Near some puddles of water was a row of the strangest huts he had ever seen. They were built out of all sorts of things — metal sheets, tyres, bricks, wood and plastic. They stood crookedly and looked as if they would fall any moment.

“Is this where you live? These houses are strange!” said Velu. “In our village, the houses are made of mud and palm leaves.”

Jaya went around to one of the huts and dumped her sack outside. Then she picked up an empty one.

“Let’s go.”

She turned to Velu and gave him a shove. “At least help me now. Here, wear these and come with me.”

She threw him a pair of old shoes without laces and pushed a sack and a stick into his hands. Velu was confused. What work did she want him to do with these things? The only work he had ever done was on the landowner’s farm, weeding and taking cows out to graze.

“Are there any farms in the city?” he asked Jaya.



**crookedly:** not straight    **shove:** push    **weeding:** working in a field removing grass/digging, etc

She laughed and thumped her stick on the ground. "Farms! There are no farmers here. We are ragpickers."

"Ragpickers?"

"See my sack? Full of things I collected."

"Collected? From where?" asked Velu.

"From rubbish bins, where else?"

"You collect rubbish?" Velu had never heard of such a thing

"Ayye, blockhead. It's not any rubbish. Only paper, plastic, glass, such things. We sell it to Jam Bazaar Jaggu."

Velu was puzzled. He had heard of people throwing away rubbish. But why would anyone want to buy rubbish?

"Who's Jam Bazaar Jaggu? Why's he buying all this?"

"You think he buys it for show? He sells it to a factory. Come on, I don't have time to waste, like you."

Velu did not move. He hadn't run away and come to this new place to dig through garbage bins. Jaya poked at him with her stick.

"Look here!" she shouted. "If someone gets there before us we don't get anything. Don't just stand there, posing. Big hero. I'm trying to help you. Who filled your stomach today?"

Velu scratched his head and sighed. I'll do it for now, he thought, until I find a better job.

GITA WOLF

ANUSHKA RAVISHANKAR

ORIJIT SEN

From *Trash — on Ragpicker Children  
and Recycling*

### Comprehension Check

- (i) What material are the 'strange' huts made out of?  
(ii) Why does Velu find them strange?
- What sort of things did Jaya and children like her collect and what did they do with those things?
- Is Velu happy or unhappy to find work? Give a reason for your answer.

---

**blockhead:** fool **posing:** looking important, hoping to impress others



## Exercise



**Discuss the following questions in small groups. Write their answers afterwards.**

1. Is Velu a smart boy? Which instances in the text show that he is or isn't?
2. Do you think Jaya is a brave and sensitive child with a sense of humour? Find instances of her courage, kind nature and humour in the text.
3. What one throws away as waste may be valuable to others. Do you find this sentence meaningful in the context of this story? How?

## Think it Over



- The best investment that a country can make is to put milk into its children.
- People don't notice goodness because it is transparent like water and air; only if it runs out does it become noticeable.
- It is never too late to have a happy childhood.

### Is it someone you know? @@@@

A busy official known for his love of animals was once passing through a village in a cart. Suddenly he asked the cartman to stop and tried to listen to what sounded like a wail from far away. The cartman asked, "Is it a man you know?" The official replied, "No, it's a dog I don't know."





# 3

## *The Selfish Giant*

### I

- The Giant's garden was beautiful, and children loved to play in it.
- The Giant, who was selfish, built a high wall round his lovely garden.
- Children did not enter the garden thereafter. Nor did Spring and Summer till the Giant experienced a change of heart.

EVERY afternoon, as they were coming from school, the children used to go and play in the Giant's garden.

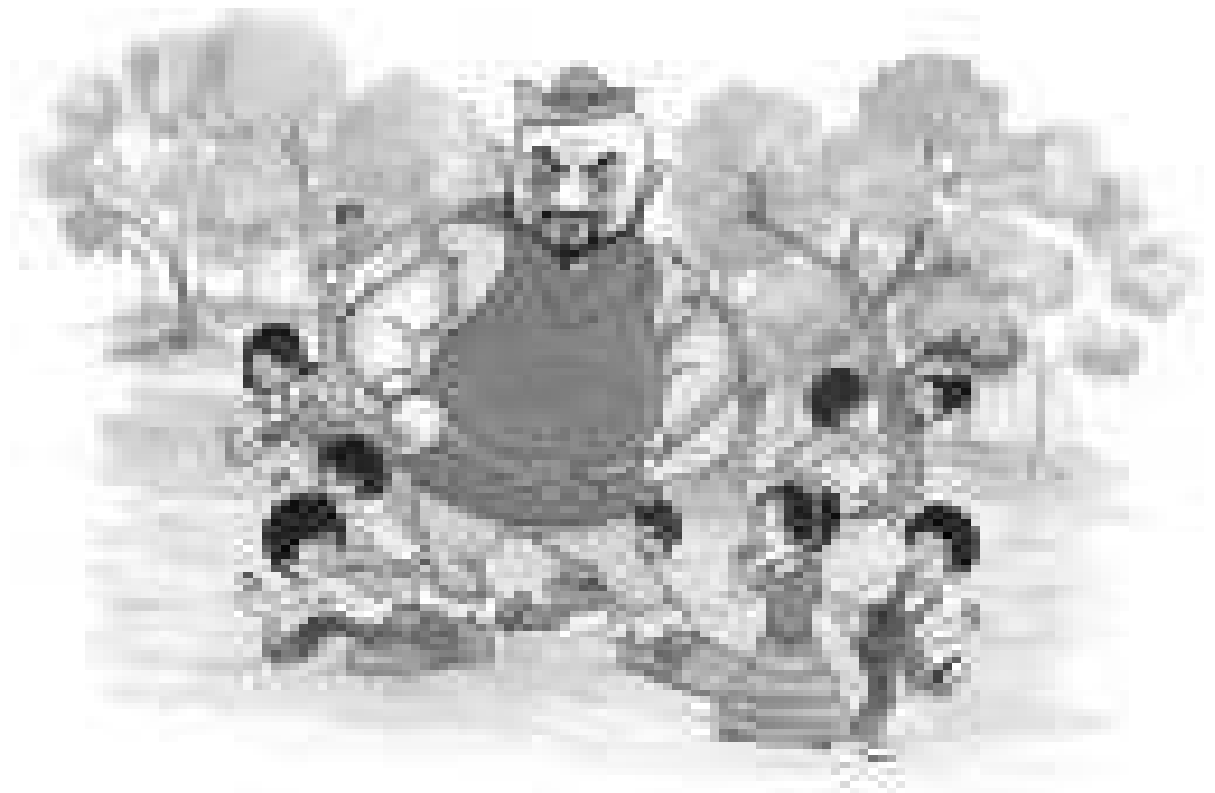
It was a large lovely garden, with soft green grass. Here and there over the grass stood beautiful flowers like stars, and there were twelve peach-trees that in the springtime broke out into delicate blossoms of pink and pearl, and in the autumn bore rich fruit. The birds sat on the trees and sang so sweetly that the children used to stop their games in order to listen to them. "How happy we are here!" they cried to each other.

One day the Giant came back. He had been to visit his friend, the Cornish ogre, and had stayed with him for seven years. When he arrived he saw the children playing in the garden.

"What are you doing here?" he cried in a very gruff voice, and the children ran away.

---

**Cornish ogre:** a giant of Cornwall (in the U.K.) **ogre:** (in legends and fairy stories) a cruel giant who eats people; (in common usage) a very frightening person **gruff:** rough; surly



“My own garden is my own garden,” said the Giant; “anyone can understand that, and I will allow nobody to play in it but myself.” So he built a high wall all round it, and put up a notice-board:

### **TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED**

He was a very selfish Giant.

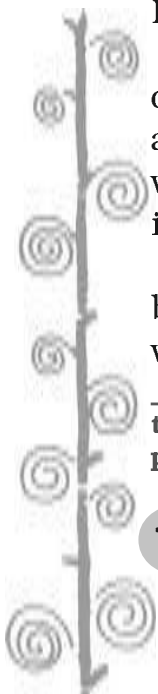
The poor children had now nowhere to play. They tried to play on the road, but the road was very dusty and full of hard stones, and they did not like it. They used to wander round the high walls when their lessons were over, and talk about the beautiful garden inside. “How happy we were there!” they said to each other.

Then the Spring came, and all over the country there were little blossoms and little birds. Only in the garden of the Selfish Giant it was still winter. The birds did not care to sing in it as there were no

---

**trespassers:** those who enter somebody's land/property without his/her permission

**prosecuted:** tried in a court of law (here, punished)







children, and the trees forgot to blossom. Once a beautiful flower put its head out from the grass, but when it saw the notice-board it was so sorry for the children that it slipped back into the ground again, and went off to sleep. The only people who were pleased were the Snow and the Frost. "Spring has forgotten this garden," they cried, "so we will live here all the year round." The Snow covered up the grass with her great white cloak, and the Frost painted all the trees silver. Then they invited the North Wind to stay with them, and he came. He was wrapped in furs, and he roared all day about the garden, and blew the chimney-pots down. "This is a delightful spot," he said, "we must ask Hail on a visit." So the Hail came. Every day for three hours he rattled on the roof of the castle till he broke most of the slates, and then he ran round and round the garden as fast as he could go. He was dressed in grey, and his breath was like ice.

"I cannot understand why the Spring is so late in coming," said the Selfish Giant, as he sat at the window and looked out at his cold, white garden; "I hope there will be a change in the weather."

But the Spring never came, nor the Summer. The Autumn gave golden fruit to every garden, but to the Giant's garden she gave none. "He is too selfish," she said. So it was always Winter there, and the North Wind and the Hail, and the Frost, and the Snow danced about through the trees.

One morning the Giant was lying awake in bed when he heard some lovely music. It sounded so sweet to his ears that he thought it must be the King's musicians passing by. It was really only a little linnnet singing outside his window, but it was so long since he had heard a bird singing in his garden that it seemed to him to be the most beautiful music in the world. Then the Hail stopped dancing over his head, and the North Wind ceased roaring, and a delicious perfume came to him through the open casement. "I believe the Spring has come at last," said the Giant; and he jumped out of bed and looked out.

---

**Snow, Frost, North Wind, Hail:** All these have been presented as characters or persons. North Wind is the chilly wind, and Hail is the hailstorm **linnet:** a brownish songbird found in Europe **casement:** window that opens on hinges like a door



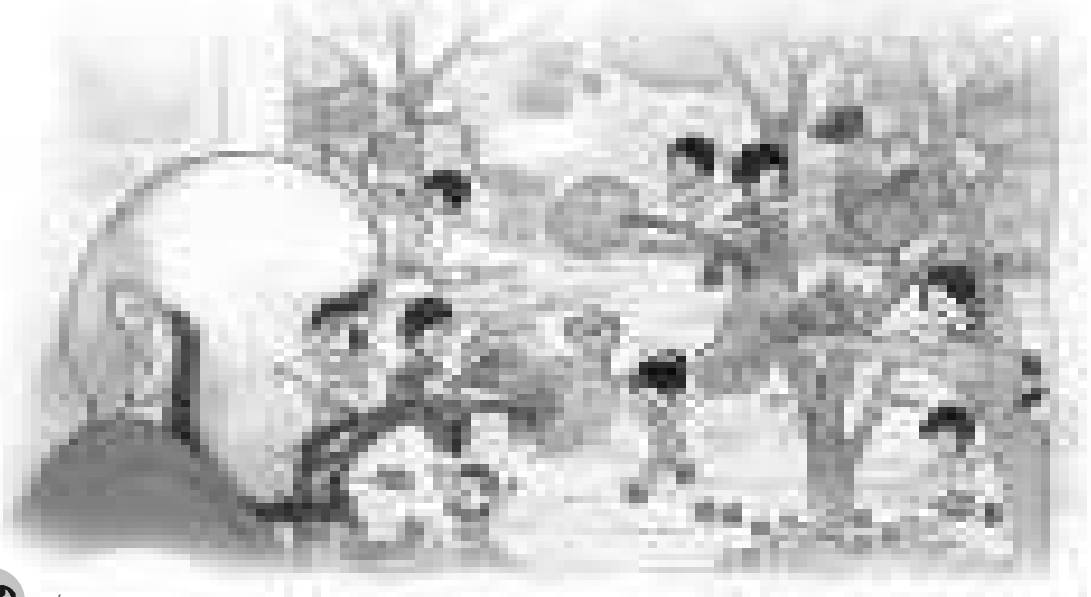
## Comprehension Check

1. Why is the Giant called selfish?
2. On one occasion the children said: "How happy we are here!"  
Later they said: "How happy we were there!"  
What are they referring to in both the cases?
3. (i) When spring came, it was still winter in the garden. What does winter stand for or indicate here?  
(ii) Winter has been presented like a story with its own characters and their activities. Describe the story in your own words.
4. Was the Giant happy or sad over the state of the garden?
5. What effect did the linnet's song have over Hail and the North Wind?

## II

- To celebrate the return of the children, trees covered themselves with birds and blossoms.
- The Giant was delighted to see his friends back, especially a little boy whom he loved dearly.
- The little boy soon disappeared only to return much later.

He saw a most wonderful sight. Through a little hole in the wall the children had crept in, and they were sitting in the branches of the trees. In every tree that he could see there was a little child. And the trees were so glad to have the children back again that they had covered themselves with blossoms, and were waving their arms gently



above the children's heads. The birds were flying about and twittering with delight, and the flowers were looking up through the green grass and laughing. It was a lovely scene. Only in one corner it was still winter. It was the farthest corner of the garden, and in it was standing a little boy. He was so small that he could not reach up to the branches of the tree, and he was wandering all round it, crying bitterly. The poor tree was still covered with frost and snow, and the North Wind was blowing and roaring above it. "Climb up, little boy!" said the Tree, and it bent its branches down as low as it could; but the boy was too tiny.

And the Giant's heart melted as he looked out. "How selfish I have been!" he said; "now I know why the Spring would not come here. I will put that poor little boy on the top of the tree, and then I will knock down the wall, and my garden shall be the children's playground for ever and ever." He was really very sorry for what he had done.

So he crept downstairs and opened the front door quite softly, and went out into the garden. But when the children saw him they were so frightened that they all ran away, and the garden became winter again. Only the little boy did not run, for his eyes were so full of tears that he did not see the Giant coming. And the Giant stole up behind him and took him gently in his hands, and put him up into the tree. And the tree broke at once into blossom, and the birds came and sang on it, and the little boy stretched out his two arms and flung them round the Giant's neck, and kissed him. And the other children, when they saw that the Giant was not wicked any longer, came running



---

**stole up:** came quietly without being noticed



back, and with them came the Spring. "It is your garden now, little children," said the Giant, and he took a great axe and knocked down the wall. And when the people were going to market at twelve o'clock they found the Giant playing with the children in the most beautiful garden they had ever seen.

All day long they played, and in the evening they came to the Giant to bid him good-bye.

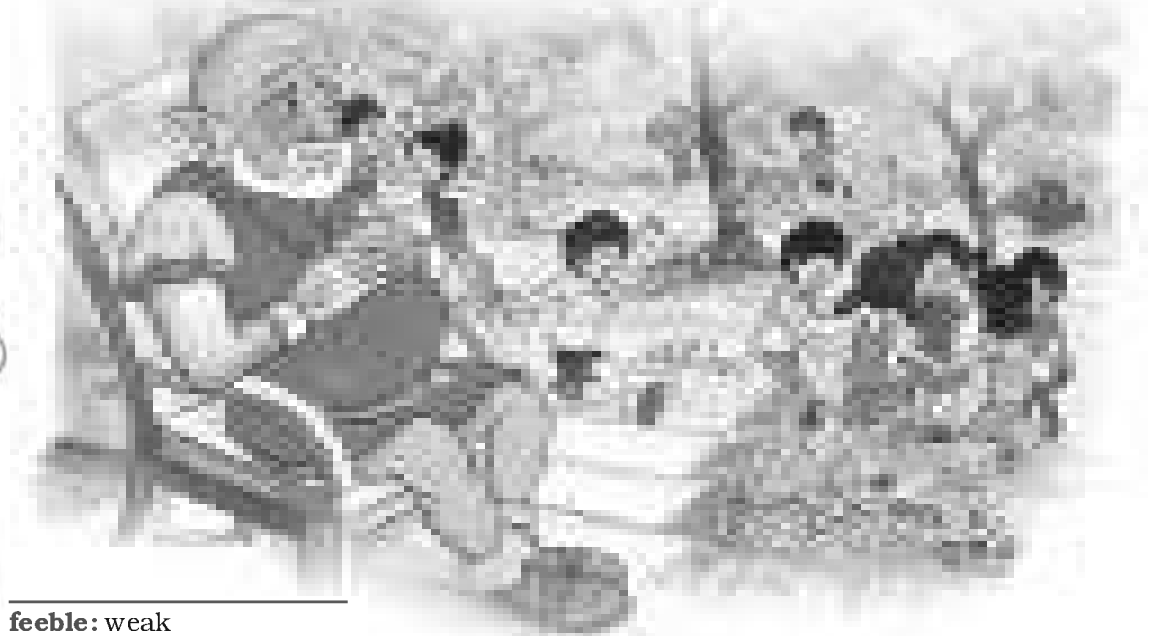
"But where is your little companion?" he said; "the boy I put into the tree?" The Giant loved him the best because he had kissed him.

"We don't know," answered the children. "He has gone away."

"You must tell him to be sure and come tomorrow," said the Giant. But the children said that they did not know where he lived, and had never seen him before; and the Giant felt very sad.

Every afternoon, when school was over, the children came and played with the Giant. But the little boy whom the Giant loved was never seen again. The Giant was very kind to all the children, yet he longed for his little friend, and often spoke of him. "How I would like to see him!" he used to say.

Years went by, and the Giant grew very old and feeble. He could not play about anymore, so he sat in a huge armchair, and watched the children at their games and admired his garden. "I have many



**feeble:** weak

**22**

*It so happened...*



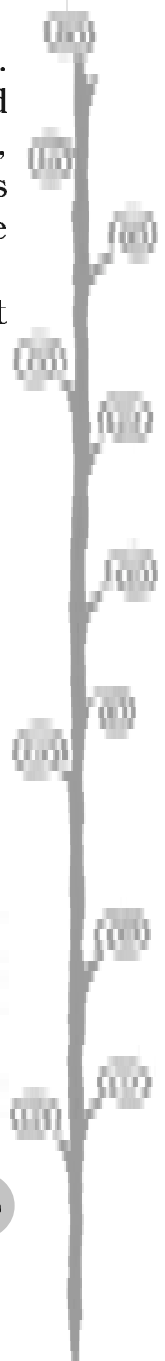
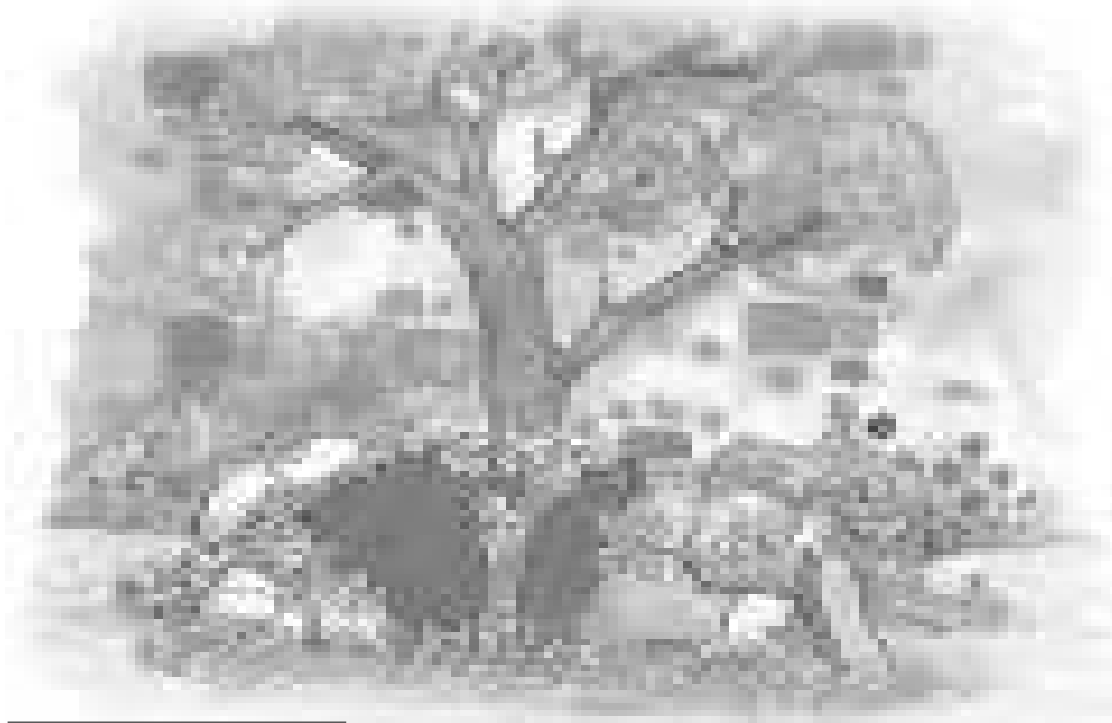
beautiful flowers,” he said; “but the children are the most beautiful flowers of all.”

One winter morning he looked out of his window as he was dressing. He did not hate the winter now, for he knew that it was merely the Spring asleep, and that the flowers were resting.

Suddenly he rubbed his eyes in wonder and looked and looked. It certainly was a marvellous sight. In the farthest corner of the garden was a tree quite covered with lovely white blossoms. Its branches were golden, and silver fruit hung down from them, and underneath it stood the little boy he had loved.

Downstairs ran the Giant in great joy, and out into the garden. He hastened across the grass, and came near to the child. And when he came quite close his face grew red with anger, and he said, “Who hath dared to wound thee?” For on the palms of the child’s hands were the prints of two nails, and the prints of two nails were on the little feet.

“Who hath dared to wound thee?” cried the Giant; “tell me, that I may take my big sword and slay him.”



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**slay:** kill   **nay:** no



“Nay!” answered the child: “but these are the wounds of Love.”

“Who art thou?” said the Giant, and a strange awe fell on him, and he knelt before the little child.

And the child smiled on the Giant, and said to him, “You let me play once in your garden; today you shall come with me to my garden, which is paradise.”

And when the children ran in that afternoon, they found the Giant lying dead under the tree, all covered with white blossoms.

OSCAR WILDE

### Comprehension Check

- (i) The Giant saw a most wonderful sight. What did he see?  
(ii) What did he realise on seeing it?
- Why was it still winter in one corner of the garden?
- Describe the first meeting of the little boy and the Giant.
- Describe their second meeting after a long interval.
- The Giant lay dead, all covered with white blossoms. What does this sentence indicate about the once selfish Giant?

### Exercise



Discuss the following topics in groups.

- The little child's hands and feet had marks of nails. Who does the child remind you of? Give a reason for your answer.
- Is there something like this garden near where you live? Would you like one (without the Giant perhaps) and why? What would you do to keep it in good shape?

### Think it Over



- Selfless love involves suffering for others.
- Owning things is human; sharing them is divine.

**Who art thou?:** Who are you?





# 4

## *The treasure within*

### **Before you read**

- *Every child is a potential achiever and is different from other children in her/his style of learning and area of interest.*
- *Read the interview that follows. It is based on a conversation between Ms Bela Raja, editor of Sparsh, a newsletter from the Resource Centre, The Valley School, Bangalore, and Mr Hafeez Contractor, one of India's leading architects.*

### **I**

- Hafeez Contractor was an unhappy school boy.
- He loved doing things but detested mechanical learning. Mathematics gave him the shivers.
- What his Principal once said to him influenced him deeply.

HC: "I used to have this terrible nightmare. Only now, over the last four to five years, it seems to have disappeared.

BR: What nightmare are you talking about and why do you think it has disappeared now?

HC: I used to get continuous nightmares about appearing for a maths examination where I did not know anything! Now the psyche must have gotten over it, I don't have to think about education and there is absolutely no time to get nightmares.

---

**nightmare:** haunting fear/frightening dream **psyche:** mind or mentality

BR: Tell us something about your earliest memories in school.

HC: In the first and second year I was a good student. After I reached the third standard, I simply lost interest and I never studied.

I used to be interested in games, running around, playing jokes and pranks on others. I would copy in class during exam times. I would try to get hold of the examination paper that had been prepared and study it, as I could not remember things that had been taught to me in class.

However, later, one sentence spoken to me by my Principal changed my life.

When I approached my eleventh standard, the Principal called me and said, "Look here, Son, I have been seeing you from day one. You are a good student, but you never studied. I have taken care of you till today. Now, I can no longer take care of you so you do it yourself."

He talked to me for five minutes, "You don't have your father, your mother has worked so hard to bring you up and paid all your fees all these years but you have only played games. Now you should rise to the occasion and study."

I used to be a very good sportsman. I had been the senior champion for so many years and I also was the cricket captain. I used to play every game, but that year I did not step out onto the field.

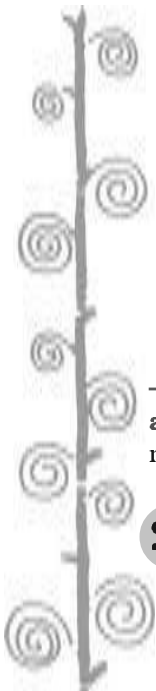
I would go for prayers and all I would do was eat and study. I normally used to copy and pass, but I realised that once I was in SSC, I could not do that.

When I got a second class, 50 per cent, in my SSC my Principal said, "Son, consider yourself as having got a distinction!" This is my memory of my school days.

I did lots of other things. See, as far as my things are concerned, I can't remember. I forget things very easily. To remember, I have to see things as a photograph. I read a

---

**as far as my things are concerned:** perhaps he is referring to matters other than course materials and their details





book and I can remember the matter as a photograph but not through my mind. That is how it works.



BR: When you were in school and you were doing badly, did the teachers pull you up and how did you feel?

HC: I never felt anything on being pulled up. I used to be so interested in playing. I would receive a caning every week.

BR: When you knew that you had incurred the wrath of your teacher by not doing your homework or by behaving badly, when you knew you would get a caning, what was the state of your mind?

HC: State of mind? Just lift up the hand and they would cane you. It would hurt badly and then I would have to forget about it, because I would want to go and play.

BR: You never felt insecure or threatened?

HC: I was just interested in playing and nothing else. I was most interested in funny pranks. One day, I did not want to study, so I created a distraction. For one whole hour we played 'chor police'.

Every Saturday we were allowed to go into town to see a movie. So what I would do was have no lunch and collect money from 40 – 50 students, and run and buy the tickets. On my way back, I would eat to my heart's content.

I used to be the leader of a gang. We would have gang fights and plan strategies. These things used to interest me more than any academics.

---

**caning:** punishment/beating **incurred the wrath of your teacher:** made your teacher furious **distraction:** something amusing and pleasurable **chor police:** children's game in which one child (thief) hides and others (policemen) try to find him/her **eat to my heart's content:** eat as much as I wanted; eat my fill **strategies:** methods of winning fights **academics:** academic or educational matters (books, discussions, debates, etc.)

Students used to book my textbooks for the following year, because they were almost brand new. I probably opened them one day before exams.

### Comprehension Check

1. What did Hafeez Contractor have nightmares about?
2. What did the Principal say to him, which influenced him deeply?
3. "... that year I did not step out onto the field." What was he busy doing that year?
4. (i) What "distraction" did Hafeez Contractor create one day?  
(ii) Would you have liked to participate in the "distraction" had you been with him?

## II

- He stumbled on architecture because he knew little French and less German.
- He was offbeat even in the pranks that he played on others.
- When he found his calling, there was no looking back.

BR: How did you get into the field of architecture?

HC: In the college for architecture, nobody who had got below 80 – 85 per cent was allowed to enter. I had only 50 per cent.

I wanted to join the Army. I got my admission letter but my aunt tore it up. Then I decided that I wanted to join the police force.

My mother said, "Don't join the police force, just do your graduation!" So I went to Jaihind College in Bombay.

There, I was to either take French or German. Though I had studied French for seven years, I did not know seven words of French. So I took German. Then my German teacher died. The college told me that I could change the college or

**book:** offer to buy in advance; reserve    **stumbled on:** got into (architecture) by chance  
**offbeat:** unusual or unconventional    **calling:** work or vocation of his choice



take French. Now, who would give me admission in another college? I had got admission to Jaihind by influence.

So I thought, 'Okay, I will take French' and I started learning French again. I learnt it from my cousin. She was an architect's wife.

I was going to an architect's office to learn French!

BR: Was it then that you decided you wanted to do architecture?

HC: Actually, it all happened quite by chance.

In the architect's office, I saw somebody drawing a window detail. A window detail is a very advanced drawing.

I told him that his drawing was wrong — that the window he had drawn would not open.

He then had a bet with me and later he found that indeed, his drawing was wrong! My cousin's husband was surprised. He asked me to draw a few specific things, which I immediately did.

He asked me to design a house and I designed a house. After that, he told me to drop everything and join architecture.

We went to meet the Principal of the college.

The Principal warned me, "I will allow you to take part in the entrance exams, but if you do not do well I will not allow you to join."

I got an 'A+' in the entrance exam and from that day it was a cakewalk.

I had never made a plan, but I knew how something looked like, from the top.

I had never known what a section was, but I knew if you cut a plan what it would look like.

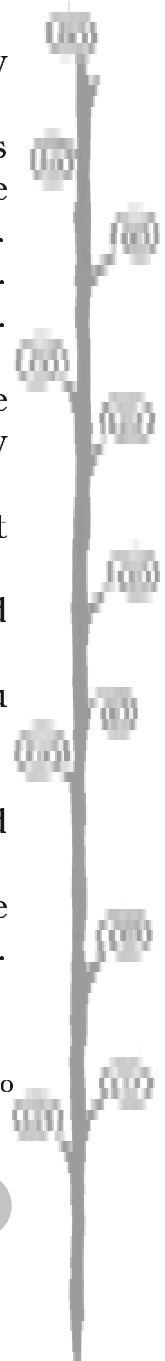
I stood first class first throughout, after that.

I believe that all this understanding came from what I used to play and do during school.

I had a friend called Behram Divecha. We used to have competitions between us for designing forts, guns and ammunition. Each of us would design something in an effort to be different.

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**influence:** an important person recommended him for admission/used his influence to get him admitted **cakewalk:** smooth ride/something easy to achieve



In school, when I was in the second or third standard, one of my teachers, Mrs Gupta, saw my sketches and told me, "See, you are useless in everything else but your sketches are good. When you grow up you become an architect". I did not know at the time but she was right. Later, after I became an architect, I went back to meet her and tell her.

BR: Why do you think you did not like studies? Was it because you felt you could not cope, could not deal with the curriculum?

HC: I was very bad at languages. Science and geography I could deal with, maths was very bad. I just was not interested. I was studying for the sake of studying. What they taught me today, I would forget after two days. I would not bother because there was no application of mind there, to begin with.

BR: Did you think that what they taught in school was boring or did you feel that once you understood the concept of what was being taught, you lost interest in the rest of the lesson?

HC: Living in a boarding school is difficult. We were just living from day to day.

Nowadays, there are so many tests. Back then, whenever we had tests we used to just copy. The teacher thought that we had done our work.

BR: There is a contention that giftedness and learning disabilities go hand in hand. Do you think this applies to you?

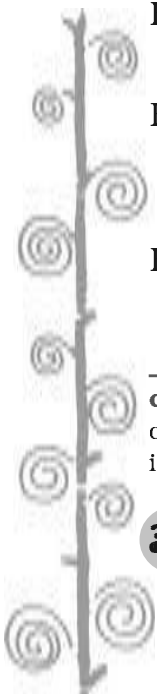
HC: Well, take some students from my class. Those who always stood first or second are today doing very ordinary jobs.

BR: I have come across this situation in so many different places where people tell me that their class toppers are doing very ordinarily today.

HC: In school, I think living our lives there made us street smart. I have learnt more by doing what I did on my own than

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**cope:** manage/handle/deal with **curriculum:** (here) school subjects or prescribed courses of study **giftedness:** having special abilities **street smart:** smart by doing things independently/ by choice rather than force



what academics would have taught me.

BR: That is because the personality and skills were there. You were able to find expression in a manner you were comfortable with and you defied every rule so that nobody would stop you from doing what you needed to do.

HC: I was more interested in other things. If, for example, while in class, it started raining outside, I would think of the flowing water and how to build a dam to block it. I would be thinking about the flow of water within the dam and how much of water the dam would be able to hold. That was my interest for the day.

When students lost a button while playing or fighting, they would come running to me and I would cut a button for them from chalk, using a blade. Discipline in the school was very important and no student could afford to have a button missing. The student would get past dinner with a full neat uniform and after that it did not matter.

BR: Coming to the present, how do you decide as to what kind of structure you want to give a client?

HC: I look at the client's face, his clothes, the way he talks and pronounces, the way he eats and I would know what his taste would be like. I can relate to people in a way that would be comfortable. I sketch very spontaneously on a paper on the spot. That paper, I give to my people in the office.

BR: You do it instinctively?

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**defied:** broke **instinctively:** naturally (not coming from training or based on reasoning)



*Complex designed by  
Hafeez Contractor*

HC: Call it instinct, call it arithmetic, whatever. Now it comes to me like mathematics. Putting design, construction, psychology and sociology together and making a sketch from all that is 'mathematics'.

Here we almost come to a full circle where Mr Contractor has derived his own interpretation of Mathematics — taking it from a subject he hated to a subject he now loves dealing with!

### Comprehension Check

1. *Hafeez Contractor wanted to join the police force. Why didn't he?*
2. *In the architect's office, Hafeez Contractor was advised to drop everything and join architecture. Why?*
3. (i) *What was Mrs Gupta's advice to Hafeez Contractor?*  
(ii) *What made her advise him so?*
4. *How did he help fellow students who had lost a button?*
5. *Which rules did he break as a school boy?*
6. (i) *What is Hafeez Contractor's definition of mathematics?*  
(ii) *How would you want to define mathematics? Do you like the subject?*

### Exercise



**Answer the following questions.**

1. Is it likely that someone who is original and intelligent does not do very well at school? Should such a learner be called a failure? If not, why not?
2. Who, in your view, is an 'unusual' learner?
3. What can schools do to draw out the best in unusual learners? Suggest whatever seems reasonable to you.

### Think it Over



- The only disability in life is a bad attitude.
- Cooperation is doing with a smile what one anyhow has to do.



## Advanced Personalised Learning

A panel of experts from around the world has identified 14 grand challenges for engineering that, if met, may significantly improve the quality of life on earth. The US National Academy of Engineering (NAE) has revealed that the panel's choices fall into four themes—sustainability, health, reducing vulnerability and joy of living.

One of the fourteen challenges is Advanced Personalised Learning, whereby instruction can be individualised based on learning styles, speeds and interests to make learning more reliable.

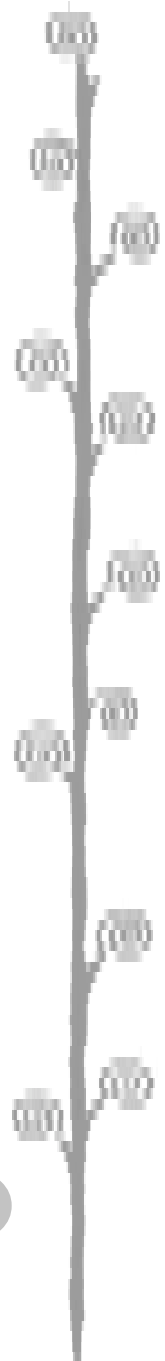
— from a recent newspaper report



### Hafeez Contractor — a profile

Hafeez Contractor was born in 1950. He did his Graduate Diploma in architecture from Mumbai in 1975 and completed his graduation from Columbia University, New York (USA) on a Tata Scholarship. Hafeez Contractor commenced his career with T. Khareghat as an apprentice architect and in 1977 he became the associate partner in the same firm. Between 1977 and 1980 Hafeez was a visiting faculty at the Academy of Architecture, Mumbai. He is a member of the Bombay Heritage Committee and New Delhi Lutyens Bungalow Zone Review Committee.

His practice had modest beginnings in 1982 with a staff of two. Today the firm has over 350 employees including senior associates, architects, interior designers, draftsmen, a civil engineering team and architectural support staff. The firm has conceptualised, designed and executed a wide range of architectural projects like bungalows, residential developments, hospitals, hotels, corporate offices, banking and financial institutions, commercial complexes, shopping malls, educational institutions, recreational and sports facilities, townships, airports, railway stations, urban planning and civic redevelopment projects.





# 5

## Princess September

### I

- *Princess September, like each one of her numerous sisters, receives the gift of a parrot in a golden cage on her father's birthday.*
- *The parrot dies, and by chance a singing bird comes in its place.*
- *The princess shows off her pet to the sisters who advise her to put it in a cage.*

THE King and Queen of Siam had many daughters, and the Queen said that it confused her to have to remember so many names. One day the King decided to call them January, February, March (though of course in Siamese) till he came to the youngest whom he called September.

The King of Siam had a peculiar habit. Instead of receiving gifts on his birthday he gave them. One year on his birthday, not having anything else handy, he gave each of his daughters a green parrot in a golden cage. The princesses were very proud of their parrots and they spent an hour every day in teaching them to talk. Presently all the parrots could say 'God save the king' and some of them could say 'Pretty Polly' in no less than seven Oriental languages.

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**Siam:** now Thailand **handy:** immediately available **Oriental:** of the east (the Orient means countries of the Far East. Its opposite is the Occident.);





But one day when Princess September went to say good morning to her parrot she found it lying dead at the bottom of its golden cage. She burst into a flood of tears, and nothing that her Maids of Honour could say comforted her. She cried so much that the Maids of Honour, not knowing what to do, told the Queen, and the Queen said it was stuff and nonsense and the child had better go to bed without any supper. The Maids of Honour wanted to go to a party, so they put Princess September to bed as quickly as they could and left her by herself. And while she lay in her bed, crying still even though she felt rather hungry, she saw a little bird hop into her room. She wiped her tears and sat up. Then the little bird began to sing and he sang a beautiful song all about the lake in the King's garden and the willow trees that looked at themselves in the still water and the goldfish that glided in and out of the branches that were reflected in it. When he had finished, the Princess was not crying any more and she quite forgot that she had had no supper. "That was a very nice song," she said.

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**Maids of Honour:** women attending the Princess

The little bird gave her a bow. "Would you care to have me in place of your parrot?" said the little bird. "It's true that I'm not so pretty to look at, but on the other hand I have a much better voice." Princess September clapped her hands with delight and then the little bird hopped on to the end of her bed and sang her to sleep.

When she awoke next day the little bird was still there, and as she opened her eyes he said, "Good morning!" The Maids of Honour brought in her breakfast, and he ate rice out of her hand and he had his bath in her saucer. He began to sing again so beautifully that the Maids of Honour were quite surprised, for they had never heard anything like it, and Princess September was very proud and happy.

"Now I want to show you to my eight sisters," said the Princess.

She stretched out the first finger of her right hand so that it served as a perch and the little bird flew down and sat on it. Then, followed by her Maids of Honour, she went through the palace and called on each of the Princesses. And for each of them the little bird sang a different song. But the parrots could only say 'God save the king' and 'Pretty Polly'. At last she showed the little bird to the King and the Queen. They were surprised and delighted.

"I knew I was right to send you to bed without any supper," said the Queen.

"This bird sings much better than the parrots," said the King.

"I should have thought you got quite tired of hearing people say 'God save the king'," said the Queen. "I can't think why those girls wanted to teach their parrots to say it too."

"The sentiment is admirable," said the King, "and I never mind how often I hear it. But I do get tired of hearing those parrots say 'Pretty Polly'."

"They say it in seven different languages," said the Princesses.

"I dare say they do," said the King, "but it reminds me too much of my Councillors. They say the same thing in seven different ways and it never means anything in any way they say it."

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**perch:** place where a bird sits or rests **I dare say:** I agree/accept (that it is true)





The Princesses were vexed at this, and the parrots looked very glum indeed. But Princess September ran through all the rooms of the palace, singing like a lark, while the little bird flew round and round her singing like a nightingale.

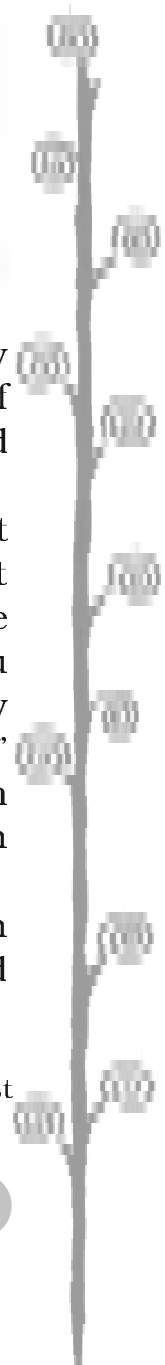
Things went on like this for several days and then the eight Princesses put their heads together. They went to September and sat down in a circle round her. "My poor September," they said, "we are sorry for the death of your beautiful parrot. It must be dreadful for you not to have a pet bird as we have. So we have all put our pocket-money together and we are going to buy you a lovely green and yellow parrot."

"Thank you for nothing," said September. "I have a pet bird which sings the most charming songs to me and I don't know what on earth I should do with a green and yellow parrot."

"Well, my dear," they said, "it's absurd to talk of your bird when the little fellow flies in and out just as he likes." They looked round the room and raised their eyebrows.

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**vexed:** distressed; worried **glum:** sad **put their heads together:** discussed amongst themselves to take a decision



“Do you mind our asking where your bird is now?” they said.

“He has gone to pay a visit to his father-in-law,” said Princess September.

“And what makes you think he’ll come back?” asked the Princesses.

“He always does come back,” said September.

“Well, my dear,” said the eight Princesses, “if you’ll take our advice you won’t run any risks like that. If he comes back, and mind you, if he does you’ll be lucky, pop him into the cage and keep him there. That’s the only way you can be sure of him.”

“But I like to have him fly about the room,” said the young Princess September.

“Safety first,” said her sisters ominously.

They got up and walked out of the room, shaking their heads, and they left September very uneasy.

### Comprehension Check

1. How many daughters did the royal couple have?
2. Why were they named after the months of the year?
3. The King had a peculiar habit. What was it? Why is it called peculiar?
4. (i) What was Princess September’s reaction to the loss of her parrot?  
(ii) What was her mother’s reaction to it?  
(iii) What do the reactions indicate about the nature and temperament of each?
5. What pulled the Princess out of her gloom?
6. How did the Maids of Honour come to know that the Princess and the bird had become intimate friends?
7. The new bird was full of new songs but the old parrots always repeated themselves. What did they say?
8. What is the King’s opinion about his Councillors? Why did he form that opinion?
9. (i) The eight Princesses made an offer to Princess September. What was it?  
(ii) Why, in your view, did they do it?
10. What did the sisters advise the Princess to do about her bird?

**pop:** put; push **ominously:** threateningly – suggesting that something bad was about to happen



## II

- *Princess September loves the bird far too much to take chances, and acts upon her sisters' advice.*
- *The bird cannot overcome the loss of freedom.*
- *Princess September decides to put the bird's happiness above her own.*

It seemed to Princess September that her little bird had been away a long time. Something might have happened to him. What with hawks and with snares you never knew what trouble he might get into. Besides, he might forget her, or he might take a fancy to somebody else. That would be dreadful. She wished he were safely back again.

Suddenly September heard a 'tweet-tweet' just behind her ear and she saw the little bird sitting on her shoulder. He had come in so quietly and alighted so softly that she had not heard him.

"I wondered what on earth had become of you," said the Princess.

"I thought you'd wonder that," said the little bird. "The fact is I very nearly didn't come back tonight at all. My father-in-law was giving a party and they all wanted me to stay, but I thought you'd be anxious."

Under the circumstances this was a very unfortunate remark for the little bird to make.

September felt her heart go thump against her chest, and she made up her mind to take no more risks. She put up her hand and took



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**snares:** traps for catching birds or animals    **alighted:** came down



hold of the bird. The bird suspected nothing and he was so surprised when she carried him over to the cage, popped him in, and shut the door on him that for a moment he could think of nothing to say. But in a moment or two he hopped up to the ivory perch and said, "What is the joke?"

"There's no joke," said September, "but some of mamma's cats are prowling about tonight, and I think you're much safer in there."

"Well, just for this once I don't mind," said the little bird, "so long as you let me out in the morning."

He ate a very good supper and then began to sing. But in the middle of his song he stopped.

"I don't know what is the matter with me," he said, "but I don't feel like singing tonight."

"Very well," said September, "go to sleep instead."

So he put his head under his wing and in a minute was fast asleep. September went to sleep too. But when the dawn broke she was awakened by the little bird calling her at the top of his voice.

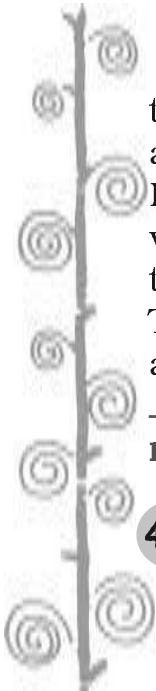
"Wake up, wake up," he said. "Open the door of this cage and let me out. I want to have a good fly while the dew is still on the ground."

"You are much better off where you are," said September.

"Let me out, let me out," said the little bird. And he tried to slip through the bars of the cage, but of course couldn't, and he beat against the door, but of course he couldn't open it. Then the eight Princesses came in and looked at him. They told September she was very wise to take their advice. They said he would soon get used to the cage and in a few days would quite forget he had ever been free. The little bird said nothing at all while they were there, but as soon as they were gone he began to cry again: "Let me out, let me out."

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**prowling:** moving about quietly



“Don’t be such an old silly,” said September. “I’ve put you in the cage because I’m so fond of you. I know what’s good for you much better than you do yourself. Sing me a little song and I’ll give you a piece of sugar.”

But the little bird stood in the corner of his cage looking out at the blue sky, and never sang a note.

“What’s the good of sulking?” said September. “Why don’t you sing and forget your troubles?”

“How can I sing?” answered the bird. “I want to see the trees and the lake and the green rice growing in the fields.”

“I’ll take you out every day,” she said.

“It’s not the same thing,” said the little bird. “The rice-fields and the lake and the willow trees look quite different when you see them through the bars of a cage.”

The bird wouldn’t sing a song and he wouldn’t eat a thing. The Princess was a little anxious at this, and asked her sisters what they thought about it.

“You must be firm,” they said.

“But if he won’t eat, he’ll die,” she answered.

“That would be very ungrateful of him,” they said. “He must know that you’re only thinking of his own good. If he’s obstinate and dies it’ll serve him right and you’ll be well rid of him.”

September didn’t see how that was going to do *her* very much good, but they were eight to one and all older than she, so she said nothing.

“Perhaps he’ll have got used to his cage by tomorrow,” she said.

And next day when she awoke she cried out good morning in a cheerful voice. She got no answer. She jumped out of bed and ran to the cage. She gave a startled cry, for there the little bird lay,



at the bottom, on his side, with his eyes closed, and he looked as if he were dead. She opened the door and putting her hand in lifted him out. She gave a sob of relief, for she felt that his little heart was beating still.

“Wake up, wake up, little bird,” she said.

She began to cry and her tears fell on the little bird. He opened his eyes and saw that the bars of the cage were no longer around him.

“I cannot sing unless I’m free, and if I cannot sing I die,” he said.

The Princess gave a great sob.

“Then take your freedom,” she said. “I shut you in a golden cage because I loved you and wanted to have you all to myself. But I never knew it would kill you. I love you enough to let you be happy in your own way.”

She threw open the window and gently placed the little bird on the sill. He shook himself a little.

“Come and go as you will, little bird,” she said. “I will never put you in a cage any more.”

“I will come because I love you, little Princess,” said the bird. “And I will sing you the loveliest songs I know. I shall go far away, but I





shall always come back and I shall never forget you.” He gave himself another shake. “Good gracious me, how stiff I am,” he exclaimed.

Then he opened his wings and flew right away into the blue. But the little Princess burst into tears, for it is very difficult to put the happiness of someone you love before your own, and with her little bird far out of sight she felt, all of a sudden, very lonely. When her sisters knew what had happened they mocked her and said that the little bird would never return. But he did, at last. And he sat on September’s shoulder and ate out of her hand and sang her the beautiful songs he had learned while he was flying up and down the fair places of the world. September kept her window open day and night so that the little bird might come into her room whenever he felt inclined, and this was very good for her; so she grew extremely beautiful.

And when she was old enough she married the King of Cambodia and was carried on a white elephant all the way to the city in which the King lived. But her sisters never slept with their windows open, so they grew extremely ugly as well as disagreeable, and when the time came to marry them off they were given away to the King’s Councillors with a pound of tea and a Siamese cat.

SOMERSET MAUGHAM  
[slightly abridged]

### Comprehension Check

1. In the following sentence elaborate the parts given in bold. **Under the circumstances** it was **a very unfortunate remark** for the bird to make.
2. (i) What did Princess September do to ensure the safety of her pet?  
(ii) How did the bird react to it?
3. Why did the bird refuse to be taken out in her cage?
4. (i) What persuaded Princess September to give the bird his freedom again?  
(ii) How did the bird react to it?
5. Princess September kept her window open day and night.  
(i) How did it help the bird?  
(ii) How did it help the Princess herself?
6. The eight sisters kept their windows shut. How did it affect them?

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**disagreeable:** unpleasant



## Exercise



**Discuss the following questions in small groups. Write their answers later.**

1. Are the sisters unkind and cruel? Find evidence in the text to support your idea.
2. Which, to you, is the most important idea in this story, and why?
  - (i) importance of music
  - (ii) value of freedom
  - (iii) beauty of nature

## Think it Over

- There are two ways to study butterflies: chase them with nets then inspect their dead bodies, or sit quietly in a garden and watch them dance among the flowers.
- Freedom practises its own logic. It puts a bouquet of rights in your right hand and a basket of duties in your left hand. This is merely to help you walk straight.
- To be free is to be disciplined. Who knew it better than a young enthusiast walking down the road swinging his arms wildly. When he accidentally hit an old gentleman on the tip of his nose, the man asked “What do you think you are doing?”

“I’m sorry”, said the enthusiast, “but it’s a free country. I am swinging my arms.”

“Remember,” advised the old man, “your freedom ends where my nose begins.”





# 6

## *The fight*

### I

- Ranji discovers a pool in the forest and plunges into it for a swim.
- There is serious trouble between him and someone else over who has a right to the pool. A fight ensues.
- The first round ends in a draw.

RANJI had been less than a month in Rajpur when he discovered the pool in the forest. It was the height of summer, and his school had not yet opened, and, having as yet made no friends in this semi-hill station, he wandered about a good deal by himself into the hills and forests that stretched away interminably on all sides of the town. It was hot, very hot, at that time of the year, and Ranji walked about in his vest and shorts, his brown feet white with the chalky dust that flew up from the ground. The earth was parched, the grass brown, the trees listless, hardly stirring, waiting for a cool wind or a refreshing shower of rain.

It was on such a day — a hot, tired day — that Ranji found the pool in the forest. The water had a gentle translucency, and you could see the smooth round pebbles at the bottom of the pool. A small stream emerged from a cluster of rocks to feed the pool. During the monsoon, this stream would be a gushing torrent, cascading down from the hills, but during the summer, it was barely a trickle.

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**interminably:** endlessly **parched:** hot and dry **translucency:** clarity (possible to see through) **torrent:** rushing stream (of water) **cascading:** coming down (like a waterfall) **trickle:** weak or thin flow of water.

The rocks, however, held the water in the pool, and it did not dry up like the pools in the plains.

When Ranji saw the pool, he did not hesitate to get into it. He had often gone swimming, alone or with friends, when he had lived with his parents in a thirsty town in the middle of the Rajputana desert. There, he had known only sticky, muddy pools, where buffaloes wallowed and women washed clothes. He had never seen a pool like this — so clean and cold and inviting. He leapt into the water. His limbs were supple, free of any fat, and his dark body glistened in patches of sunlit water.

The next day he came again to quench his body in the cool waters of the forest pool. He was there for almost an hour sliding in and out of the limpid green water, or lying stretched out on the smooth yellow rocks in the shade of broad-leaved sal trees. It was while he lay thus that he noticed another boy standing a little distance away, staring at him in a rather hostile manner. The other boy was a little older than Ranji — taller, thickset, with a broad nose and thick, red lips. He had only just noticed Ranji, and when Ranji did not say anything, the other called out, “What are you

doing here, Mister?”

Ranji, who was prepared to be friendly, was taken aback at the hostility of the other’s tone.

“I am swimming,” he replied. “Why don’t you join me?”

“I always swim alone,” said the other. “This is my pool; I did not invite you here.”

The stranger strode up to Ranji, who still sat on



**wallowed:** rolled about (in mud or dirty water) **quench:** cool (his body) **thickset:** stout/solidly built **taken aback:** surprised **hostility:** ill will/enmity



the rock and, planting his broad feet firmly on the sand, said (as though this would settle the matter once and for all), “Don’t you know I am a Warrior? I do not take replies from villagers like you!”

“So you like to fight with villagers?” said Ranji. “Well, I am not a villager. I am a Fighter!”

“I am a Warrior!”

“I am a Fighter!”

They had reached an impasse. One had said he was a Warrior, the other had proclaimed himself a Fighter. There was little else that could be said.

“You understand that I am a Warrior?” said the stranger, feeling that perhaps this information had not penetrated Ranji’s head.

“I have heard you say it three times,” replied Ranji.

“Then why are you not running away?”

“I am waiting for you to run away!”

“I will have to beat you,” said the stranger, assuming a violent attitude, showing Ranji the palm of his hand.

“I am waiting to see you do it,” said Ranji.

“You will see me do it,” said the other boy.

Ranji waited. The other boy made a strange, hissing sound. They stared each other in the eye for almost a minute. Then the Warrior slapped Ranji across the face with all the force he could muster. Ranji staggered, feeling quite dizzy. There were thick red finger marks on his cheek.

“There you are!” exclaimed his assailant. “Will you be off now?”

For answer, Ranji swung his arm up and pushed a hard, bony fist into the other’s face.

And then they were at each other’s throats, swaying on the rock, tumbling on to the sand, rolling over and over, their legs and arms locked in a desperate, violent struggle. Gasping and cursing, clawing and slapping, they rolled into the shallows of the pool.

Even in the water the fight continued as, spluttering and covered with mud, they groped for each other’s head and throat. But after

---

**impasse:** (also pronounced *ampass*) deadlock; place or position from which there is no way out **penetrated:** gone through/into **muster:** (*here*) use; collect or gather **staggered:** felt weak/unsteady (due to the blow) **assailant:** the person who attacks; (*here*) enemy/ adversary **swaying:** moving from side to side (in the fight) **spluttering:** speaking quickly/confusedly





five minutes of frenzied, unscientific struggle, neither boy had emerged victorious. Their bodies heaving with exhaustion, they stood back from each other, making tremendous efforts to speak.

“Now — now do you realise — I am a Warrior?” gasped the stranger.

“Do you know I am a Fighter?” said Ranji with difficulty.

They gave a moment’s consideration to each other’s answers and, in that moment of silence, there was only their heavy breathing and the rapid beating of their hearts.

“Then you will not leave the pool?” said the warrior.

“I will not leave it,” said Ranji.

“Then we shall have to continue the fight,” said the other.

“All right,” said Ranji.

But neither boy moved, neither took the initiative.

The warrior had an inspiration.

“We will continue the fight tomorrow,” he said. “If you dare to

**frenzied:** violent **exhaustion:** tiredness/fatigue **tremendous:** great **rapid:** quick/fast  
**inspiration:** (here) a new idea.



come here again tomorrow, we will continue this fight, and I will not show you mercy as I have done today.”

“I will come tomorrow,” said Ranji. “I will be ready for you.”

They turned from each other then and, going to their respective rocks, put on their clothes, and left the forest by different routes.

### Comprehension Check

1. *In what way is the forest pool different from the one which Ranji knew in the Rajputana desert?*
2. *The other boy asked Ranji to ‘explain’ himself.*
  - (i) *What did he expect Ranji to say?*
  - (ii) *Was he, in your opinion, right or wrong to ask this question?*
3. *Between Ranji and the other boy, who is trying to start a quarrel? Give a reason for your answer.*
4. *“Then we will have to continue the fight,” said the other.*
  - (i) *What made him say that?*
  - (ii) *Did the fight continue? If not, why not?*

## II

- Next day the two claimants face each other across the pool.
- They throw challenges and counter-challenges at each other.
- The best solution, they realise, lies not in fighting each other but fighting together for something.

When Ranji got home, he found it difficult to explain the cuts and bruises that showed on his face, leg and arms. It was difficult to conceal the fact that he had been in an unusually violent fight, and his mother insisted on his staying at home for the rest of the day. That evening, though, he slipped out of the house and went to the bazaar, where he found comfort and solace in a bottle of vividly coloured lemonade and a banana leaf full of hot, sweet *jalebis*. He had just finished the lemonade when he saw his adversary coming down the road. His first impulse was to turn away and look elsewhere, his second to throw the lemonade bottle at his enemy. But he did neither of





these things. Instead, he stood his ground and scowled at his passing adversary. And the warrior said nothing either but scowled back with equal ferocity.

The next day was as hot as the previous one. Ranji felt weak and lazy and not at all eager for a fight. His body was stiff and sore after the previous day's encounter. But he could not refuse the challenge. Not to turn up at the pool would be an acknowledgement of defeat. From the way he felt just then he knew he would be beaten in another fight. But he could not acquiesce in his own defeat. He must defy his enemy to the last, or outwit him, for only then could he gain his respect. If he surrendered now, he would be beaten for all time; but to fight and be beaten today left him free to fight and be beaten again. As long as he fought, he had a right to the pool in the forest.

---

**scowled:** looked angrily **adversary:** opponent/enemy **ferocity:** fierceness (suggesting anger/cruelty) **acquiesce:** accept quietly





He was half hoping that the warrior would have forgotten the challenge, but these hopes were dashed when he saw his opponent sitting, stripped to the waist, on a rock on the other side of the pool. The warrior was rubbing oil on his body. He saw Ranji beneath the sal trees, and called a challenge across the waters of the pool.

“Come over on this side and fight!” he shouted.

But Ranji was not going to submit to any conditions laid down by his opponent.

“Come this side and fight!” he shouted back with equal vigour.

“Swim across and fight me here!” called the other. “Or perhaps you cannot swim the length of this pool?”

But Ranji could have swum the length of the pool a dozen times without tiring, and here he would show the warrior his superiority. So, slipping out of his vest, he dived straight into the water, cutting through it like a knife, and surfaced with hardly a splash. The warrior’s mouth hung open in amazement.

“You can dive!” he exclaimed.

“It is easy,” said Ranji, treading water, waiting for a further challenge. “Can’t you dive?”

“No,” said the other. “I jump straight in. But if you will tell me how, I will make a dive.”

“It is easy,” said Ranji. “Stand on the rock, stretch your arms out and allow your head to displace your feet.”

The warrior stood up, stiff and straight, stretched out his arms, and threw himself into the water. He landed flat on his belly, with a crash that sent the birds screaming out of the trees.

Ranji dissolved into laughter.



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**vigour:** strength **treading water:** keeping oneself upright in deep water by moving the feet

“Are you trying to empty the pool?” he asked, as the warrior came to the surface, spouting water like a small whale.

“Wasn’t it good?” asked the boy, evidently proud of his feat.

“Not very good,” said Ranji. “You should have more practice. See, I will do it again.”

And pulling himself up on a rock, he executed another perfect dive. The other boy waited for him to come up, but, swimming under water, Ranji circled him and came upon him from behind.

“How did you do that?” asked the astonished youth.

“Can’t you swim under water?” asked Ranji.

“No, but I will try it.”

The warrior made a tremendous effort to plunge to the bottom of the pool and indeed he thought he had gone right down, though his bottom, like a duck’s, remained above surface.

Ranji, however, did not discourage him.

“It was not bad,” he said. “But you need a lot of practice.”

“Will you teach me?” asked his enemy.

“If you like, I will teach you.”

“You must teach me. If you do not teach me, I will beat you. Will you come here every day and teach me?”

“If you like,” said Ranji. They had pulled themselves out of the water, and were sitting side by side on a smooth grey rock.

“My name is Suraj,” said the warrior. “What is yours?”

“It is Ranji.”

“I am strong, am I not?” asked Suraj, bending his arm so that a ball of muscle stood up stretching the white of his flesh.”

“You are strong,” said Ranji. “You are a real *pahelwan*.”

“One day I will be the world’s champion wrestler,” said Suraj, slapping his thighs, which shook with the impact of his hand. He looked critically at Ranji’s hard, thin body. “You are quite strong yourself,” he conceded. “But you are too bony. I know, you people do not eat enough. You must come and have your food with me. I drink one seer of milk every day. We have got our own cow! Be my

---

**feat:** clever act; special skill **plunge:** jump **conceded:** admitted **seer:** same as *ser*, a unit of weight used previously in India. A *ser*, a little less than a litre, was one-fortieth of a maund.



friend, and I will make you a *pahelwan* like me! I know — if you teach me to dive and swim underwater, I will make you a *pahelwan*! That is fair, isn't it?"

"That is fair!" said Ranji, though he doubted if he was getting the better of the exchange.

Suraj put his arm around the younger boy and said, "We are friends now, yes?"

They looked at each other with honest, unflinching eyes, and in that moment love and understanding were born.

"We are friends," said Ranji.

The birds had settled again in their branches, and the pool was quiet and limpid in the shade of the sal trees.

"It is our pool," said Suraj. "Nobody else can come here without our permission. Who would dare?"

"Who would dare?" said Ranji, smiling with the knowledge that he had won the day.

RUSKIN BOND

### Comprehension Check

1. What is it that Ranji finds difficult to explain at home?
2. Ranji sees his adversary in the bazaar.
  - (i) What does he wish to do?
  - (ii) What does he actually do, and why?
3. Ranji is not at all eager for a second fight. Why does he go back to the pool, then?

**unflinching:** (without blinking) looking straight at each other **limpid:** clear

4. *Who was the better swimmer? How do you know it?*
5. *What surprises the warrior?*
6. *Now that they are at the pool, why don't they continue the fight?*
7. *Ranji's superiority over the other boy is obvious in the following:*  
*physical strength, good diving, his being a fighter, sense of humour, swimming under water, making a good point, willingness to help*

*Underline the relevant phrases.*

8. *What, according to you, makes the two adversaries turn into good friends in a matter of minutes? Explain it as you have understood it.*

### Exercise



**Discuss the following topics in small groups.**

1. Is fighting the only way of resolving differences of opinion? What else can be done to reach a mutually acceptable settlement?
2. Have you ever been in a serious fight only to realise later that it was unnecessary and futile? Share your experience/views with others frankly and honestly.
3. Why do some of us find it necessary to prove that we are better than others? Will you be amused or annoyed to read the following sign at the back of the car in front of you?

I may be going slow but I am ahead of you.

### Think it Over

- Good friends are like stars. You don't always see them, but you know they are there.
- Success is the outline of a rest house on the horizon. Effort is the uneven path leading towards it. Destiny is the vehicle in which one arrives.





# 7

## *The open window*

### I

- Framton Nuttel has bad nerves.
- He retires to the country for cure, and calls on a family friend.
- The lady being busy upstairs, her young niece refers to a family mishap with focus on the open window.

“My aunt will be down presently, Mr Nuttel,” said a very self-possessed young lady of fifteen. “In the meantime you must try and put up with me.”

Framton Nuttel endeavoured to say something which should duly flatter the niece of the moment without unduly discounting the aunt that was to come. Privately he doubted more than ever whether these formal visits of a succession of total strangers would do much towards helping the nerve cure which he was supposed to be undergoing.

“I know how it will be,” his sister had said when he was preparing to migrate to this rural retreat; “you will bury yourself down there and not speak to a living soul, and your nerves will be worse than ever from moping. I shall just give you letters of introduction to all the people I know there. Some of them, as far as I can remember, were quite nice.”

---

**self-possessed:** calm and confident; sure of herself **endeavoured:** tried **flatter:** make (her) happy

Framton wondered whether Mrs Sappleton, the lady to whom he was presenting one of the letters of introduction, came into the nice division.

“Do you know many of the people round here?” asked the niece, when she judged that they had had sufficient silent communion.

“Hardly a soul,” said Framton. “My sister was staying here, some four years ago, and she gave me letters of introduction to some of the people here.”

He made the last statement in a tone of distinct regret.

“Then you know practically nothing about my aunt?” pursued the self-possessed young lady.

“Only her name and address,” admitted the caller. He was wondering whether Mrs Sappleton was in the married or widowed state. An undefinable something about the room seemed to suggest masculine habitation.

“Her great tragedy happened just three years ago,” said the child, “that would be since your sister’s time.”

“Her tragedy?” asked Framton. Somehow in this restful country spot tragedies seemed out of place.

“You may wonder why we keep that window wide open on an October afternoon,” said the niece, indicating a large French window that opened on to a lawn.

“It is quite warm for the time of the year,” said Framton, “but has that window got anything to do with the tragedy?”

“Out through that window, three years ago to a day, her husband and her two young brothers went off for their day’s shooting. They never came back. In crossing the moor to their favourite shooting ground they were all three engulfed in a treacherous piece of bog. It had been that dreadful wet summer, you know, and places that were safe in other years gave way suddenly without warning. Their bodies were never recovered. That was the dreadful part of it.” Here the child’s voice lost its self-possessed note and became falteringly

---

**suggest masculine habitation:** suggest that the room belonged to a man **moor:** grassland **treacherous:** dangerous (though it seems safe) **bog:** wet, spongy ground (one may sink into it) **falteringly:** a ‘faltering’ voice is shaky, hesitant; haltingly





human. “Poor aunt always thinks that they will come back someday, they and the little brown spaniel that was lost with them, and walk in at that window just as they used to do. That is why the window is kept open every evening till it is quite dusk. Poor dear aunt, she has often told me how they went out, her husband with his white waterproof coat over his arm, and Ronnie, her youngest brother, singing ‘Bertie, why do you bound?’ as he always did to tease her, because she said it got on her nerves. Do you know, sometimes on still, quiet evenings like this, I almost get a creepy feeling that they will all walk in through that window...”

### Comprehension Check

1. Why had Framton Nuttel come to the “rural retreat”?
2. Why had his sister given him letters of introduction to people living there?
3. What had happened in the Sappleton family as narrated by the niece?

## II

- Mrs Sappleton comes down at last and inadvertently confirms her niece's story.
- Framton tries to acquaint his host with the nature of his ailment.
- Through the open window, he can see things that worsen his nerves.

She broke off with a little shudder. It was a relief to Framton when the aunt bustled into the room with a whirl of apologies for being late in making her appearance.

"I hope Vera has been amusing you?" she said.

"She has been very interesting," said Framton.

"I hope you don't mind the open window," said Mrs Sappleton briskly; "my husband and brothers will be home directly from shooting, and they always come in this way. They've been out for snipe in the marshes today, so they'll make a fine mess over my poor carpets. So like you menfolk, isn't it?"

She rattled on cheerfully about the shooting and the scarcity of birds, and the prospects for duck in the winter. To Framton it was all



**bustled:** entered (the room) noisily **whirl of apologies:** many apologies (in quick succession) **snipe:** water bird that lives in marshes **rattled on:** went on **scarcity of birds:** no birds or very few ('scarcity' means acute shortage)







purely horrible. He made a desperate but only partially successful effort to turn the talk on to a less ghastly topic; he was conscious that his hostess was giving him only a fragment of her attention, and her eyes were constantly straying past him to the open window and the lawn beyond. It was certainly an unfortunate coincidence that he should have paid his visit on this tragic anniversary.

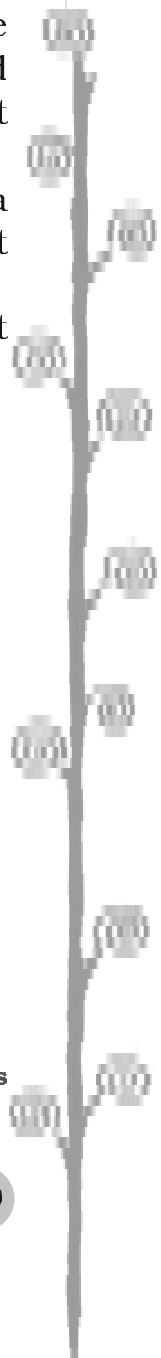
“The doctors agree in ordering me complete rest, an absence of mental excitement, and avoidance of anything in the nature of violent physical exercise,” announced Framton, who laboured under the tolerably widespread delusion that total strangers and chance acquaintances are hungry for the least detail of one’s ailments and infirmities, their cause and cure. “On the matter of diet they are not so much in agreement,” he continued.

“No?” said Mrs Sappleton, in a voice which only replaced a yawn at the last moment. Then she suddenly brightened into alert attention — but not to what Framton was saying.

“Here they are at last!” she cried. “Just in time for tea, and don’t they look as if they were muddy up to the eyes!”



**straying:** moving (she was not looking at him) **delusion:** false impression or belief **ailments and infirmities:** (relating to health) complaints of sickness/weakness



Framton shivered slightly and turned towards the niece with a look intended to convey sympathetic comprehension. The child was staring out through the open window with a dazed horror in her eyes. In a chill shock of nameless fear Framton swung round in his seat and looked in the same direction.

In the deepening twilight three figures were walking across the lawn towards the window, they all carried guns under their arms, and one of them was additionally burdened with a white coat hung over his shoulders. A tired brown spaniel kept close at their heels. Noiselessly they neared the house, and then a hoarse young voice chanted out of the dusk: "I say, Bertie, why do you bound?"

### Comprehension Check

1. *What did Mrs Sappleton say about the open window?*
2. *The horror on the girl's face made Framton swing around in his seat. What did he see?*

### III

- What else can Framton do but beat a hasty retreat!
- Had he seen a ghost?
- The niece does have a knack for explaining an uncanny coincidence.

Framton grabbed wildly at his stick and hat; the hall door, the gravel drive, and the front gate were dimly noted stages in his headlong retreat. A cyclist coming along the road had to run into the hedge to avoid imminent collision.

"Here we are, my dear," said the bearer of the white mackintosh, coming in through the window. "Who was that who bolted out as we came up?"

"A most extraordinary man, a Mr Nuttel," said Mrs Sappleton. "He could only talk about his illnesses, and dashed off without a word of goodbye or apology when you arrived. One would think he had seen a ghost."

---

**sympathetic comprehension:** understanding and showing sympathy    **uncanny coincidence:** unnatural/unexpected/strange event





“I expect it was the spaniel,” said the niece calmly. “He told me he had a horror of dogs. He was once hunted into a cemetery somewhere on the banks of the Ganges by a pack of dogs, and had to spend the night in a newly dug grave with the creatures snarling and grinning and foaming just above him. Enough to make anyone lose their nerve.”

Romance at short notice was her speciality.

SAKI (H.H. MUNRO)

### Comprehension Check

1. Why did Framton rush out wildly?
2. What was the girl's explanation for his lightning exit?

#### Exercise



#### Discuss in small groups.

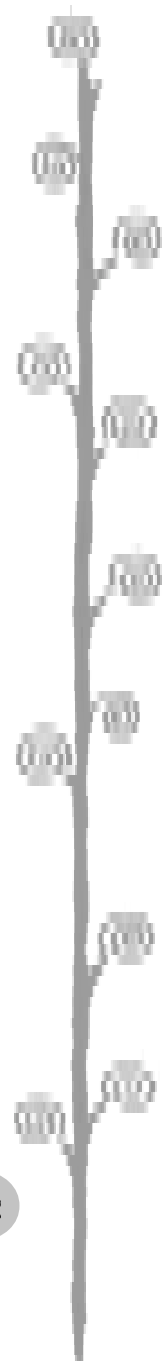
1. Is this a mystery story? Give a reason for your answer.
2. You are familiar with the ‘irony’ of the situation in a story. (Remember *The Cop and the Anthem* in Class VII Supplementary Reader!) Which situations in ‘The Open Window’ are good examples of the use of irony?
3. Which phrases/sentences in the text do you find difficult to understand? Select a few and guess the meaning of each. Rewrite a simple paraphrase of each.

#### Think it Over



- Chance usually plays a leading role in the drama of life.
- It is always the best policy to speak the truth—unless, of course, you are an exceptionally good liar.
- All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered; the point is to discover them.

**romance at short notice:** finding occasions for fun and enjoyment, wherever possible





# 8

## *Jalebis*

### I

- An honest boy is on his way to school carrying money in his pocket to pay the school fees.
- The sight of crisp, syrupy *jalebis* in the market excites him and the coins in his pocket begin to jingle.
- After a long debate with himself, he yields to the sweet temptation.

IT happened many years ago. I was in the fifth standard at the government school, Kambelpur, now called Atak. One day, I went to school with four rupees in my pocket to pay the school fees and the fund. When I got there I found that the teacher who collected the fees, Master Ghulam Mohammed, was on leave and so the fees would be collected the next day. All through the day the coins simply sat in my pocket, but once school got over and I was outside, they began to speak.

All right. Coins don't talk. They jingle or go *khanak-khanak*. But I'm telling you, that day they actually spoke! One *coin* said, "What are you thinking about? Those fresh, hot *jalebis* coming out of the *kadhao* in the shop over there, they're not coming out for nothing. *Jalebis* are meant to be eaten and only those with money

---

**khanak-khanak:** sound of jingling of coins **jalebis:** syrupy Indian sweet **kadhao:** large, open pot for cooking/boiling

in their pocket can eat them, And money isn't for nothing. Money is meant to be spent and only they spend it, who like *jalebis*."

"Look here, you four rupees, I said to them. I am a good boy. Don't misguide me or it won't be good for you. I get so much at home that I consider even looking at something in the *bazaar* a sin. Besides, you are my fees and fund money. If I spend you today, then how shall I show my face to Master Ghulam Mohammed in school tomorrow and after that to *Allah miyan* at *Qayamat*? You probably don't know it but when Master Ghulam Mohammed gets angry and makes you stand on the bench, he simply forgets to let you sit till the last bell rings. So it's best you stop chewing at my ears like this and let me go home straight."

The coins disliked what I'd said so much that all of them began to speak at the same time. There was such a clamour that passersby in the *bazaar* stared, eyes wide with surprise, at me and my pocket. The coin of those days, the wretched thing, made so much more noise too! Finally, in a panic, I grabbed all four of them and held them tight in my fist and then they were silent.



---

**clamour:** loud noise

After taking a few steps, I loosened my grip. Immediately, the oldest coin said, "Here we are trying to tell you something for your own good and you try to strangle us instead. Tell me honestly now, don't you feel like eating those hot, hot *jalebis*? And then, if you do end up spending us for today, won't you get the scholarship money tomorrow? Sweets with the fees money, fees with the scholarship money. End of story! *Kissa khatam, paisa hazam.*"

What you're saying isn't right, I replied, but it isn't that wrong either. Listen. Stop blabbering and let me think. I am not a common sort of boy. But then, these *jalebis* are no common sort of *jalebis* either. They're crisp, fresh and full of sweet syrup.

My mouth watered, but I wasn't about to be swept away so easily. In school I was among the most promising students. In the fourth standard exams, I had even won a scholarship of four rupees a month. Besides, I came from a particularly well-to-do family, so I enjoyed considerable prestige. I'd never once been beaten so far. On the contrary, Masterji had got me to beat the other boys. For a child of such status, standing there in the middle of the bazaar eating *jalebis*? No. It wasn't right, I decided. I clenched the *rupiyas* in my fist and came home.



***Kissa khatam paisa hazam***: end of story (literally: story ends, money disappears)  
**blabbering**: talking confusedly **prestige**: respect





The coins were so keen on being spent that day, they kept up their attempts at persuasion till their voices began to choke. When I reached home and sat on the bed, they began to speak. I went inside to have lunch, they began to shriek. Thoroughly fed up, I rushed out of the house barefoot and ran towards the *bazaar*. Terrified I was, but quickly I told the *halwai* to weigh a whole rupee worth of *jalebis*. His astonished look seemed to be asking where I had the handcart in which I would carry all those *jalebis*. Those were inexpensive times. One rupee fetched more than twenty rupees does nowadays. The *halwai* opened up a whole newspaper and heaped a pile of *jalebis* on it.

### Comprehension Check

1. Why didn't he pay the school fees on the day he brought money to school?
2. (i) What were the coins 'saying' to him?  
(ii) Do you think they were misguiding him?
3. Why didn't he take the coins' advice? Give two or three reasons.
4. (i) What did the oldest coin tell him?  
(ii) Did he follow his advice? If not, why not?
5. He reached home with the coins in his pocket. What happened then?

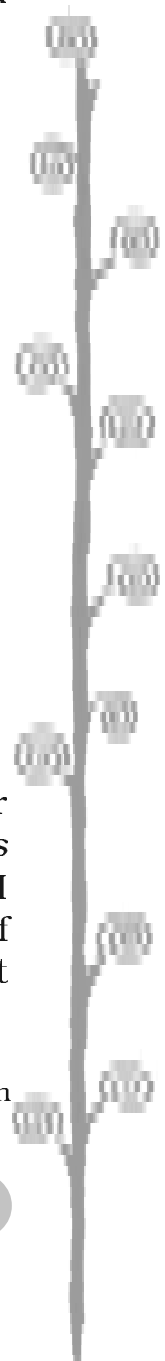
## II

- A heap of *jalebis* he eats, and shares them liberally with one and all.
- Though penniless now, he feels no less important than a mob leader.
- The real problem at hand is payment of school fees on time.

Just as I was gathering up the heap, in the distance I spotted our *tonga*. Chachajaan was returning from Court. I clutched the *jalebis* to my chest and ran into a *gali*. When I reached a safe corner, I began to devour the *jalebis*. I ate so many... so many *jalebis* that if anyone pressed my stomach a little, *jalebis* would have popped out of my ears and nostrils.

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**persuasion:** coaxing **halwai:** sweetmeat seller **tonga:** two-wheeled, horse-drawn vehicle **gali:** narrow lane





Very quickly, boys from the entire neighbourhood assembled in the *gali*. By that time I was so pleased with my stomach full of *jalebis* that I got into the mood for some fun. I started handing out *jalebis* to the children around. Delighted they ran off, jumping and screaming, into the *galis*. Soon a whole lot of other children appeared, probably having heard the good news from the others. I dashed to the *halwai* and bought one more rupee's worth of *jalebis*, came back and stood on the *chabutara* of one of the houses, liberally distributing *jalebis* to the children just like the Governor *saheb* used to distribute rice to the poor and needy on Independence day. By now there was a huge mob of children around me. The beggars too launched an assault! If children could be elected to the Assembly, my success would have been assured that day. Because one little signal from my *jalebi*-wielding hand and the mob would have been willing to kill and get killed for me. I bought *jalebis* for the remaining two rupees as well and distributed them. Then I washed my hands and mouth at the public tap and returned home, putting on such an innocent face, as if I hadn't even seen the hint of a *jalebi* all my

**chabutara:** platform **assault:** attack **jalebi-wielding hand:** the hand that held *jalebis*



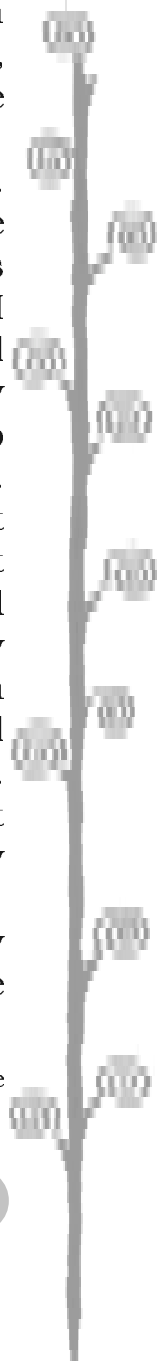


life. *Jalebis* I had gobbled up easily enough, but digesting them became another matter. With every breath came a burp, and with every burp, the danger of bringing out a *jalebi* or two — the fear was killing me. At night I had to eat my dinner as well. If I hadn't eaten I would have been asked to explain why I did not want any food, and if I had pretended illness the doctor would have been summoned and if the doctor, after feeling my pulse, had declared, Munna has devoured a mound of *jalebis*, I would simply die.

The result was that all night I lay, coiled up like a *jalebi*, suffering a stomach ache. Thank God I didn't have to eat all four rupees worth of *jalebis* by myself. Otherwise, as they say, when children speak, flowers shower from their mouths but I would be the first child in the world with whose every word a crisp, fried *jalebi* would come out.

Children don't have stomachs, they have digestion machines. My machine too kept working right through the night. In the morning, just like any other day, I washed my face and like a virtuous student, with chalk and slate in hand, I headed for school. I knew I would get the previous month's scholarship that day and once I'd paid the fees with that amount, the *jalebis* would be completely digested. But when I got to school, I found out that the scholarship was going to be paid the following month. My head started to spin. I felt as if I was standing on my head and could not get on to my feet again even if I tried. Master Ghulam Mohammed announced that the fees would be taken during the recess. When the recess bell rang, I tucked my bag under my arm and left the school and simply followed my nose, walking on and on... If no mountain or ocean blocked my path, I would have kept going till the earth ended and the sky began, and once I got there, I would say to *Allah miyan*. "Just this once save me. Order a *farishta* to pass by and drop just four rupees in my pocket. I promise I will use them only to pay my fees and not to eat *jalebis*."

I couldn't reach the point where the earth ended, but definitely reached the point where the Kambelpur railway station began. The




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**gobbled:** eaten quickly/greedily **summoned:** sent for/called **virtuous:** good and noble  
**farishta:** angel



elders had warned me never to cross the railway tracks. Fine. The elders had also warned me that one must never eat sweets with one's fees money. How did this instruction escape my mind that day? I don't know.

### Comprehension Check

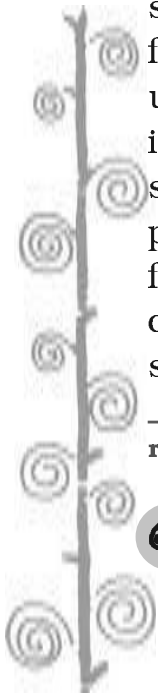
- (i) Why didn't he eat all the jalebis he had bought?  
(ii) What did he do with the remaining jalebis?
- "The fear was killing me." What was the fear?
- "Children's stomachs are like digestion machines." What do you understand by that? Do you agree?
- How did he plan to pay the fees the next day?
- When it is time to pay the fees, what does he do? How is he disobeying the elders by doing so?

### III

- Remorseful and scared, he prays to God for monetary help.
- He makes matters look normal but prays harder than ever.
- The inevitable happens, though somewhere along the way he notices the divide between the fanciful and the factual.

There was a shade-giving tree beside the railway tracks. I sat under it and wondered whether there could possibly be a more unfortunate child than me in this world! When the coins had first created a racket in my pocket, the entire matter seemed so simple and straightforward. Eat *jalebis* with the fees money and then pay the fees with the scholarship money. I thought that two and two added up to four and could never be five. How was I to know that sometimes it added up to five as well? Had I known that I would get the scholarship the next month, I would have postponed my *jalebi* eating programme to the next month as well. Now for the crime of eating a few *jalebis*, for the first time in my life I was absent from school, and crouching in the shade of a tree in a deserted corner of the railway station. Sitting there under the tree, at first I felt like crying.

**racket:** uproar/loud noise    **crouching:** sitting (as if hiding)

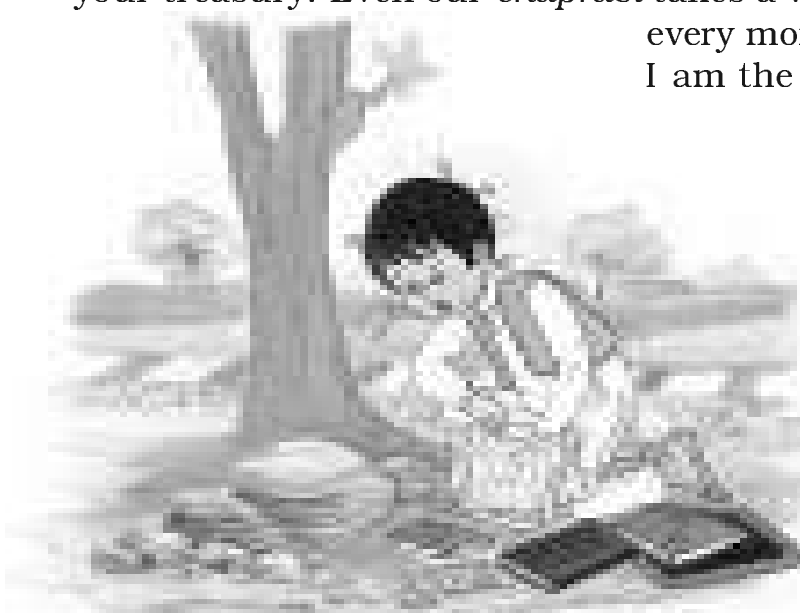


Then I felt like laughing when it struck me that the tears I was shedding were not tears but drops of *jalebi* syrup. From the *jalebis* my thoughts went to the fees, and from fees to Master Ghulam Mohammed's cane, and from his cane I thought of God. I closed my eyes, and began to pray.

'*Allah miyan!* I'm a very good boy. I have memorised the entire *namaaz*. I even know the last ten *surats* of the Quran by heart. If you wish, I can recite the entire *ayat-al-kursi* for you just now. The need of your devoted servant is only the fees money that I ate the *jalebis* with... So all right, I admit I made a mistake. I didn't eat them all by myself, though I fed them to a whole lot of children too, but yes, it was a mistake. If I'd known the scholarship money would be given next month, I would neither have eaten them nor fed them to the others. Now you do one thing, just put four rupees in my bag. If there's a *paisa* more than four rupees I will be very displeased with you. I promise, if I ever eat sweets with my fees money again, then let a thief's punishment be my punishment. So, *Allah miyan*, just this once, help me out. There is no shortage of anything in your treasury. Even our *chaprasi* takes a whole lot of money home every month, and *Allahji*, after all I am the nephew of a big officer.

Won't you give me just four rupees?

After the prayer I offered *namaaz*, recited ten *surats*, *ayat-al-kursi*, *kalma-e-tayyab*, in fact everything that I remembered. Then I blew over my bag saying Choo. Then, after saying *bismillah*, I realised that what



**surats:** verses from the Holy Quran **ayat-al-kursi:** title of a verse in the Holy Quran;  
**treasury:** wealth **chaprasi:** peon **choo:** sound of 'blowing over the bag' (to ward off evil)  
**bismillah:** in the name of God (words spoken before starting something)

they said was only too true — no one can erase what fate has decreed. Forget four rupees, there weren't even four *paise* in my bag. Just a few textbooks and notebooks. One pencil. One sharpener. One Id card my *Mamu* had sent me last Id.

I felt like crying as loudly as I could, but then I remembered that school must have ended and the children must be on their way home. Tired and defeated, I got up from there and walked to the *bazaar* and waited for the school bell to ring, so that when the children came out I too would walk home with them as if I had come straight from school.

I didn't even realise that I was standing near the *jalebiwala's* shop. Suddenly, the *halwai* called out, "*Kyon bhai*, shall I weigh a rupee's worth? Don't want *jalebis* today?"

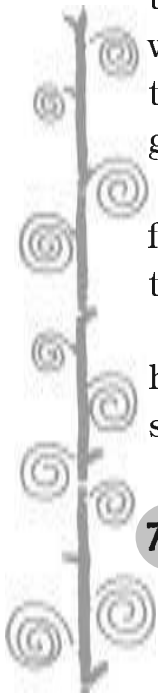
I felt like saying I won't eat your *jalebis* today but, I'd sure like to roast your liver and eat that instead. But I wasn't feeling too well that day, so I simply moved away.

The next day I did the same thing. I got dressed and left home, went up to the school gate and then turned off to the railway station. Under the same tree I sat and began to say the same prayers. I repeatedly pleaded, *Allah miyan!* At least give it to me today. Today is the second day.

Then I said, "All right come, let's play a game. I will go from here to that signal. You secretly place four rupees under this big rock. I will touch the signal and come back. What fun it will be if I pick up the rock and find four rupees underneath! So, are you ready? I am going towards the signal. One-two-three."

I went up to the signal and returned, smiling. But I could not find the courage to pick up the rock. What if the coins were not there? But then, I thought, what if they were?

Finally after saying *bismillah*, when I lifted up the rock, this big hairy worm got up, and curling and twisting wriggled towards me. I screamed and ran away and once again touched the signal. Then,



crawling on my hands and knees, I reached the tree. I tried my best not to let my eyes stray towards the rock. But as I picked up my bag and was about to leave, I had to look once again at the rock, and do you know what I saw there? I saw Mr Worm coiled on it comfortably, staring at me.



I walked away thinking, tomorrow I will do *wazu*, wear clean clothes and come here. From morning to noon I will keep reading the *namaaz*. If, even after that, *Allah* doesn't give me four rupees, I will be forced to learn how to strike bargains or make deals with Him. After all, if my *Allah* does not give me my four rupees then who will? That day, when I returned home, apparently from school and actually from the railway station, I was caught. The report of my absence had reached home. It's useless to relate what happened after that.

Well, whatever happened, happened. But up to the seventh or eighth standard I kept wondering, if *Allah miyan* had sent me four rupees that day, what harm could it have possibly caused anyone? It was only later that I came to the conclusion that if *Allah miyan* were to provide all for the asking, then man would, even today, be living in nests like vultures and crows and would not have learnt the art of making *jalebis*!

AHMED NADEEM QASMI  
(translated from the Urdu  
by SUFIYA PATHAN)

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**wazu:** ablution (washing face, hands and feet before praying)

## Comprehension Check

1. What was the consequence of buying jalebis with the fees money?
2. His prayer to God is like a lawyer's defence of a bad case. Does he argue his case well? What are the points he makes?
3. He offers to play a game with Allah Miyan. What is the game?
4. Did he get four rupees by playing the game? What did he get to see under the rock?
5. If God had granted his wish that day, what harm would it have caused him in later life?

### Exercise



#### Work in small groups.

1. Select and read sentences that show
  - that the boy is tempted to eat *jalebis*.
  - that he is feeling guilty.
  - that he is justifying a wrong deed.
2. Discuss the following points.
  - Is the boy intelligent? If so, what is the evidence of it?
  - Does his outlook on the *jalebis* episode change after Class VIII? Does he see that episode in a new light?
  - Why are coins made to 'talk' in this story? What purpose does it serve?

### Think it Over



- I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with senses, reason and intellect has intended us to forgo their use and by some other means to give us knowledge which we can attain by them.





9

## *The comet - I*

### **Before you read**

*A new comet has appeared in the sky and is heading straight for the earth. A head-on collision, which is nearly unavoidable, will mean the end of life on this planet. Scientists and religious leaders react to this situation in two different ways. What happens to the comet?*

### **I**

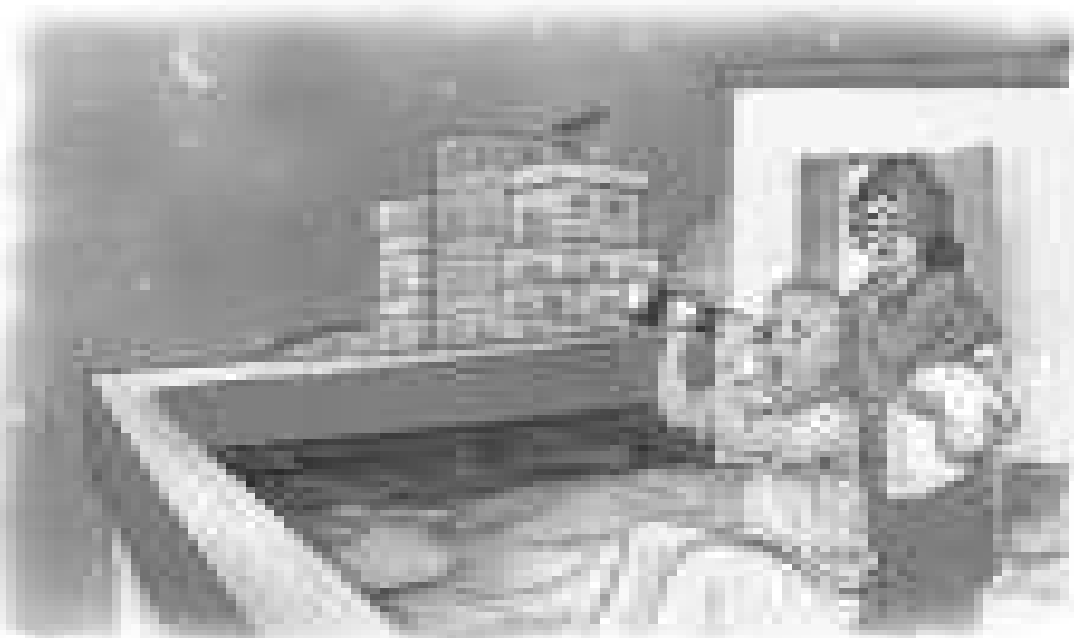
- Duttada, an amateur scientist, can't stay away from the keen-eyed *Dibya Chakshu* for long.
- Dibya helps him achieve his secret ambition.
- Duttada's wife, Indrani Debi, wishes he hadn't found the object of his search.

It was a moonless night in December. A burst of cool breeze from the window was enough to disturb the sleep of Indrani Debi. Half awake she felt for the adjoining pillow, although she knew the answer. Duttada was not there.

“So he has gone to hobnob with that wretched Dibya! At least he might have bothered to close the door.” Even as she muttered her complaints Indrani Debi could not repress her smile. She knew how utterly oblivious her husband was of the practical problems of living. Didn't his doctor tell him to take special precautions against the cold? But he wouldn't remember to put on a sweater even if it

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**hobnob:** have friendly talk/spend time together **oblivious:** forgetful



was lying on his bedside chair! How could he when Dibya had put her spell on him?

She picked up the white woollen pullover, wrapped herself in a shawl and made her way to the roof, to break up his tete-a-tete with Dibya.

She found them both huddled together eye to eye. At least Duttada was looking into Dibya's eyes.

When Duttada acquired this telescope he was so thrilled that he called it *Dibya Chakshu* — Divine Eye. To Indrani Debi the telescope was like a designing woman who had ensnared her husband. So she just called it Dibya and the name stuck.

To Duttada the telescope marked the fulfilment of the ambition of a lifetime. As an amateur astronomer he had longed for enough money to buy a good telescope and for enough spare time in which to observe the heavens. He got them both when he retired with ample money. The telescope was duly installed and long were the dark nights that Duttada spent in star-gazing. At least Indrani Debi thought so.

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**tete-a-tete:** private meeting/talk between two persons    **acquired:** (here) bought  
**astronomer:** a scholar of the science of the sun, moon, stars, planets, etc.





“Here! Put on this sweater — or do you want Nabin Babu to order bed-rest tomorrow?”

Like every other amateur astronomer, Duttada had a secret ambition that he would one day discover a new comet. For, comets can be new, coming as they do from the remote corners of the Solar System. Like planets, comets also orbit round the Sun but their orbits are highly eccentric. So once in a while a comet comes close to the Sun; it has a longish tail that is lit brilliantly by the sunlight and then it recedes into darkness not to be seen again for years, or for centuries.

What chance did he stand with his eight-inch Dibya? Didn't professional astronomers have gigantic telescopes?

Duttada was optimistic... he knew that the professionals with their pre-assigned programmes would be looking at faint stars and nebulous galaxies. They might miss such an insignificant thing as a comet which they were not expecting to see anyway! Indeed amateurs had often discovered new comets which the professionals had missed.

And, it looked to Duttada that tonight was going to be the big night. For against the background of the same old stars Duttada had detected a faint stranger. He re-examined the charts with him, checked his Dibya for any smudges on the optics, did some calculations on his pocket calculator in torchlight — for, though absent-minded about daily chores, he was meticulous in his observations.

Yes, there can be no mistake. What he was looking at had not been there earlier and it did look like a new comet.

Two days later the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* came out with the news:

### **Calcutta Man Discovers New Comet**

*(From our special correspondent)*

Shri Manoj Dutta, a resident on the northern outskirts of Calcutta\* has claimed to have discovered a new comet. He has seen the comet on the last two nights and has informed the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) at

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**eccentric:** unusual/unlike the orbits of other planets **recedes:** goes back; disappears  
**optimistic:** hopeful; expecting the best **nebulous:** hazy **smudges:** spots/marks **optics:** Dibya's eyes (glass) through which he detected the comet **meticulous:** careful and exact

\* now, Kolkata



Bangalore\* of its whereabouts. The IIA runs a 90-inch telescope, the biggest in Asia, at Kavalur. If it confirms Dutta's finding it will be the high point in his lifelong career as amateur astronomer. Duttada, as he is affectionately called by his friends and admirers, estimates that the comet would be clearly visible to the naked eye in the next few months. He gives all credit for his discovery to his eight-inch telescope which he calls Dibya.

Thereafter it took just one week for 'Comet Dutta' to be recognised and so named. For the IIA confirmed the findings and communicated it worldwide and, according to the accepted practice, the new comet was named after its discoverer.

This brought in unwelcome publicity to the introvert Duttada. There were numerous receptions and functions to attend. Returning from one such ceremony Duttada muttered to himself in disgust, "I almost wish I had not discovered this comet."

To his surprise Indrani Debi agreed. "I wish the same, though not for the same reason".

"May I ask why you wish I had not discovered this comet?" Duttada asked.

"Comets bring ill-luck and I wish a good man like you were not associated with the discovery of one," Indrani Debi said with concern.

Duttada laughed. "I see that even an MA degree has not cured you of your superstitions! There is no correlation whatsoever with the arrival of a comet and the calamities of the earth. On the contrary comets have been scientifically studied and their composition is well understood. There is nothing harmful about them. Well, you will soon see this comet of mine pass harmlessly by causing no anxiety to anybody."

In this last comment, however, Duttada was not going to be exactly right.

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\* now, Bangluru

**introvert:** one who is preoccupied with his/her own thoughts and feelings—not interested in things outside oneself **disgust:** strong dislike or disapproval **calamities:** disasters/misfortunes



## Comprehension Check

1. Why does Indrani Debi dislike Duttada's "hobnobbing" with Dibya?
2. She is complaining and smiling. Why is she smiling?
3. (i) What was Duttada's secret ambition?  
(ii) What did he do to achieve it?
4. What is the difference between a planet and a comet, as given in the story?
5. Why was Duttada hopeful that he would discover a new comet soon?
6. Why does Duttada say — "I almost wish I had not discovered this comet."?
7. Why is his wife unhappy about the discovery?

## II

- A British scientist writes a paper based on Duttada's discovery.
- He and the Defence Science Advisor have a tete-a-tete over an impending calamity.
- A conference of international experts might yield a clue to the cosmic puzzle.

In the spacious dining hall of King's College, Cambridge, the butler whispered deferentially in the Provost's ear and handed him an envelope on a silver tray. The Provost beckoned James and passed on the envelope saying, "It seems you are wanted urgently in your room."

As he made his way towards the beautiful building, James opened the envelope. It contained a brief note:

Dear Dr Forsyth,

The bearer of this note has been instructed to bring you to my office in London tonight. Please come without delay. I am making arrangements for your overnight stay in London. I regret the inconvenience caused to you and request you to keep your visit strictly confidential. *Believe me, it is absolutely essential.*

Yours sincerely,

John Macpherson

The signature carried the designation underneath: Defence Science Advisor, Her Majesty's Government.

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**deferentially:** respectfully



A bowler-hatted man near the mantelpiece greeted him as James entered his sitting room. "I am Johnson, sir. Security officer at Whitehall." He showed his identity card and continued, "I presume, you know why I am here, sir."

"To the extent that is conveyed in this note," replied James. He knew that it would be useless to ask Johnson for further details. "I won't take long."

Johnson's Ford Cortina brought them to Whitehall in less than ninety minutes. It took them another ten minutes to reach the chambers of Sir John Macpherson. Having introduced James to Sir John, the quiet but efficient Johnson slipped out.

"Dr Forsyth, my apologies for this imposition on your time!" Sir John advanced with outstretched hands. "To avoid any further delay, I will come to the point right away." Sir John handed him a typescript.

"Why! It is my paper to *Nature*. How did you get this original manuscript?" James was surprised and somewhat uneasy.

Sir John saw his anxiety and continued, "Taylor, the editor of *Nature* is a friend of mine."

"I had asked *Nature* to publish it without delay since it is very important," James looked puzzled.

"I agree that it is important. So important in fact that it must never be published — that is, if what you say is correct." Sir John lit his pipe.

James would never have tolerated aspersions on the accuracy of his work, or the implied order that it must be suppressed. But he knew Sir John to be a respected scientist and was willing to hear him out.

"Please do not misunderstand me, Dr Forsyth. I met Taylor today at lunch in the club where he showed me your paper — I still retain enough interest in astronomy, you know — and he asked for my opinion before sending it to a professional referee. I immediately realised that your result has profound implications, if it is correct."

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**imposition:** unfair demand that one is obliged to accept **manuscript:** paper or book not yet printed **aspersions:** harsh remarks



“Let me assure you, Sir John, that it is correct. I stake my reputation on it,” James could not contain himself any more.

“Do you realise what will happen if Comet Dutta collides with the Earth, as you predict it will?”

“The effects will be catastrophic! That is why I have taken extra care to verify my calculations. Barring rare circumstances, the collision is inevitable.” James was confident. But Sir John picked out the one qualifying phrase: “What are those rare circumstances?”

“Well, it might collide with some asteroid before reaching here. Or it might just split up when near the Sun, or it might evaporate...”

“But one can’t count on these fortuitous circumstances. We have to proceed on the assumption that Comet Dutta will collide with the Earth. Cometary collisions are expected to occur once in ten million years. But now we know that the next one will occur in a year...”

“Ten months, to be precise,” interjected James.

“Thank you for the correction! Do you realise that we have only ten months of survival left for the entire living species on the Earth? Don’t you think we have to do something to stop all this?”

A fleeting smile crossed James’ face. ‘Just like a civil servant! As if we are facing here a minor breakdown of law and order,’ he thought to himself. Aloud, he said, “How, may I ask, can we prevent this natural catastrophe?”

“I don’t know; but we have no option but to try. I think we need more than two brains to handle this situation. It is essential to call an urgent meeting of experts from all over the world to think of a counter-measure and of course in total secrecy. Think of the panic in the world if this dreadful news leaks out.” Sir John glanced at the manuscript in James’ hand.

“My suppressing this paper will not hide the truth, Sir John!” James said. “There are others who will arrive at the same conclusion, sooner or later.”

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**fortuitous:** (happening) by chance    **counter-measure:** step or action in the opposite direction



“No. Do not suppress it but tone it down. Add many if’s and but’s to make your conclusion appear not so certain... I will exert all my influence with friends in other countries to make them exercise a similar restraint for a while.”

“For how long?”

“Until this wretched comet is safely out of the way. Let us spend some time now to plan the details of this international conference. Shall we call it in a week’s time, here?”

A week to plan such an important secret conference of international experts! James thought it an impossible task, but Sir John disagreed, and began to spell out details.

### Comprehension Check

1. How did Sir John get hold of James’ original manuscript?
2. What is the important point the paper makes?
3. Why does Sir John say that James’ paper should not be published?
4. What do the two men finally decide to do?

### Cold Causes Colds

The common cold is the world’s most widespread illness— which is probably why there are more myths about it than any of the other illnesses.

A widespread fallacy is that colds are caused by cold. They are not. They are caused by viruses passed on from person to person. If cold causes colds, it would be reasonable to expect the Eskimos to suffer from them permanently. But they do not.

**restraint:** control/check

80

*It so happened...*





10

## *The comet - II*

### I

- Duttada is invited to the secret conference.
- How to change the course of Comet Dutta is the scientists' hidden agenda.
- Duttada and the Defence Advisor become close friends, and share a secret.

By the time they finished their deliberations and Sir John dropped him at his hotel off Regent Street, it was 1 a.m. There was hardly any crowd on the street but when James looked up from his window a star-studded night sky greeted him. Somewhere amongst these stars was Comet Dutta heading for a collision with the Earth. It was hard to believe the calamity of the future on such a peaceful night. For a moment James wondered if he had done his sums right.

Whatever doubt James may have had about Sir John's efficiency were quickly dispelled when he reported for the conference and found that all the experts listed by him were there. Astronomers, computer scientists, nuclear physicists, space technologists, biologists, all were there. And as Sir John's special invitee was present the man who had started it all—Manoj Dutta.

The conference lasted one week and went on under total cover of secrecy. First the experts checked and rechecked James Forsyth's calculation with the latest observations of Comet Dutta. He was

right: there was no escape from the direct hit predicted by him. There was a small chance that the comet may just graze the atmosphere of the Earth and not collide. In that case the loss of life and property would not be total. But this slight respite was hardly reassuring enough for taking no action.

Having decided that some action was needed, what form should it take? The experts dismissed defensive measures like living in underground bunkers. It was simply not a practical proposition. So the only course was to take offensive action. Comet Dutta could be marginally deflected from its path by giving it a push.

The experts calculated that the bulk of destructive nuclear power available on the Earth would be needed to achieve this mammoth task. A gigantic nuclear explosion suitably placed, suitably directed and suitably timed could do the trick. This could be done by placing the nuclear payload in a spaceship, sending it to intercept the approaching comet and detonating it by remote control. Success or failure, secrecy must be preserved. Finally a time-table was drawn up for the operation which was code-named 'Project Light Brigade'. The important dates in it were:

*October 10:* Despatch the spacecraft with the payload unless by then the comet is already destroyed by natural causes or has changed its path due to unforeseen reasons.

*November 15:* Rendezvous with the comet and detonation of the payload.

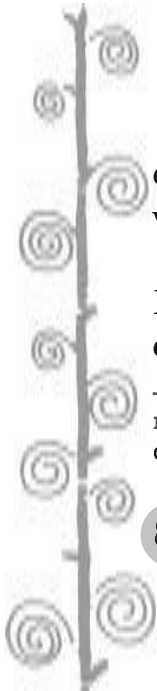
*December 15:* If the experiment failed this was the day the comet would hit the Earth. If it succeeded, this was the day the comet would pass by at a near but safe distance.

The success of the experiment depended on how massive the comet was. Nobody could estimate; everybody hoped that it was not very massive.

"Do you think we will succeed?" Duttada asked Sir John Macpherson for his opinion. During the week the two had developed considerable affinity for each other.

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**respite:** relief **intercept:** (here) stop or block **detonating:** setting it off; making it explode **payload:** equipment **rendezvous:** (pronounced *rondivoo*) meeting place





“Mr Dutta, I will give you an honest answer! I am not buying any Christmas presents till December 15.”

Duttada toured the British Isles for two weeks after the conference and he had a pleasant time visiting observatories and exchanging views with amateur as well as professional astronomers. On his return he was greeted by the inevitable vast crowd of friends, social leaders, students and the usual hangers-on. Loaded with garlands and bombarded by questions from the press he somehow made his way to the waiting car.

### Comprehension Check

1. “For a moment James wondered if he had done his sums right.” Why was James doubtful about his sums and calculations?
2. What did the scientists at the conference say about James’s ‘sums’?
3. Immediate action was needed, the scientists decided. Give one example each of ‘defensive’ and ‘offensive’ action mentioned in the text.
4. “I am not buying any Christmas presents till December 15.” What did Sir John mean by that?

## II

- Duttada returns home to a warm welcome and a ceremony, which is not a scientist’s delight.
- A secret communication sends him rushing to the local sweet shop.
- Indrani Debi says that Khoka, their eight-year-old grandson, has saved the world. Her husband is seriously puzzled.

Arriving home he found another crowd gathered under a *pandal*. He glanced questioningly at Indrani Debi. Surely she knew how he hated crowds. Indrani, obviously uneasy, offered the explanation: “I have arranged a *yajna* and called priests to bless you.”

“But why? Just because I left the shores of India? You know it is no longer taboo! And in any case you know my views on these meaningless rituals.”

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**hangers-on:** people in a meeting etc. (usually uninvited) who try to appear very friendly with important people **taboo:** something not permitted for religious, social/cultural reasons



Indrani Debi looked at Sibaji babu, the younger brother of her husband. Sibaji babu coughed and explained, "We have all been very disturbed since you discovered the comet. Guruji recommended a *shanti yajna* to pacify the evil spirit behind the comet. We are all waiting for you to perform the *yajna*."

"May I know what specific advantage there is in this ceremony?" Duttada was outwardly calm.

"The comet you have discovered will not cause any ill effects on the Earth."

At this remark Duttada blew up. "Don't you know that this is all superstition? It could be condoned in the olden times when man did not know what comets were. Not so in modern times. Comets are known for what they are, their movements are forecast precisely by mathematical calculations and it is clearly established by statistical studies that their visits have no correlations with disasters on the Earth ... All this is of course futile on my part to explain — you and the likes of you never read even the elementary books on Science."

Sibaji babu gently interjected, "But our wise forefathers recommended such *yajnas*."

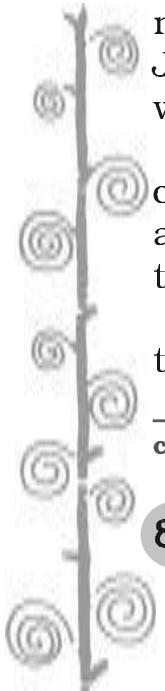
Since his return from London, Duttada was in regular correspondence with Sir John Macpherson. Their friendship had grown out of their appreciation of each other's virtues. Sir John admired Duttada's scientific outlook while the latter admired the former's discipline and efficiency. Their correspondence never mentioned the Project Light Brigade although once in a while Sir John would hint at its progress in a subtle manner that Duttada would understand.

Meanwhile Comet Dutta was following its predicted path. In due course it developed its tail. It circled round the Sun without breaking apart; nor did it evaporate. The scientists on Project Light Brigade therefore knew that the threat of collision was now very much real.

In the middle of October, Duttada got a letter from Sir John. In the midst of descriptions of the meeting of the Royal Astronomical

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**correlations:** connections    **futile:** useless; in vain



Society, the unseasonably warm weather, the opening matches of the football season and a recent bye-election, Duttada spotted the sentence he was eagerly looking for: "The charge of the Light Brigade has begun. Let us hope for the best." So the spacecraft had been launched on time.

But will it achieve the rendezvous in time and at the right place? Will the remote control detonation work? What if the gigantic nuclear pile fails to fire?

Duttada could not share his anxieties with anyone around him. He had to participate in and outwardly enjoy the Puja ceremonies, the Diwali celebration and other festivals. His sole daytime relaxation was in the company of Khoka, his eight-year-old grandson, and of course at night looking through Dibya.

He was regularly monitoring the comet, now clearly visible even to the naked eye. On November 18 a special messenger on a scooter from the British Council brought in an urgent telex message for him. The telex operator in Calcutta had wondered what was so special about it to make it so urgent. But on reading it Duttada lost all his lethargy and rushed to his favourite *rasagolla* shop. The message read:

"I am confident now of buying my Christmas presents on December 15 — John Macpherson."

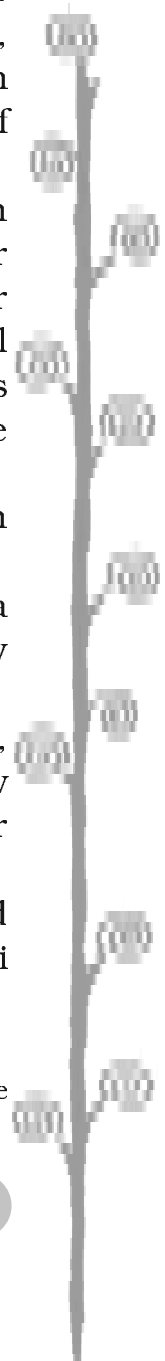
On December 15 Comet Dutta came closest to the earth — at a distance of 80,000 kilometres. Millions saw it and admired it. Only a handful knew how close they had come to total annihilation.

When the comet had gone far away and was seen no more, Duttada felt it safe to make the following comment to his wife: "Now that the comet came and went, are you satisfied that no major disaster took place that can be attributed to it?"

"I agree that there has been no major disaster; but there could have been some. Do you know how they were averted?" Indrani Debi said with quiet confidence.

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**lethargy:** laziness **annihilation:** total destruction **attributed:** (can be) put down to/be the result of



Duttada looked at her. Did she know? How could she? He had never mentioned Project Light Brigade to her. He probed cautiously, "I don't understand what you mean."

"It is very simple. There were no disasters because of the *yajna* at our house."

"But I never performed the *yajna*. Don't you remember, I refused to have anything to do with it?"

"Of course, I do. But we found a way out — at least Guruji did. He said that if you were unwilling to perform the *yajna*, it would be all right if a descendant of yours did it. So we got Khoka to deputise for you. And it has worked! Isn't Guruji clever?" Indrani's voice had a ring of triumph.

Duttada formed a mental picture of Khoka performing the *yajna* uttering *mantras* dictated to him which he did not understand,



**descendant:** a close relative (children or grandchildren) **deputise:** act on your behalf





pouring *ghee* at specified intervals into the fire, offering flowers... And then the picture changed to an assembly of scientists at the conference analysing the problem, devising solutions and executing them rationally and efficiently.

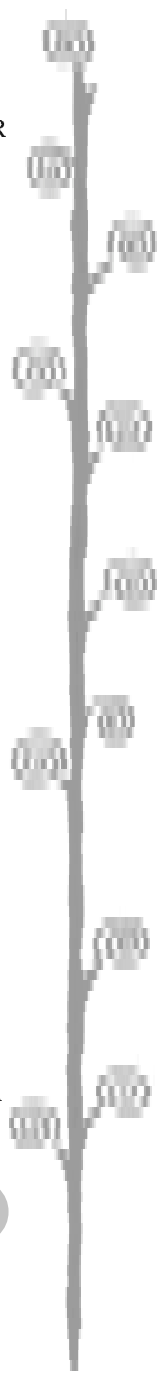
It seemed hard to believe that both pictures were different aspects of contemporary human society. Duttada was aware of the gulf that separates the rich from the poor, the educated from the illiterate, the privileged from the unprivileged. But this gap between the rational and the superstitious seemed to him far wider, far more sinister. Will human society ever succeed in eliminating it?

Duttada did not know the answer.

JAYANT NARLIKAR

### Comprehension Check

1. What is Duttada expected to do on his return from London?
2. What is his reaction to the proposal?
3. (i) What does 'Project Light Brigade' refer to?  
(ii) What does Sir John say about the Project in his letter to Duttada in October?
4. Did Sir John buy Christmas presents on December 15? How did Duttada get to know about it?
5. Why, according to Indrani Debi, had the comet not been disastrous? Do you agree with her?
6. Is Duttada's general outlook
  - (i) rational?
  - (ii) moral?
  - (iii) traditional?
 Choose the right word. Say why you think it right.




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**contemporary:** of the same period; modern    **rational:** logical/that which has a reason  
**sinister:** dangerous/harmful



## Exercise



**Discuss the following topics in small groups. Write your answers afterwards.**

1. Should a scientist's findings be suppressed if they seem disturbing? Give reasons for and against the topic.
2. Do you think ours is a traditional society? What are some of the things we do to be called traditional? Do you find these things useless or useful?
3. Give two or three examples to show how science has been useful to us.
4. Give one example to show how science has been misused, and has as a result been harmful to us.

## Think it Over



- When a person who has never flattered you suddenly discovers all your qualities, he either wants to con you or needs something urgently from you. (To 'con' is to swindle after gaining one's trust)
- Be generous in complimenting others. The secret of happiness is to make others believe that they are the cause of it.

