



**IIT Madras**  
ONLINE DEGREE

## Copyright and terms of use

**IIT Madras is the sole owner of the content available in this portal - [onlinedegree.iitm.ac.in](http://onlinedegree.iitm.ac.in) and the content is copyrighted to IIT Madras.**

- Learners may download copyrighted material for their use for the purpose of the online program only.
- Except as otherwise expressly permitted under copyright law, no use other than for the purpose of the online program is permitted.
- No copying, redistribution, retransmission, publication or exploitation, commercial or otherwise of material will be permitted without the express permission of IIT Madras.
- Learner acknowledges that he/she does not acquire any ownership rights by downloading copyrighted material.
- Learners may not modify, publish, transmit, participate in the transfer or sale, create derivative works, or in any way exploit, any of the content, in whole or in part.

# SWAMI AND FRIENDS

## CHAPTER IV

### **WHAT IS A TAIL?**

# READ ALOUD IN SLOW TEMPO

THE Geography Master was absent, and the boys of the First A had leisure between three and three-forty-five on Wednesday. Somehow Swaminathan had missed his friends and found himself alone. He wandered along the corridor of the Infant Standards. To Swaminathan, who did not really stand over four feet, the children of the Infant Standards seemed ridiculously tiny. He felt vastly superior and old. He was filled with contempt when he saw them dabbling in wet clay, trying to shape models. It seemed such a meaningless thing to do at school! Why, they could as well do those things resembling elephants, mangoes, and whatnots, in the backyards of their houses. Why did they come all the way to a school to do this sort of thing?

# ACTIVITY 1

1. Identify the words of present tense from the above passage.  
(e.g. dabbling).
2. Find a replacement for the following words in the context of the passage: leisure, wandered, vastly, sort.
3. What is the root of the following words: ridiculously, resembling

# ACTIVITY 1

4. State whether the given statements are true or false.

- a. Dabbling means dipping hand in water.
- b. Swaminathan felt happy when he saw the kids playing with water.

5. Identify a word in the passage which can be replaced with 'etcetera'.

6. Identify words in the passage which is made by joining two words (somehow, whatnots).

1. What is the height of Swaminathan?

2. Why was Swaminathan feeling superior and old?

# READ ALOUD IN SLOW TEMPO

Schools were meant for more serious things like Geography, Arithmetic, Bible, and English. In one room he found all the children engaged in repeating simultaneously the first two letters of the Tamil alphabet. He covered his ears and wondered how the teacher was able to stand it. He passed on. In another room he found an ill-clad, noisy crowd of children. The noise that they made, sitting on their benches and swinging their legs, got on his nerves. He wrinkled his brow and twisted his mouth in the hope of making the teacher feel his resentment but unfortunately the teacher was sitting with his back to Swaminathan. He paused at the foot of the staircase leading to the senior classes the Second and the Third Forms. He wanted to go up and inspect those classes which he eagerly looked forward to joining. He took two or three steps up, and changed his mind.

# ACTIVITY 2

1. Identify the words which are capitalised in the passage.
2. What does the phrase 'passed on' mean?
3. Can you recall more words like ill-clad (two different words joining together)?
4. Can you replace the phrase, 'got on his nerves' with one word?
5. Find the meaning of the word 'resentment' in your dictionary.
6. Mark the words or phrases in the passage which shows Swaminathan's anger.
7. Does the phrase 'foot of the staircase' mean that the stairs have foot? Impossible, right. Then, what is the meaning?

# READ ALOUD IN SLOW TEMPO

The Head Master might be up there, he always handled those classes. The teachers too were formidable, not to speak of the boys themselves, who were snobs and bullies. He heard the creak of sandals far off and recognised the footsteps of the Head Master. He did not want to be caught there—that would mean a lot of unsatisfactory explanations. It was with pleasant surprise that he stumbled into his own set, which he had thought was not at school. Except Rajam and Mani all the rest were there. Under the huge tamarind tree they were playing some game. Swaminathan joined them with a low, ecstatic cry. The response disappointed him. They turned their faces to him with a faint smile, and returned to their game. What surprised Swaminathan most was that even the genial Somu was grim. Something seemed to be wrong somewhere.



# ACTIVITY 3

1. Identify words that represent sound in the passage.
2. What is the meaning of the phrase, 'far off?'
3. Search the antonym of the word: snobs, bullies, stumbled, formidable
4. In the context of the passage, replace the word 'faint' used in the sentence, 'they turned their faces to him with a faint smile, and returned to their game.'
5. In the context of the passage, can we derive that genial is the opposite of grim?
6. The meaning of the word 'ecstatic' is the feeling of happiness. But in the passage, you see that it is written as ecstatic cry. Why?

# READ ALOUD IN SLOW TEMPO

Swaminathan assumed an easy tone and shouted: 'Boys, what about a little place for me in the game?' Nobody answered this. Swaminathan paused and announced that he was waiting for a place in the game. 'It is a pity, we can't take more,' Sankar said curtly. There are people who can be very efficient as tails,' said the Pea. The rest laughed at this. 'You said Tail, didn't you?' asked Sankar. 'What makes ' you talk of Tail now?' 'It is just my pleasure. What do you care? It doesn't apply to you anyway,' said the Pea. 'I am glad to hear it, but does it apply to anyone here?' asked Sankar. 'It may.' 'What is a Tail?' 'A long thing that attaches itself to an ass or a dog.' Swaminathan could comprehend very little except that the remark contained some unpleasant references to himself. His cheeks grew hot. He wanted to cry. The bell rang and they ran to their class.

# ACTIVITY 4

1. Can curtly be replaced with the word rudely. Look up the dictionary for the synonyms of curtly.
2. Is 'un' in unpleasant a prefix or a suffix? (Recall more words similar to the word unpleasant).
3. Does the sentence, 'his cheeks grew hot' literally mean that or is it an idiom? Can you identify more such type of idioms used. Can you try replacing 'cheeks grew hot' with some other idiom.
4. In the context of the passage, is the meaning of the word 'tail' its literal meaning or has some other reference?