

Chapter 8

Mijbil the Otter

Oral Comprehension Check Pg-106

Q. 1 What 'experiment' did Maxwell think Camusfearna would be suitable for?

Ans.: Maxwell thought about keeping an Otter as a pet after the death of his dog. Camusfearna, ringed by water a very short distance from its door, he thought would, therefore, be a suitable spot for this experiment he had in mind.

Q.2 Why does he go to Basra? How long does he wait there and why?

Ans.: He went to Basra, to Consulate-General, to collect and answer his mail from Europe. He had to wait there for five days because his mail did not reach on time. At first, he sent a telegraph to England but nothing happened for three days. Then he had to book an international call 24hours in advance and on the very first day the line was not working properly. On the second day, it was a public holiday followed by another breakdown on the third day. However, after a tedious time of five days, his mail finally arrived.

Q.3 How does he get the otter? Does he like it? Pick out the words that tell you this.

Ans.: When he received his mail, he carried it to his bedroom to read it. There, he saw two Arabs with a sack. They handed him a note from his friend saying that he had sent him an other.

Yes, he liked it very much. The sentence from the text, 'It is, in effect, a thralldom to otters, an otter fixation, that I have since found to be shared by most other people, who have ever owned one' throws light on the strong feeling of happiness that he had.

Q.4 Why was the otter named "Maxwell's Otter"?

Ans.: The otter belonged to a race previously unknown to science and was at length christened by zoologists *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli*, or Maxwell's otter.

Q.5 Tick the right answer. In the beginning, the otter was-

- aloof and indifferent
- friendly
- hostile

Ans.: In the beginning, the otter was aloof and indifferent.

Q.6 What happened when Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom? What did it do two days after that?

Ans.: When Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom, it was plunging and rolling in the bathtub, shooting up and down the length of the bathtub underwater, and making enough slosh and splash for a hippo.

After two days, it escaped from the bedroom to the bathroom. By the time he got there, Mijbil was fumbling at the chromium taps with its paws and in less than a minute, it had turned the tap enough to produce some water and after some time, achieving full flow.

Oral Comprehension Check Pg-108

Q.1 How was Mij to be transported to England?

Ans.: Maxwell booked a flight to Paris and then to London. The airline insisted that Mij should be packed in a box (not more than eighteen inches square) that was to be placed on the floor.

Q.2 What did Mij do to the box?

Ans.: Mij did not sit silently in the box and found it very uncomfortable. It kept on moving round and round and in an attempt to escape; he tore the metal lining of the box. As a result, Mij had hurt himself and started bleeding.

Q.3 Why did Maxwell put the otter back in the box? How do you think he felt when he did this?

Ans.: Maxwell put the otter back in the box because he was left with no other option at the last moment. Only ten minutes were left for the flight to take off and the distance of airport was about five miles. When he did this, he must have felt pity for the way the otter was hurt as well as worried at the same time.

Q.4 Why does Maxwell say the air hostess was 'the very queen of her kind'?

Ans.: Maxwell said that the air hostess was 'the very queen of her kind' because she was very friendly and helpful. When Maxwell took her into confidence about the incident with the box, she suggested him to keep his pet on the knees. The author, therefore, developed a profound admiration for the cooperative lady who could understand his pain and trouble.

Oral Comprehension Check Pg-110

Q.1 What game had Mijbil invented?

Ans.: Mijbil had invented a game of his own which he played with a ping-pong ball. There was a slope on one end of the suitcase. Mij placed the ball on one end of the sloping lid, and then grab it as it ran down to the other-end.

Q.2 What are 'compulsive habits'? What does Maxwell say are the compulsive habits of (i) school children (ii) Mij?

Ans.: 'Compulsive habits' are strange acts of behaviour which one does without a particular reason.

School children on their way to school and back placed their feet on the center of the each paving block. Similarly, Mijbil would tug the author to the two feet high wall of a school when he walked with him. On his way home, he made it a habit of jumping on to the wall and go galloping all along its length of thirty yards.

Q.3 What group of animals do otters belong to?

Ans.: Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called Mustellines shared by badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink and others.

Q.4 What guesses did the Londoners make about what Mij was?

Ans.: According to Maxwell, the average Londoner could not recognize an otter. They made varied guesses about who he was considering him to be a baby seal, a squirrel, a walrus, a hippo, a beaver, a bear cub, a leopard and a brontosaur.

Thinking about the Text

Q.1 What things does Mij do which tells you that he is an intelligent, friendly and fun loving animal who needs love?

Ans.: Mij was an intelligent animal. It invented a game of his own out of the ping-pong balls. It was able to screw the tap till water began to flow and then it would play and splash underwater. Though it was aloof and indifferent in the beginning, it soon became very friendly and developed a special attachment with Maxwell. It gradually began responding to him when he called Mij. It grew extremely desperate when Maxwell left him in a box and clung to his feet as soon as he came out. Mij was also a fun loving animal who liked to play all kinds of games including toys, ping-pong balls, marbles, rubber fruit and a terrapin shell.

Q.2 What are some of the things we come to know about otters from this text?

Ans.: Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called Mustellines shared by badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink, and others. Maxwell's Otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists as *Lutrogale Perspicillata* Maxwell or Maxwell's Otter. In accordance with the text, Mijbil was a very friendly, intelligent and fun loving animal who developed his own sliding game and also liked to play ping-pong balls and going up and down the bathtub underwater. He possessed an exquisite way of enjoying his free life and surroundings. We can thus conclude that not only otters but all kinds of animals possess a hilarious as well as caring attitude and tend to build a very healthy and affectionate relationship with whomsoever they live.

Q.3 Why is Mij's species now known to the world as Maxwell's otter?

Ans.: Maxwell's Otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists as *Lutrogale Perspicillata* Maxwell or Maxwell's Otter.

Q.4 Maxwell in the story speaks for the otter, Mij. He tells us what the otter feels and thinks on different occasions. Given below are some things the otter does. Complete the column on the right to say what Maxwell says about what Mij feels and thinks.

| What Mij does | How Mij feels or think |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Plunges, rolls in the water and makes the water splash and splash | |
| Screws the tap in the wrong way | |
| Nuzzles Maxwell's face and neck in the aeroplane. | |

Ans.:

| What Mij does | How Mij feels or think |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Plunges, rolls in the water and makes the water splash and splash | Went wild with joy |
| Screws the tap in the wrong way | Irritated and disappointed |
| Nuzzles Maxwell's face and neck in the aeroplane. | Shows his love and affection |

Q.5 Read the story and find the sentences where Maxwell describes his pet otter. Then choose and arrange your sentences to illustrate those statements below that you think are true. Maxwell description

- (i) Makes Mij seem almost human, like a small boy.
- (ii) Shows that he is often irritated with what Mij does.

- (iii) Shows that he is often surprised by what Mij does.
- (iv) of Mij's antics is comical.
- (v) Shows that he observes the antics of Mij very carefully.
- (vi) Shows that he thinks Mij is a very ordinary otter.
- (vii) Shows that he thinks the otter is very unusual.

Ans.:

(i) The following instances show that Mij seems almost human, like a small boy.

He plunges and rolls in the water. He shoots up and down the bathtub underwater. He makes enough slosh and splash and turns the water tap enough to produce a trickle of water. He plays and juggles small objects between his paws lying on its back. He nuzzles the author's face and neck.

(iii) Mij turned the tap enough to produce a trickle of water, followed by full flow in less than a minute with the help of his paws.

(v) Mij developed his own game from the damaged suitcase of the author. He discovered that if he would place the ball at the high end, it would slide down to the lower end. He always dashed around from one end of the suitcase to another and would grab the ball and trot it off to the high end again and again.

(vii) He did not believe that the otter is an unusual animal. However, the variety of guesses Londoners made about who Mij was what came as a surprise to the author.

Thinking about Language

Q.1 Describing a Repeated Action in the Past

To talk about something that happened regularly in the past, but does not happen any longer, we use *would* or *used to*. Both *would* and *used to* can describe repeated actions in the past.

(a) Mij *would* follow me without a lead and come to me when I called his name.

(b) He *would* play for hours with a selection of toys.

(c) On his way home... Mij *would* tug me to this wall.

(d) When I was five years old, I *used to* follow my brother all over the place.

(e) He *used to* tease me when mother was not around.

To describe repeated states or situations in the past, however, we use only *used to*. (We cannot use *would* for states or situations in the past.) So we do not use *would* with verbs like *be*, *have*, *believe*, etc. Look at the following sentences.

(a) When we were young, we *used to* believe there were ghosts in school. (Note: *belief* shows a state of mind.)

(b) Thirty years ago, more women *used to* be housewives than now. (Note: *be* here describes a situation.)

From the table below, make as many correct sentences as you can using *would* and/ or *used to*, as appropriate. (Hint: First decide whether the words in *italics* show an action, or a state or situation, in the past.) Then add two or three sentences of your own to it.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| Emperor Akbar | | Be fond of musical evening |
| Every evening we | <i>would</i> | Take long walks on the beach |
| Fifty years ago, very few people | | Own cars |
| Till the 1980s, Shanghai | <i>Used to</i> | Have very dirty streets |

| | | |
|----------|--|-------------------------------|
| My uncle | | Spend his holidays by the sea |
|----------|--|-------------------------------|

Ans.:

- (i) Emperor Akbar used to be fond of musical evenings.
- (ii) Every evening we used to take long walks on the beach.

OR

Every evening we would take long walks on the beach.

- (iii) Fifty years ago, very few people used to own cars.
- (iv) Till the 1980's Shanghai used to have very dirty streets.
- (v) My uncle used to spend his holidays by the sea.

More Example-

- (i) Our English teacher used to teach us moral education.
- (ii) My mother used to read the Ramayana in the morning.

Q.2A Look at these examples from the text and say whether the modifiers (in italics) are nouns, proper nouns, or adjective plus noun.

- (i) An otter fixation
- (ii) The iron railings
- (iii) The Tigris marshes
- (iv) The London streets
- (v) Soft velvet fur
- (vi) A four-footed soccer player

Ans.: (i) Noun

(ii) Noun

(iii) Proper noun

(iv) Proper noun

(v) Adjective plus Noun

(vi) Adjective plus Noun

Q.2B Given below are some nouns, and a set of modifiers (in the box). Combine the nouns and modifiers to make as many appropriate phrases as you can. (Hint: The nouns and modifiers are all from the texts in this book.)

Temple – girls – triangle - Dresses

Person – thoughts – boys - roar

Gifts – scream – farewell - expression

Time – subject – landscape - handkerchief

Crossing – flight – chatterbox - profession

Physique – coffee - view - celebration

College – rough – hundred – Stone - ordinary

Love - Uncomfortable - white - slang - slack

Bare – railroad – tremendous – family - marriage

Plump – invigorating – panoramic – heartbreaking - birthday

Incorrigible – Ridiculous – loud – first – three

Ans.: Temple – white temple, stone temple

Person- incorrigible person, ridiculous person

Gifts – birthday gifts

Time – first time, rough time

Crossing – railroad crossing

Physique – plump physique

Three girls – incorrigible three girls, first three girls

Thoughts – heartbreaking thoughts, ridiculous thoughts

Scream – loud scream

Subject – college subject

Flight – first flight

Coffee – invigorating coffee

Triangle – love triangle

Boys – college boys

Farewell – heartbreaking farewell

Landscape- bare landscape

Chatterbox – incorrigible chatterbox

View – panoramic view

Dresses – birthday dresses, marriage dresses

Roar – loud roar

Expression – bare expression

Handkerchief – white handkerchief

Profession – family profession

Celebration – birthday celebration, family celebration

NOTE – Students can frame more phrases using suitable words given.
The above given are few examples.

Q.3A Match the words on the left with a word on the right. Some words on the left can go with more than one word on the right.

- (i) a portion of -blood
- (ii) a pool of – cotton
- (iii) flakes of – stones
- (iv) a huge heap of – gold
- (v) a gust of – fried fish
- (vi) little drops of – snow
- (vii) a piece of – water
- (viii) a pot of – wind

Ans.: (i) a piece of cotton

(ii) a pool of blood

(iii) Flakes of snow

(iv) a huge heap of stones

(v) a gust of the wind

(vi) little drops of water

(vii) a portion of fried fish

(viii) a pot of gold

Q.3B Use a bit of/a piece of/a bunch of/a cloud of/a lump of with the italicised nouns in the following sentences. The first has been done for you as an example.

(i) My teacher gave me some advice. _____

(ii) Can you give me some clay, please? _____

(iii) The information you gave was very useful. _____

(iv) Because of these factories, smoke hangs over the city. _____

(v) Two stones rubbed together can produce sparks of fire. _____

(vi) He gave me some flowers on my birthday. _____

Ans: (i) My teacher gave me some advice - My teacher gave me a bit of advice.

(ii) Can you give me some clay, please? - Can you give me a lump of clay, please?

(iii) The information you gave was very useful. - The piece of information you gave was very useful.

(iv) Because of these factories, smoke hangs over the city. - Because of these factories, a cloud of smoke hangs over the city.

(v) Two stones rubbed together can produce sparks of fire. - Two pieces of stones rubbed together can produce sparks of fire.

(vi) He gave me some flowers on my birthday. - He gave me a bunch of flowers on my birthday.

Fog - Thinking about the Poem

Q.1A What does Sandburg think the fog is like?

Ans.: According to Sandburg, fog is like a cat.

Q.1B How does the fog come?

Ans.: The fog comes silently like a cat. It sits on haunches looking around the harbour and the city and then moves on.

Q.1C What does 'it' in the third line refer to?

Ans.: In the third line, 'it' refers to the fog that has covered the city.

Q.1D Does the poet actually say that the fog is like a cat? Find three things that tell us that the fog is like a cat.

Ans.: No, the poet does not actually say that the fog is like a cat.

However, he uses the cat as a metaphor to describe the fog. The three things that tell us that the fog is like a cat are:

(i) The fog comes slowly and silently like a cat.

(ii) It spreads over the city and stays for some time like a cat sitting on its haunches.

(iii) The fog disappears after some time just as a cat moves away after some time.

NOTE – Metaphor refers to a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not applicable in a practical sense.

Q.2 You know that a metaphor compares two things by transferring a feature of one thing to the other.

| | | |
|--------|-------|-----------------------------|
| Storm | Tiger | Pounces over fields, growls |
| Train | | |
| Fire | | |
| School | | |
| Home | | |

(ii) Think about a storm. Try to visualise the force of the storm, hear the sound of the storm, feel the power of the storm and the sudden calm that happens afterwards. Write a poem about the storm comparing it with an animal.

Ans.:

(i) Find metaphors for the following words and complete the table below. Also, try to say how they are alike. The first is done for you.

| | | |
|--------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Storm | Tiger | Pounces over fields, growls |
| Train | Gush of Wind | Swift movement |
| Fire | Anger | Symbolises the dangers on the basis of their magnitude |
| School | Temple | Provide knowledge |
| Home | Refugee camp | Provide protection and care |

(ii) Ferocious as a leopard,
It touches the terrain.
Growling all over the place,
Howling at its highest pace.

NOTE - This is just a small example using leopard as a metaphor. Students can write the poem using innovative ideas.

Q.3 Does this poem have a rhyme scheme? Poetry that does not have an obvious rhythm or rhyme is called 'free verse'.

Ans.: No, this poem has no rhyme scheme. It is written in 'free verse'.