

# Mijbil the Otter

Question 1: What 'experiment' did Maxwell think Camusfearna would be suitable for?

Answer: Maxwell wanted to have an otter as a pet. This would have been a new experiment for him as people usually keep dogs or cats as pets. Otters are wild creatures and people seldom keep them as pets. It would have been a new learning experience for Maxwell to tame and train the otter.

Question 2: Why does he go to Basra? How long does he wait there, and why?

Answer: Maxwell went to Basra to visit the Consulate General to get his mail. He had had to wait there for five days. To start with his mail didn't reach on time. Then he tried to make a telephone call. This incident is of those days when one had to book an international call 24 hrs in advance. The telephone line was not working properly on the first day. Next day it was some public holiday so it was not working. Finally after a tortuous wait of five days his mail arrived.

Question 3: How does he get the otter? Does he like it? Pick out the words that tell you this.

Answer: One of Maxwell's friends probably requested a local to get an otter for him. Two people came with an otter and delivered it to him. The way the author explains every small prank of otter shows that he liked the otter.

Question 4: Why was the otter named 'Maxwell's otter'?

Answer: The zoological name of that species *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli* indicates to the fact that it was named by some scientist called Maxwell. Or the suffix 'maxwelli' may have been given by the author himself. That is why the otter can be simply called 'Maxwell's Otter'.

Question 5: What happened when Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom? What did it do two days after that?

Answer: Otters live near water and water is their favourite playground. Mijbil enjoyed the sight of water in the bathtub. It enjoyed the water to its fullest. Mijbil splashed water all around the bathroom. Two days later

Mijbil developed confidence to go all alone to the bathroom. It jumped up the bathtub and after some effort turned on the tap as well.

Question 6: How was Mij to be transported to England?

Answer: As British airlines did not allow animals to be taken by plane so the author decided to take it by another airline to Paris and then from Paris to London. The airline's directive said that Mij could be carried in a box which should not be bigger than 18 square inches in dimension.

Author was allowed to keep the box near his feet in the plane.

Question 7: What did Mij do to the box?

Answer: The box was lined with metal sheet. Mij didn't find it comfortable to be there so tried to escape. In its attempt to escape, Mij tore into the metal lining of the box. As a result it hurt itself and started bleeding.

Question 8: Why did Maxwell put the otter back in the box? How do you think he felt when he did this?

Answer: As there was no other way to carry Mij to London so the author had put it back into the box. He must have felt pity on the way the otter had hurt itself. Moreover, he must be worried as well.

Question 9: Why does Maxwell say the airhostess was "the very queen of her kind"?

Answer: The airhostess not only allowed the injured otter to be taken in, she also allowed Maxwell to keep the otter the way he wanted. She had been cooperative and generous to the core. That is why she is referred to as a queen, as kings and queens usually have big generous hearts.

Question 10: What happened when the box was opened?

Answer: The moment Maxwell opened the box Mij darted out of it vanished somewhere. Then it ran all over the place scaring all passengers. It created a chaos and most of the people in the plane started praying for their lives.

Question 11: What game had Mij invented?

Answer: Mij invented a game of playing ball in a unique way. One of author's suitcase which was damaged during journey was Mijbil's play arena. The suitcase top was having a slope. Mijbil would drop the ball from the height of the slope and would hurriedly catch it on the deeper end of the slope.

Question 12: What are 'compulsive habits'? What does Maxwell say are the compulsive habits of (i) school children (ii) Mij?

Answer: Compulsive habits are usually strange act or behaviour which a person does without clear reason. For example a cricket player may put on his right shoe first as he believes it would bring him good luck or a kid jumping over a fence, instead of going through the passageway. Usually compulsive behaviour of children are full of childhood mischief and those of adults are of incorrigible type.

(i) As per this story, children must place their feet squarely on the centre of each paving block; must touch every seventh upright of the iron railings, or pass to the outside of every second lamp post.

(ii) Mijbil while on its way to home would jump over the boundary wall railing and run at full speed throughout its length.

Question 13: What group of animals do otters belong to?

Answer: Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called Mustellines, shared by the badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink and others.

Question 14: What guesses did the Londoners make about what Mij was?

Answer: As otters are not found in England so Londoners made wildest possible guesses about Mijbil's identity. Their guesses would range from a baby seal, a squirrel, a hippo to a brontosaurus.

Question 15: What things does Mij do which tell you that he is an intelligent, friendly and fun-loving animal who needs love?

Answer: The way Mij learnt to open the tap shows that it is an intelligent animal. Mij is always in a playful mood; doing all sorts of pranks. Mij prefers the company of the author. These facts show that it is a friendly and fun-loving animal.

Question 16: What are some of the things we come to know about otters from this text?

Answer: Some of the things we come to know about otters from this text are as follows. Otters are small creatures with dark brown fur all over the body. Otters live near water and enjoy playing in water. Otters are very active animals and can be easily tamed.

Question 17: Why is Mij's species now known to the world as Maxwell's otter?

Answer: It can be the association of some scientist; named Maxwell who discovered this species. It can also be the association with the author who is named Maxwell.

Question 18: Maxwell in the story speaks for the otter, Mij. He tells us what the otter feels and thinks on different occasions. Given below are some things the otter does. Complete the column on the right to say what Maxwell says about what Mij feels and thinks.

Answer:

What Mij does	How Mij feels or thinks
plunges, rolls in the water and makes the water splosh and splash	Mij feels that every drop of water should be enjoyed. It feels that static water is a waste and water should always remain dynamic.
Screws the tap in the wrong way	Mij feels irritated when the tap does not cooperate.
Nuzzles Maxwell's face and neck in the aeroplane	Mij is feeling comfortable in the author's company.

Question 19: Read the story and find the sentences where Maxwell describes his pet otter. Then choose and arrange your sentences to illustrate those statements below that you think are true.

Maxwell's description

makes Mij seem almost human, like a small boy.

Answer: He spent hours shuffling a rubber ball round the room like a four-footed soccer player using all four feet to dribble the ball, and he could also throw it, with a powerful flick of the neck, to a surprising height and distance.

shows that he is often irritated with what Mij does.

Answer: Incorrect

shows that he is often surprised by what Mij does.

Answer: I watched, amazed; in less than a minute he had turned the tap far enough to produce a trickle of water, and after a moment or two achieved the full flow.  
of Mij's antics is comical.

Answer: But the real play of an otter is when he lies on his back and juggles with small objects between his paws.  
shows that he observes the antics of Mij very carefully.

Answer: Mij discovered that if he placed the ball on the high end it would run down the length of the suitcase. He would dash around to the other end to ambush its arrival, hide from it, crouching, to spring up and take it by surprise, grab it and trot off with it to the high end once more.  
shows that he thinks Mij is a very ordinary otter.

Answer: Incorrect

## **Fog**

The fog comes  
on little cat feet.  
It sits looking  
over harbour and city  
on silent haunches  
and then moves on.

**CARL SANDBURG**

In this small poem the poet has compared the fog with a cat. Cats are very popular pets in western countries. Fog comes like a cat, silently; making no sound with its feet. The fog sits like a cat on haunches looking over the harbour and the city. The typical style of a cat sitting lazily over a wall is termed as haunch. After sometimes the fog moves on to another place.

## Summary of the Poem

The poet says that the fog which is generally seen during the winter season is coming towards the city and the harbour just like a cat. This means that it is approaching the city in a very silent manner so that no one can notice its arrival. He has compared its arrival to that of a cat because a cat always enters a place silently. Next he says that the fog has covered the whole of the city and harbour and it appears as if it is sitting by folding its legs and looking around just the way a cat does when it sits on the haunches and looks around. At the end, he describes the departure of the fog which very silently and unpredictably, again, similar to the departure of the cat, vanishes.

## Fog Poem and Explanation



The fog comes  
on little cat feet.  
It sits looking  
over harbour and city  
on silent haunches  
and then moves on.

Fog: It is a thick cloud of tiny water droplets present in the atmosphere, especially in winter.

Harbour; Port, dock  
on haunches: sitting with knees bent

The poet is describing fog. Fog is a thick cloud of tiny water droplets present in the atmosphere. It is generally seen during the winter season. Here the poet describes the advancement of fog towards the city and the harbour. He says the fog comes like a cat comes on its little feet. This means the fog advances towards the city very slowly and calmly just like a cat. One never knows how and when the fog will enter the city. Therefore, fog is compared to the cat which enters our home in an unpredictable manner. Next he says that the fog sits over the whole of the city as a cat sits silently by folding her legs behind itself and looks around the nearby places and things. Similarly, it seems that the fog

silently covers the whole of the city and the harbour and is sitting over them looking around like a cat. After a while the fog leaves the city and moves on. The poet says so because it is a natural phenomenon that fog does not stay at a place for long and leaves the place after a few hours. So, here also the poet says that just like a cat, the fog leaves the place very silently without being noticed by anyone.

Literary devices:

Metaphor: Fog is compared to cat (On little cat feet)

Rhyme scheme: There is no rhyme scheme followed. Poem is in free verse

Enjambment: When a sentence continues to next line (It sits looking..... then moves on)

Personification: fog has been personified - Fog comes, it sits

## Fog Class 10 Poem Question and Answers

Q1-

1. What does Sandburg think the fog is like?

Ans- Sandburg thinks the fog is like a cat that comes silently so that no one can sense its arrival.

2. How does the fog come?

Ans- As per the poet the fog comes very silently like a cat.

3. What does 'it' in the third line refer to?

Ans- 'It' refers to the fog

4. Does the poet actually say that the fog is like a cat? Find three things that tell us that the fog is like a cat.

Ans- The three things that tell us that the fog is like a cat are as follows:

- i. The fog comes on its little cat feet: This means that the fog enters silently just like a cat.
- ii. It sits looking over harbour and city: The fog is compared to cat as cats also like to sit and look here and there and fog is also looking while it sits over the city.
- iii. On silent haunches and then moves on: The fog sits on her bended legs just like a cat and then moves away very quickly and silently, just like a cat.

Q2- Does this poem have a rhyme scheme? Poetry that does not have an obvious rhythm or rhyme is called 'free verse'.

Ans- There is no rhyme scheme in the poem. It has neither internal nor external rhyme scheme. Hence, we can say that it is in free verse.