**Chapter 1: Vitamin M**

**Starter**  
**Take a good look at the busy marketplace in the picture.**

* Give names to the people you see and write down five things you notice in the image. For example: “Jaya is buying a pair of shoes” or “Aliya and Aman are enjoying ice cream as they watch their mother shop.”
* Team up with a partner. Take turns to share five sentences, while the other listens attentively.
* Challenge yourselves by trying to recall and repeat each other’s sentences from memory. How well can you remember the details? Did you score five on five on the memory scale?

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**We love our family! Sometimes while looking after our elderly relatives, we forget that they looked after us once. Read on to learn how they feel about our forgetfulness!**

‘Shall we play chess or watch the cricket match on TV, Grandpa?’ Ravi asked after his mother left.

‘Just set out the chessboard, Ravi,’ Grandpa put his paper down. ‘I’ll just go around the corner to see whether the Tamil newspaper has arrived.’

‘Appa usually buys you the Tamil paper on his way home. But if you want it immediately, I’ll buy it for you,’ Ravi offered.

‘Hope you’re not going to be as tiresome¹ as your mother, Ravi. Treating me like a baby. Has she told you not to let me go out on my own? Told you to keep me a prisoner here, has she?’ Grandpa suddenly looked suspicious².

Ravi looked guilty for a moment then quickly recovered to say loyally, ‘Of course not, Grandpa. Amma would never treat you like a baby. Or as a prisoner.’

‘Good,’ said Grandpa craftily³, ‘then you’ll have no objection to me going out.’

He picked up his beautiful, shiny black mahogany⁴ walking stick with a brass handle carved in the shape of an eagle’s head. He put on his bright yellow cap and declared, ‘I’ll be back home before you can set up the board, Ravi.’

He heard the elevator door shut as Grandpa went down. Ravi decided he would follow Grandpa secretly, at a safe distance, to make sure he came to no harm.

He ran out of the building just in time to see Grandpa’s yellow cap disappearing round the corner.

¹tiresome: annoying  
²suspicious: feeling that somebody has done something wrong  
³craftily: cunningly  
⁴mahogany: a kind of hard reddish-brown wood

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Grandfather’s first stop was the children’s park where he bought himself a paper-cone of peanuts and settled on a bench, watching the children play. Ravi, feeling very foolish, had to crouch behind a bush trimmed in the shape of an elephant to avoid being seen. He felt even more foolish when a small child came up to him and asked, ‘Are you playing hide-and-seek? I can show you a better place to hide.’

‘Shh, shh,’ was all Ravi could say before he felt a shadow fall over him, and an enormous voice boomed⁵, ‘How dare you shoo my child? Who are you?’ It was the little boy’s mother.

‘Shh, shh,’ Ravi repeated to the massive lady.

‘I’ll shh you, you rude boy!’ said the large lady, picking up her umbrella threateningly⁶. The ultimate humiliation was when Ravi had to crawl out of the park on all fours, ducking behind the benches, creeping behind the bushes, thanking his lucky stars⁷ that Grandpa hadn’t heard the noise and spotted him.

Grandpa’s next stop was the tea stall and this time Ravi took position behind a big banyan tree to watch him, feeling most embarrassed when the vendors sitting under the tree gave him quizzical⁸ looks.

‘This area is booked by us,’ said one old lady who was selling plastic combs, in the same tone she might use were she asked to address a gathering without being given a loudspeaker. ‘There’s no room for any new vendors.’

‘Oh, all right!’ Ravi conceded⁹ defeat and moved to duck behind a shiny silver cart, peering¹⁰ through the windows to keep an eye on Grandpa. Grandpa took his time sipping a sugary cup of tea (he was forbidden¹¹ sugar at home), ate two bananas (another banned item), then tucked into¹² an ice cream bought from the cart. (Mother would faint if she saw this!)

Ravi felt hot, bothered and faint by the time Grandpa finished his snack. His heart thudded anxiously when he saw Grandpa zigzagging¹³ through the traffic as he crossed the road. He shut his eyes in panic when...

⁵boomed: made a loud deep sound  
⁶threateningly: in a way that expresses a threat of harm or violence  
⁷thanking [your] lucky stars: feeling grateful and lucky  
⁸quizzical: in a questioning and puzzled manner  
⁹conceded: admitted  
¹⁰peering: staring  
¹¹forbidden: not allowed  
¹²tucked into: ate a lot quickly  
¹³zigzagging: moving forward by making sharp sudden turns first to the left and then to the right

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... he heard a screech¹⁴ of brakes and opened them just in time to see Grandpa entering the barber’s shop. Now Grandpa was as bald as a table-tennis ball, so Ravi decided that a closer look was in order. He crossed the road, first looking dramatically left and then right and then hurriedly ducked into the shop next to the barber’s … only to be evicted¹⁵ a moment later amidst a volley¹⁶ of feminine shrieks because it happened to be a ladies’ hairdressing salon.

‘Just as well I was thrown out,’ thought Ravi, because he spotted Grandpa making his way briskly¹⁷ towards the bus stop, and — oh no — boarding the first bus that stopped there.

Sprinting¹⁸ for the bus and jumping on to it seconds before it started would have deterred¹⁹ a lesser detective, but not Ravi, who was panting as he managed to leap on to the crowded bus. He could see Grandpa’s yellow cap somewhere in the front. It was warm inside the bus so Grandpa took off his cap to reveal … a full head of grey hair! Ravi was startled. ‘Surely Grandpa couldn’t have bought a wig at the barber shop,’ he thought, pushing his way to the front of the bus to confront²⁰ the cap-wearer. It was a total stranger! He was wearing a white dhoti and shirt, which was Grandpa’s standard attire, and a yellow cap exactly like Grandpa’s. But wait, the cap had a coffee-stain on its rim²¹ just like Grandpa’s!

‘Grandpa’s cap!’ Ravi couldn’t help exclaiming. The stranger grinned pleasantly and told Ravi that a kind old gentleman in the barber’s shop had insisted that he take his cap because it was such a hot day. That was typical of Grandpa, always generous. But where was the kind old gentleman?

Ravi went back to the barber’s shop. Grandpa wasn’t there. He wasn’t at the park either. Ravi was frantic²². After all, his mother had left him in charge of Grandpa. He tried calling first his mother and then his father but both numbers were busy. Sick with worry, Ravi went home wondering whether Grandpa would be able to find his way back.

To his great delight and relief, the first thing he heard when he opened the front door was the gentle whir²³ of Grandpa snoring in his bedroom. He knelt down near the bed and put his cheek against the old man’s face. Grandpa’s thin, wrinkled skin...

¹⁴screech: a loud high unpleasant noise  
¹⁵evicted: forced to leave  
¹⁶volley: a lot of questions, comments, offensive remarks, etc. directed at somebody  
¹⁷briskly: quickly  
¹⁸sprinting: running  
¹⁹deterred: put off, discouraged  
²⁰confront: to make somebody face a difficult or unpleasant situation  
²¹rim: circular edge  
²²frantic: in a state of panic  
²³whir: a continuous, low sound

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... had more creases than a map has lines. Grandpa smelt of eucalyptus²⁴ ointment and shaving cream. Ravi suddenly felt overcome with affection for his grandfather and gave him a hug, but Grandpa only grunted²⁵ in his sleep. He decided not to question Grandpa because then he would have to reveal that he had been following him.

‘What did you both do today?’ asked Ravi’s mother when she got back from office.

‘I had a quiet morning, but I don’t know about Ravi. He just disappeared instead of staying at home to look after me like you told him to,’ answered Grandpa coolly, while Ravi just nodded his head in surprise.

Grandpa had another surprise for Ravi. A gift-wrapped parcel!

‘But Appa, Ravi’s birthday was three months ago. Have you forgotten?’ exclaimed Ravi’s mother, impatiently.

‘No. But you know I always give a gift to every child in the house on my birthday. Have you forgotten?’ countered Grandpa, very seriously.

Ravi’s mother flushed red²⁶ and darted a stricken²⁷ look at the calendar on which she had, at the beginning of the year, circled today’s date in red and written ‘Appa’s birthday’. There was a gift for her too, and for Ravi’s father as well, for Grandpa still considered them his ‘children’.

Grandpa turned to Ravi’s father who had just walked into the room, ‘My daughter needs some Vitamin M, I think. For her memory.’

Ravi’s mother flushed a darker shade of red and Ravi’s father looked confused.

Ravi unwrapped his gift to find a thick hardback²⁸ book. *The Best Detective Stories.*

²⁴eucalyptus: a tall tree which produces an oil rich in medicinal properties  
²⁵grunted: made a short, low sound in the throat  
²⁶flushed: red (of a person’s face) became red because of embarrassment  
²⁷stricken: troubled  
²⁸hardback: a book with a stiff cover

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**“Great stories, Ravi. You can pick up some really good tips on how to be a detective. How to avoid getting fooled when one is trailing²⁹ a suspect³⁰ for instance,” Grandpa advised Ravi.**

“I don’t think he wants to be a detective, do you Ravi?” asked his father, looking even more confused.

“I haven’t decided yet,” answered Ravi, because he was too busy trying to decide whether the twinkle in Grandpa’s eye was an innocent gleam or a mischievous one.

(slightly adapted)  
**Asha Nehemiah**

Asha Nehemiah is a children’s author who has written many short stories, picture books and mystery novels. Her stories have unique characters who often end up in hilarious situations. ‘Vitamin M’ has been taken from her collection of stories named Zigzag and Other Stories. Other books by the author include Trouble with Magic and The Boy Whose Nose Was Rose & More Rollicking Stories.

### ****Comprehension****

1. Why did Ravi follow his Grandpa secretly?
2. Where did Grandpa go on his outing?
3. What was unusual about the man wearing Grandpa’s cap?
4. How did Grandpa surprise Ravi and his family when they got back home?
5. What gift did Grandpa give Ravi, and why did he choose that gift?
6. How did Ravi’s mother react when she realized that she had forgotten Grandpa’s birthday?
7. Why did Grandpa suggest that Ravi could pick up some good tips from reading The Best Detective Stories?

### ****Critical Thinking****

1. How do Ravi’s feelings towards his grandfather change throughout the story? Why do you think they change?
2. What qualities do you think Grandpa possesses that make him a special person?
3. Ravi lives in a loving family. Do you agree? Give reasons to support your view.

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**4. Real-Life Connect:**  
Have you ever had the responsibility of caring for a family member? If so, briefly describe your experiences. If not, think of a relative who might benefit from your assistance, and explain how you would like to provide care for them over a weekend.

**Cross-Curricular Connect**  
**How do you remember something?** Your brain is like a library! This library stores all the things you see, hear and learn. When you want to remember something, the brain ‘searches’ for the ‘right book’ in the storage and brings it out to you.

**Read the flow chart given below to find out how our brain remembers information. Work in pairs and use an example to demonstrate the process.**

**INPUT**  
What you see, hear or read

This is called sensory memory — you use it for the moment.  
For example: Recognising everyday objects like flowers, fruits, etc.

➡️

When you pay attention to something, it gets stored in your brain as short-term memory.  
For example: Remembering what you ate for breakfast today.

➡️

If you use the information again and again, it gets stored in long-term memory.  
For example: Remembering the way to your home.

This information is available when you want to use it. Some information may get lost over time.

**Vocabulary**

**Synonyms**

Synonyms are words or phrases that have exactly or nearly the same meaning as each other.

Example: radiant is a synonym of bright.

Look, view, see, peer and glance are synonyms of each other.

**Find out the meaning of the underlined word in each sentence. Then, tick the word that can replace the underlined word in the sentence. One has been done for you.  
(Remember: The meanings of the sentences must not change.)**

1. Grandpa was forbidden sugar at home.
   * a. permitted
   * b. disallowed ✅
   * c. allowed
   * d. approved

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1. … he spotted Grandpa making his way briskly towards the bus stop …
   * a. lazily
   * b. leisurely
   * c. gradually
   * d. swiftly ✅
2. He was evicted a moment later amidst a volley of feminine shrieks.
   * a. expelled ✅
   * b. invited
   * c. welcomed
   * d. ignored
3. Grandpa’s thin, wrinkled skin had more creases than a map has lines.
   * a. spikes
   * b. folds ✅
   * c. bumps
   * d. scratches
4. … the twinkle in Grandpa’s eye was an innocent gleam or a mischievous one.
   * a. dullness
   * b. shine ✅
   * c. shadow
   * d. crumb

**Grammar**

**Revising nouns**

Nouns are words that name people, animals, things, places, qualities, feelings, events, organisations and concepts.

Read this opening sentence from the story:  
“Shall we play chess or watch the cricket match on TV, Grandpa?” Ravi asked after his mother left.

The words in italics are nouns. Let us take a look at the different types of nouns.

**Nouns**

* Common nouns: newspaper, vendor
* Proper nouns: Ravi, The Best Detective Stories
* Countable nouns: gifts, stranger
* Uncountable nouns: tea, patience
* Concrete nouns: umbrella, cars
* Abstract nouns: idea, experience
* Collective nouns: herd, bunch

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Common nouns are names we use for any person, place, idea or thing.  
Proper nouns are words used to name a particular person, place, idea or thing. A proper noun begins with a capital letter.

| **Common nouns** | **Proper nouns** |
| --- | --- |
| girl | Donna, Temy, Garima |
| ocean | Indian Ocean, Pacific Ocean |
| cartoon | Doraemon, Chhota Bheem, Mickey Mouse |

1. **Read the story below. Underline five common nouns and circle four proper nouns. Some are done for you as examples.**

When Moses was born, the cruel king of the land, Pharaoh Ramses II, ordered that all new-born boys must be thrown into the river. Moses’ mother, Jochebed, and sister, Miriam, put baby Moses in a basket and tearfully, placed the basket in river Nile. Miriam hid behind some bushes to see what happened to her baby brother. She took him to the palace. She wanted a nurse to take care of the baby. Miriam cleverly arranged for her mother to become Moses’ nurse. Thus, Moses got all the love from his mother.

Most nouns can be counted. These are called countable nouns. These have both singular and plural forms. For example: tree — trees, rock — rocks, sister — sisters, etc. The nouns that cannot be counted are called uncountable nouns. For example: water, sand, rice, music, love, etc. These are mostly used in singular form. For example, we do not use the plural forms of the following:  
luggage ✓ luggages ✗  
information ✓ informations ✗  
sugar ✓ sugars ✗  
furniture ✓ furnitures ✗

In specific contexts, plural forms of uncountable nouns are used. For example, the word waters is sometimes used to refer to a large expanse of water in a particular area — river, lake, sea, ocean or a country.

**Examples:**

* The waters from two mighty rivers fall into the Bay of Bengal.
* The ship was found floating in international waters.

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1. **Write (C) next to countable nouns and (UC) next to uncountable nouns.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a. book — **C** | e. bread — **UC** |
| b. intelligence — **UC** | f. baggage — **UC** |
| c. smartness — **UC** | d. leaf — **C** |

The nouns that name abstract ideas, emotions or mental states are called abstract nouns. Most abstract nouns are uncountable. For example: love, anger, happiness, kindness, etc.

The nouns that we can experience with our five senses are called concrete nouns. They have both singular and plural forms. They can be countable or uncountable.  
For example:  
Countable concrete nouns: trees, songs, laptops, blankets, etc.  
Uncountable concrete nouns: wood, steel, sand, sugar, etc.

1. **Write (A) next to abstract nouns and (C) next to concrete nouns.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a. hunger — **A** | e. paper — **C** |
| b. branches — **C** | f. wool — **C** |
| c. rocks — **C** | d. pride — **A** |
| g. astonishment — **A** | h. hope — **A** |
| i. experience — **A** |  |

Nouns that are used to refer to a group of people, animals or things are called collective nouns. For example: a flock (of sheep), a bunch (of flowers), a swarm (of bees), etc. A collective noun is treated as a singular noun. Therefore, it takes a singular verb. For example: A flock of birds is flying across the field.

1. **Fill in the blanks with appropriate collective nouns given in the box.**

| team | band | deck | troupe | panel | pile | pack | army |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a. a **deck** of cards | e. a **pack** of wolves |
| b. a **troupe** of dancers | f. an **army** of soldiers |
| c. a **pile** of clothes | g. a **panel** of experts |
| d. a **band** of musicians | h. a **team** of players |

✅ **That’s the full text of Chapter 1: Vitamin M — fully extracted for you!**