

3

A Day's Wait

— Ernest Hemingway

Most of the troubles in life come from misunderstanding.

In this unit

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About the Author



Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961): Ernest Hemingway was an American author and journalist. His economical and understated style had a strong influence on 20th-century fiction, while his life of adventure and his public image influenced later generations. Hemingway produced most of his work between the mid-1920s and the mid-1950s, winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954. He published seven novels, six short story collections, and two non-fiction works. Three novels, four collections of short stories, and three non-fiction works were published posthumously. Many of his works are considered classics of American literature.

He committed suicide in the summer of 1961.

The Passage

Glossary

Difficult words:

miserable = unhappy,
sad

fever = abnormally
high body
temperature

germs = microbes

light-headed = dizzy

slack = slow, moving
carelessly

The Passage

He came into the room to shut the windows while we were still in bed and I saw he looked ill. He was **shivering**, his face was white and he walked slowly as though it **ached** to move.

‘What’s the matter, Schatz?’

‘I’ve got a headache.’

‘You better go back to bed.’

‘No. I’m all right.’

‘You go to bed. I’ll see you when I’m dressed.’

But when I came downstairs he was dressed, sitting by the fire, looking a very sick and **miserable** boy of nine years. When I put my hand on his forehead I knew he had a **fever**.

‘You go up to bed,’ I said, ‘you’re sick.’

‘I’m all right,’ he said.

When the doctor came he took the boy’s temperature.

‘What is it?’ I asked him.

‘One hundred and two.’

One word substitute:

epidemic = wide spread disease

purgative = substance which has power to cleanse the bowels/intestine

acid condition = having more than normal amount of acid

pirate = robber who attacks ships

Downstairs, the doctor left three different medicines in different coloured capsules with instructions for giving them. One was to bring down the fever, another a **purgative**, the third to overcome an **acid condition**. The **germs** of influenza can only **exist** in an acid condition, he explained. He seemed to know all about influenza and said there was nothing to worry about if the fever did not go above one hundred and four degrees. This was a light **epidemic** of flu and there was no danger if you **avoided** pneumonia.

Back in the room I wrote the boy's temperature down and made a note of the time to give the various capsules. 'Do you want me to read to you?'

'All right. If you want to,' said the boy. His face was very white and there were dark areas under his eyes. He lay still in the bed and seemed very **detached** from what was going on.

I read aloud from Howard Pyle's *Book of Pirates*; but I could see he was not following what I was reading.

'How do you feel, Schatz?' I asked him.

'Just the same, so far,' he said.

I sat at the foot of the bed and read to myself while I waited for it to be time to give another capsule. It would have been natural for him to go to sleep, but when I looked up he was looking at the foot of the bed, looking very strangely.

'Why don't you try to sleep? I'll wake you up for the medicine.'

'I'd rather stay awake.'

After a while he said to me, 'You don't have to stay in here with me. Papa, if it **bothers** you.'

'It doesn't bother me.'

'No, I mean you don't have to stay if it's going to bother you.'

I thought perhaps he was a little **light-headed** and after giving him the **prescribed** capsules at eleven o'clock I went out for a while.

At the house they said the boy had refused to let anyone come into the room.

'You can't come in,' he said. 'You mustn't get what I have.'

I went up to him and found him in exactly the position I had left him, white-faced, but with the tops of his cheeks **flushed** by the fever, staring still, as he had **stared**, at the foot of the bed.

I took his temperature.

'What is it?'

'Something like a hundred,' I said. It was one hundred and two and four tenths.

Verbs and Idioms:

to shiver = to tremble

to ache = to have pain

to exist = to be alive

to avoid = to keep away from,

to detach = to be aloof

to bother = to make trouble

to prescribe = to give as a remedy

to flush = to wash out, to flow with a rush

to stare = to gaze, to look at something one constantly

to commence = to start, to begin

'It was a hundred and two,' he said.

'Who said so?'

'The doctor.'

'Your temperature is all right,' I said. 'It's nothing to worry about.'

'I don't worry,' he said, 'but I can't keep from thinking.'

'Don't think,' I said. 'Just take it easy.'

'I'm taking it easy,' he said and looked straight ahead. He was evidently holding tight onto himself about something.

'Take this with water.'

'Do you think it will do any good?'

'Of course it will.'

I sat down and opened the Pirate book and commenced to read, but I could see he was not following, so I stopped.

'About what time do you think I'm going to die?' he asked.

'What?'

'About how long will it be before I die?'

'You aren't going to die. What's the matter with you?'

'Oh yes, I am. I heard him say a hundred and two.'

'People don't die with a fever of one hundred and two. That's a silly way to talk.'

'I know they do. At school in France the boys told me you can't live with forty-four degrees. I've got a hundred and two.'

He had been waiting to die all day, ever since nine o'clock in the morning.

'You poor Schatz,' I said. 'Poor old Schatz. It's like miles and kilometres. You aren't going to die. That's a different thermometer.'

On that thermometer thirty-seven is normal. On this kind it's ninety-eight.'

'Are you sure?'

'Absolutely,' I said. 'It's like miles and kilometres. You know, like how many kilometres we make when we do seventy miles in the car.'

'Oh,' he said.

But his **gaze** at the foot of the bed relaxed slowly. The hold over himself relaxed too, finally, and the next day it was very **slack** and he cried very easily at little things that were of no importance. (Slightly Abridged)

EXERCISE – I

Read the passage and select the correct answer for the following:

1. The author of the *Book of Pirates* is _____.
(a) Howard Pyle (b) Earnest Hemingway (c) Schatz (d) Schatz's father
2. In the beginning of the story, Schatz complained of _____.
(a) a headache (b) a toothache (c) a backache (d) a fever
3. How old is Schatz? _____.
(a) 8 years (b) 9 years (c) 10 years (d) 11 years
4. Why did the doctor prescribe the third medicine? _____.
(a) to overcome acid condition (b) to bring down the fever (c) as a purgative (d) to make Schatz sleep
5. How much did Schatz's temperature really measure? _____.
(a) a hundred (b) a hundred and two (c) a hundred and two and four tenths (d) a hundred and four
6. Schatz had a misunderstanding regarding _____.
(a) two thermometers (b) *Book of Pirates* (c) miles and kilometers (d) two pirates
7. Schatz's father removes his misunderstanding by showing the difference between _____.
(a) two thermometers (b) *Book of Pirates* (c) miles and kilometers (d) two pirates

EXERCISE – II

Answer the following questions:

1. Describe Schatz's condition in the beginning of the story.

2. Which medicines did the doctor prescribe for Schatz?

3. Why did Schatz not want his father to stay in the room with him?

4. What are the two thermometers mentioned in the lesson?

Three blank horizontal lines spaced evenly apart, intended for children to practice writing letters or words.

5. How did Schatz's father clarify his doubts about temperature?

6. Explain the significance of the title of the story.

7. What was the effect on Schatz after he understood his mistake?

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EXERCISE – III

Write a short paragraph on:

1. Schatz's illness

2. The end of the story

3. The title of the story ‘A Day’s Wait.’