

## Summary

It is a story of a homeopathic doctor's encounter with a snake. The doctor lived in a small rented room which was an outhouse. It had two windows and a tiled roof. The tiles were supported by gables which rested on the beam and there was no electricity supply to the room. The place was infested with rats.

One hot summer night, the doctor took his meals at the restaurant and returned home. He lighted the kerosene lamp, took off his coat and shirt and opened the two windows. He settled on the chair and took out a medical book to read. There was a large mirror on the table on which stood a lamp. Since it was too hot to sleep, and he had nothing better to do, he sat down in front of the mirror, admiring himself, planning to improve his appearance as he was an eligible bachelor. Gradually, his thoughts shifted from self-admiration to planning his future marriage. He thought that he would marry a rich doctor having a good practice and that he would choose a fat lady as his wife so that she would not be able to run and catch him.

He was so engrossed in his day dreaming that he did not give much importance to the sudden silence. The rats had stopped scampering and there was a sound of something falling behind him. But he was slow to react. By the time he turned around to have a look, a snake had wriggled over the back of the chair and landed on his shoulders. It coiled around his left arm, above the elbow. It was a dangerous cobra and its hood spread out, hardly three inches from his face. The doctor sat there like a stone statue, afraid to move, lest the snake may strike. He thought of various medicines he had and if any was good enough to save him if the snake did bite him.

In this moment of fear of death, (he realized the presence of God). God had punished him for being too proud and arrogant. He realized that he was but a mere human, a poor man, nothing to boast about.

The moment he accepted his true worth, the snake crawled off and sat on the table in front of the mirror. The doctor got up silently and rushed out of the door. Next morning when he returned, all his belongings had been robbed but for his dirty vest which was too dirty even for the thief.

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## Question and Answers

**Discuss in pairs and answer each question below in a short paragraph (30–40 words).**

1. “The sound was a familiar one.” What sound did the doctor hear? What did he think it was? How many times did he hear it? (Find the places in the text.) When and why did the sounds stop?

A. The sound that the doctor heard was that of rats which moved on the beam overhead. He thought that it was the squeaking of the rats. He heard the sound thrice. The places in the text which indicate this are as follows –

i. “I heard a noise from above as I opened the door”.

ii. “Again I heard that sound from above”.

iii. “Again came that noise from above”.

When the doctor sat on the chair, the sound stopped suddenly as the rats had seen a snake.

2. What two “important” and “earth-shaking” decisions did the doctor take while he was looking into the mirror?

A. When the doctor looked at himself in the mirror, he decided to improve his looks in order to appear more handsome. So, he made two “important and “earth – shaking” decisions. Firstly, he would shave daily and grow a thin moustache. Secondly, he would always keep smiling as he looked attractive when he smiled.

3. “I looked into the mirror and smiled,” says the doctor. A little later he says, “I forgot my danger and smiled feebly at myself.” What is the doctor’s opinion about himself when:

(i) he first smiles, and

(ii) he smiles again?

In what way do his thoughts change in between, and why?

A. (i) when the doctor smiled for the first time, he thought that he was a valuable man as he was an unmarried doctor and there would be many girls who wanted to marry him. He was looking at himself in the mirror, admiring himself and planning to improve his looks.

(ii) when he smiled for the second time, he was helpless and thought that he was a foolish person. He was looking at himself in the mirror, feeling that he was so silly to have landed into trouble as he could not think of any way out.

## Grammar Exercises

**Here are some sentences from the text. Say which of them tell you, that the author: (a) was afraid of the snake, (b) was proud of his appearance, (c) had a sense of humour, (d) was no longer afraid of the snake.**

1. I was turned to stone.

2. I was no mere image cut in granite.

3. The arm was beginning to be drained of strength.

4. I tried in my imagination to write in bright letters outside my little heart the words, ‘O God’.

5. I didn't tremble. I didn't cry out.
6. I looked into the mirror and smiled. It was an attractive smile.
7. I was suddenly a man of flesh and blood.
8. I was after all a bachelor, and a doctor too on top of it!
9. The fellow had such a sense of cleanliness...! The rascal could have taken it and used it after washing it with soap and water.
10. Was it trying to make an important decision about growing a moustache or using eye shadow and mascara or wearing a vermilion spot on its forehead.

A.

S. No	(a) was afraid of the snake	(b) was proud of his appearance	(c) had a sense of humour	(d) was no longer afraid of the snake
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2				I was no mere image cut in granite.
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**Can you find the expressions in the story that tell you that the author was frightened? Read the story and complete the following sentences.**

1. I was turned \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. I sat there holding \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. In the light of the lamp I sat there like \_\_\_\_\_ .

A.

1. I was turned to stone.
2. I sat there holding my breath.
3. In the light of the lamp I sat there like a stone image in the flesh.

**Match the meanings with the words/expressions in italics, and write the appropriate meaning next to the sentence. The first one has been done for you.**

1. I knew a man was following me, I was *scared out of my wits*. (very frightened)
2. I *got a fright* when I realised how close I was to the cliff edge.
3. He *nearly jumped out of his skin* when he saw the bull coming towards him.
4. You really *gave me a fright* when you crept up behind me like that.
5. Wait until I tell his story — it will *make your hair stand on end*.
6. *Paralysed with fear*, the boy faced his abductors.
7. The boy hid behind the door, *not moving a muscle*.

A.

1. I knew a man was following me, I was *scared out of my wits*. (very frightened)
2. I *got a fright* when I realised how close I was to the cliff edge. (frightened by something that happens suddenly)
3. He *nearly jumped out of his skin* when he saw the bull coming towards him. (very frightened)

4. You really *gave me a fright* when you crept up behind me like that. (frightened by something that happens suddenly)
5. Wait until I tell his story — it will *make your hair stand on end*. (makes another feel frightened)
6. *Paralysed with fear*, the boy faced his abductors. (too scared to move)
7. The boy hid behind the door, *not moving a muscle*. (too scared to move)

**Report** **these** **questions**  
using *If/whether* or *why/when/where/how/which/what*.

**(Remember the italicised verbs change into the past tense.)**

- 1.Meena asked her friend, “Do you *think* your teacher will come today?”
- 2.David asked his colleague, “Where *will* you go this summer?”
- 3.He asked the little boy, “Why *are* you studying English?”
- 4.She asked me, “When *are* we going to leave?”
- 5.Pran asked me, “*Have* you finished reading the newspaper?”
- 6.Seema asked her, “How long *have* you lived here?”
- 7.Sheila asked the children, “*Are* you ready to do the work?”

A.

1. Meena asked her friend if she thought the teacher would come that day.
2. David asked his colleague where he would go that summer.
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6. Seema asked her how long she had lived there.
7. Sheila asked the children if they were ready to do the work.