

## Summary

In "The Accidental Tourist" the writer narrates the incidences where he acts strangely. On various air trips, he spills drinks on co - passengers. Its as if his arms work on their own, move towards the tray and knock - off the glass without his directions. He would be unable to get the air miles because either he could not present his card or the clerk refused to give him the points. Once while opening his bag to get the card, he threw all the articles on the floor. Things flew here and there and there was complete chaos. Also, on another trip, the ink from his pen smeared his mouth, teeth, gums and chin. His face turned blue and would remain like that for a couple of days. Once he bend forward to tie his shoelace when the front seat went into a recline position and his head got stuck there. Whenever he ate a meal, the dining table was a complete mess and it appeared as if an earthquake had struck the place. His family was accustomed to it and when they got their meal, they would get alert to prevent being victims of the spillovers. While travelling alone, he would not eat, drink or bend forward. He would even keep his hands under him to avoid mishaps. He never managed to get the airmiles and would not travel free of cost to Bali but that was good in a way. He could not remain without food on such a long flight.

## Question and Answers

1. Bill Bryson says, "I am, in short, easily confused." What examples has he given to justify this?

A: He gets confused when he forgets his room number at a hotel and has to confirm it from the reception. When at a cinema hall, he is unable to find the toilet and lands in a lane, on the other end of a self locking door.

2. What happens when the zip on his carry-on bag gives way?

A. He was trying too hard to open the zip and when it opened suddenly, all the articles flew out of his bag. They were scattered over a large area as big as a

tennis court. He saw all his papers flying out, the coins rolled on the floor and the lidless box of tobacco rolled as the tobacco spilled on the floor.

3. Why is his finger bleeding? What is his wife's reaction?

A. His finger got stuck in the zip. It got cut and was bleeding. His wife was wondering at his strange behaviour.

4. How does Bill Bryson end up in a "crash position" in the aircraft?

A. Bill had bent forward to tie his shoelace. The passenger on the seat in front of him pushed his seat in a reclined position and it hit his head. Thus, he got stuck in a "crash position".

5. Why are his teeth and gums navy blue?

A. Once on a flight, he was preparing a list and was sucking the end of the pen. After twenty minutes, he went to the toilet and saw that the ink had leaked and his mouth, lips, teeth, gums and chin had turned blue. They would remain so for a couple of days.

6. Bill Bryson "ached to be suave". Is he successful in his mission? List his 'unsuave' ways.

A. He was not successful in his attempts to remain suave. His unsuave ways were as follows-

1. He would stain his light coloured trousers with ice - cream, motor oil, gum and cough syrup
2. The sleeve of his coat would get stuck in the car's door.
3. He would leave the dining table in a mess and it would appear as if an earthquake had struck the place.

7. Why do you think Bill Bryson's wife says to the children, "Take the lids off the food for Daddy"?

A. Bill's wife asks the children to remove the lids off the food for daddy because they could do it better than him. He was clumsy and could spill the food while removing the lids.

8. What is the significance of the title?

A. The title "The Accidental Tourist" refers to the accidents caused by the writer while he is travelling.

## Short Answer Type

Question 1.

Bill Bryson says "I am, in short, easily confused." What examples has he given to justify this?

Answer:

He gives the example of returning to his hotel desk two or three times a day, asking what his room number was. He also talks about looking for a lavatory and ending up standing in an alley on the wrong side of a self-locking door.

Question 2.

What happens when the zip on his carry-on bag gives way?

Answer:

The side of the bag flew open and everything inside it, like newspaper cuttings, other loose papers, a 14-ounce tin of pipe tobacco, magazines, passport, English money, film, etc, were scattered all over the place. He also injured his finger, which bled profusely.

Question 3.

What causes his finger to bleed? How does his wife react?

Answer:

His finger was cut on the zip when he was trying to open it. His wife looked at him with an expression of wonder and commented that she couldn't believe that he did that for a living.

Question 4.

How does Bill Bryson end up in a 'crash position' in the aeroplane?

Answer:

This happened when he bent down to tie his shoelaces while seated in the plane, and the person in the seat ahead of him threw back his seat back in a full recline. As a result, Bill Bryson found himself doubled over and pinned helplessly in the 'crash position'.

Question 5.

Why do the writer's teeth and gums turn navy blue?

Answer:

This happens when the writer was penning down important thoughts in his notebook during a flight. He had been sucking thoughtfully on the end of his pen while doing so.

He had not realised that in the process, his teeth and gums had turned navy blue because of the ink.

Question 6.

Bill Bryson 'ached to be suave'. Is he successful in his mission?

Answer:

No, he is not suave in spite of his best efforts, because he always looks as though he has been through an earthquake when he rises from a dinner table. He can never get inside a car without having at least 14 inches of his coat hanging outside the door. He can never wear light coloured trousers without having chewing gum, ice cream, cough syrup, or motor oil stains on them.

Question 7.

Why do you think Bill Bryson's wife says to the children, 'Take the lids off the food for Daddy'?

Answer:

She says this because her husband is so accident-prone that she expects the food to go all over the place or some such accident to happen if he is allowed to open the lid himself. This is because of his earlier accidental incidents that always happen whenever he tries to perform simple actions, especially during flights.

Question 8.

What is the significance of the title?

Answer:

The title suggests that the writer is a tourist, not by choice, but by accident. It is a pun on the word accident, as he has several accidents while travelling. In fact, this effectively captures the various misadventures that he has while travelling with his family. It also suggests that the anecdotes and events described are humorous and should be taken in a lighter vein.

Question 9.

Why does the writer say 'living in the real world' is challenging for him?

Answer:

He says this because he has had several experiences of doing something wrong in instances where normal people have no problems. For instance, things like remembering his room number in an hotel, or finding the lavatory at a movie theatre.

Question 10.

Why did the writer feel the need to open his carry-on bag at Logan Airport?

Answer:

He wanted to open the bag to take out his frequent flyer card, which he had kept inside it.

Question 11.

Of all the things that spilled out of his carry-on bag, what was the writer most disturbed about? Why?

Answer:

He was most disturbed about the loss of his tobacco tin, because he was worried it might be very expensive to buy in England.

Question 12.

How did the writer free himself from the crash position?

Answer:

He did so by clawing at the leg of the man sitting next to him.

Question 13.

How did the writer affect the lady sitting next to him during one of his flights?

Answer:

He kept knocking soft drinks into the lady's lap, even though he tried to be careful after the flight attendant had cleaned her up the first time he had done so.

Question 14.

How did the lady next to the writer on the plane react?

Answer:

She looked at the writer with a stupefied expression of disbelief, and exclaimed an oath that started with 'oh' and ended with 'sake', and had words in between that he had not heard a nun utter before.

Question 15.

What, according to the writer, was his worst experience on a plane?

Answer:

The worst experience according to him was the time his mouth and teeth turned navy blue. He had been sucking on the end of his pen while writing down his thoughts. He then spoke to an attractive lady sitting next to him, before he realised that his teeth, chin and gums had turned a striking shade of blue.

Question 16.

What does the writer do to curb his accidental tendencies when he is flying alone?

Answer:

He doesn't eat or drink, or lean over to tie his shoelaces. He also never puts his pen anywhere near his mouth.

Question 17.

Why does the writer not get his frequent flyer miles?

Answer:

He does not get his miles because he couldn't find his frequent flyer card in time. Also,

he forgets to ask for the miles when he checks in, or the airline does not record them, or the check-in clerk informs him that he is . not entitled to them.

Question 18.

Give an example to show that the writer is a frequent flyer?

Answer:

The fact that the writer says that he usually flies 100,000 miles a year in about 23 different airlines, reveals that he is a frequent flyer.

Question 19.

Give an example of when the writer was not given miles because he was not entitled to them.

Answer:

On a flight to Australia, which could have got him a large number of air miles, he was told by the airport clerk that he was not entitled to them.

Question 20.

Why were the miles not credited to the writer?

Answer:

They were not credited to him because the ticket was in the name of B. Bryson, while the card was in the name of W. Bryson. Even though the writer tried to tell her that 'Bill' was the short form of 'William', she refused to oblige him.

Question 21.

How do we know that the writer is a positive man?

Answer:

We know this from the fact that though he did not get a free passage to Bali due to the insufficient airmiles on his card, he was quite philosophical about it. He remarks that it is probably a good thing, because he could not have remained hungry on the long flight from America to Bali.

Question 22.

What is the meaning of 'venerable'? What is the writer trying to say by using the phrase 'close and venerable relationship between Bill and William'?

Answer:

Venerable means honourable or respectful. By using this phrase, the writer is saying that both Bill and William are closely related; they are in fact different forms of the same name.

Question 23.

How was the writer planning to fly to Bali?

Answer:

He was planning to do so by using the air miles that he would collect for flying so frequently. They are the bonus that one is given for flying by a particular airline, where a

person is awarded a free ticket to any destination after one collects a certain number of points.

Question 24.

What is the tone of the lesson 'The Accidental Tourist'?

Answer:

The tone is humorous and self-deprecating. The writer has made fun of his own shortcomings and clumsiness, by listing out all the accidents he has had while flying in an aircraft, as well as the embarrassing situations he has been in because of this.

Question 25.

Do you think the writer's family members have trouble travelling with him? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer:

I feel that the writer's family are quite used to his clumsiness and have reconciled to the fact that he is likely to have several 'accidents'. This is evident from the fact that his wife asks the children to take the lid off the food for the writer, because she knows even a small thing like opening the lid can have disastrous consequences if he is allowed to do it.

## Long Answer Type

Question 1.

What kind of picture do you get of the writer's character from the lesson 'The Accidental Tourist'?

Answer:

He appears to be a positive, funny, and self-deprecating man who does not mind highlighting his shortcomings. In fact, every instance that could have embarrassed other people has been shown in a humorous light. He has found humour in the most disastrous and frustrating situations. Even when he loses the chance to go to Bali when the airline refuses to give him air miles on a technical reason, he does not lose his temper.

He does not take himself too seriously and readily accepts his clumsiness. He doesn't try to hide any of the embarrassing accidents he has had, but honestly admits to them. His family also appears to have accepted him the way he is, and learnt to handle him along with his 'accidents'. The writer's most endearing quality is how comfortable he is with his own self. Even though he talks about wanting to be suave and gentlemanly like other travellers, he is not too worried when he is unable to do so, in spite of his best efforts. He thus comes across as a clumsy, accident-prone, but good natured person.

Question 2.

Mention two disastrous events that the writer experiences while travelling with women

travellers and trying to impress them?

Answer:

The first instance mentioned is when he is travelling next to a sweet young nun, and he twice spilled his drink on her lap, thereby testing her patience greatly. In fact, she became so agitated that she used swear words, which he had not expected a nun to use. The second instance was when he was talking to his lady companion while sucking on the end of a pen. He later realised that the ink from the pen had stained his teeth, gums, and chin a bright navy blue, which had obviously made him appear ridiculous.

Question 3.

Discuss the title of the story. Do you think it is appropriate? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer:

'The Accidental Tourist' is an apt title for this story. The title is a pun on the word 'accidental'. On one level, the writer is literally accident prone, and has a problem of having the most peculiar accidents while travelling. Some of the accidents include spilling the contents of his bag all over the airport, spilling food and drinks on his fellow travellers. At another level, it refers to him being an accidental or unwilling traveller.

We know this because he mentions that even though he travels a lot every year, he prefers to travel with his family rather than alone. In their absence, he tries to avoid eating or drinking, out of fear of causing mishaps to those travelling with him.

Question 4.

How does the writer's family behave during the writer's mishaps and accidents?

Answer:

The family seems to have accepted the fact that they cannot travel with the writer without facing some accident or the other. This is revealed in the part where the writer's wife reacts with wonder and says that she cannot believe he does it for a living. She seems neither angry nor exasperated/annoyed with his clumsiness. Instead, when he begins to eat the food served during the flight, his children help him take the lid off the food, and his wife warns the children when he is about to cut the meat.

Question 5.

How could the writer make his journeys advantageous in spite of the accidents? Why is he not able to benefit from them ultimately?

Answer:

The writer is a frequent flyer. Hence, he could benefit from collecting frequent flier miles that the airline offers to those who travel with their airline on a regular basis. These miles add up to a free ticket to any destination of the traveller's choice. The writer is, however, not able to take advantage of this scheme, because he either can't find his card on time, or forgets to ask for the miles. Sometimes, the airlines don't record the miles, and one time, the check-in clerk informed him that he was not entitled to the points. Moreover, he doesn't stick to a single airline, and mentions having travelled with 23 airlines, thereby losing out on points from any single airline.



