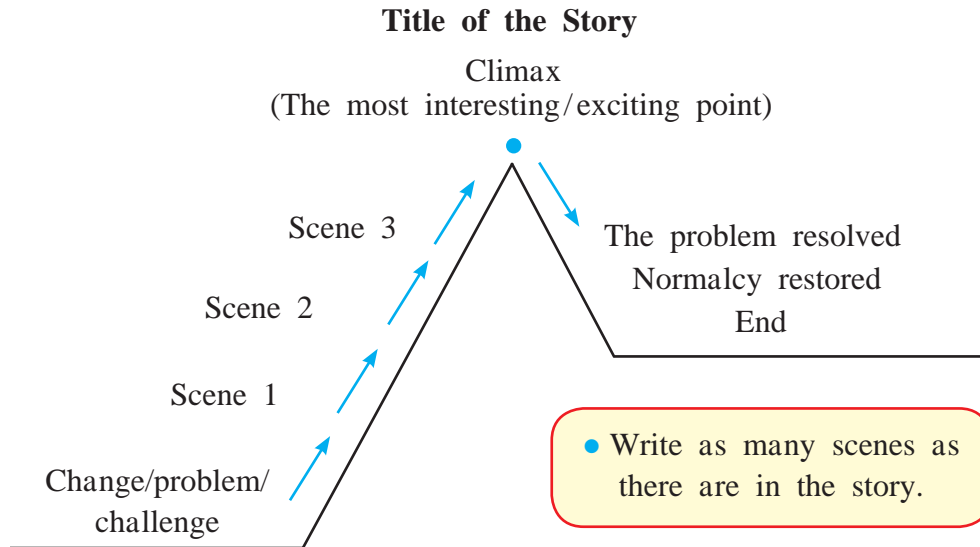


## 1.2 A Synopsis - The Swiss Family Robinson

### ■ ■ ■ Warming up! ■ ■ ■

1. Do you know any stories about people who were lost in uninhabited places and were later rescued? Name them.
2. Think of one of your favourite interesting stories and fill in/draw an outline-chart like the one shown below.



- Many times, the climax is near the end. A few stories end with a climax to achieve greater effect.
  - Find the meaning of 'anticlimax'.
3. Divide the class into groups of 4-6. Each group selects for itself, one of the difficult situations listed below. Each group imagine themselves to be in that situation.



(a) marooned on an island



(b) lost in a forest



(c) stranded on the highway

A group of passengers are marooned on an island in the middle of the ocean.

A group of pilgrims walking through a thick jungle have lost their way.

A team of players from an office have got down at the wrong place on a highway at night. It is a lonely spot.

- Describe their surroundings in 4-5 sentences.
- Write the reactions of the companions using exclamations.
- Using your imagination, write what is the only ray of hope for them.
- Two members of the group are going out to try to get help. They can take any five things with them. Write what they choose, and why they choose it.

## A Synopsis – The Swiss Family Robinson



- ◆ In what way is a work of fiction different from a fact file?
- ◆ How did the family reach the tropical island?
- hold : Here, space in a ship for cargo.
- evacuated : left the ship to save themselves
- reef : rocks and sand etc. close to the surface of the sea
- vessel : Here, it means a boat.
- pinnacle : small boats attached to a ship
- kegs : barrels

The Swiss Family Robinson is a well-known adventure novel that people of many countries have enjoyed for more than two hundred years. It has also been made into graphic novels and films.

The novel, written by the Swiss clergyman Johann David Wyss, is not just an adventure. It aims at teaching young people values like self-reliance, determination, love for your family, co-operation and prudent use of resources. It also has good lessons relevant in natural sciences, good husbandry and even mathematics!

Some elements of the novel do stretch reality to a certain extent – but we must consider that it is a work of fiction and not a fact file. Given below is a synopsis – an outline of its basic story.

William, Elizabeth and their children had been travelling in a ship when the ship was caught in a great storm. The other passengers evacuated without them. William, and his family including the young children Fritz, Ernest, Jack and Franz, were left to survive alone. They weathered the great storm waiting in the ship's hold. The ship survived the night and the family found themselves within sight of a tropical desert island. The next morning, they decided to get to the island they could see beyond the reef. With much effort, they constructed a vessel out of tubs. After they filled the tubs with food and ammunition and all other articles of value they could safely carry, they rowed toward the island. Two dogs from the ship named Turk and Juno swam beside them. The ship's cargo of livestock, guns and powder, carpentry tools, books, a disassembled pinnacle, and provisions had also survived.

Over the next few days, William (father) attached the floatable old kegs to one another and built a bow that curved around them. The family had landed successfully on the island. They set up a tent and softened the floor with armloads of grass they cut and spread to serve as their beds. They came to a grove of trees. One tree grew what looked like gourds on its



trunk. The father told Fritz, the gourds would make excellent bowls and spoons, and they cut them into various utensils.

After some days, Elizabeth informed William that she wanted the family to move to a safer place. Their current camp was not only exposed but also very dry and hot. If they built a house up in one of the large trees, they would be safe from jackals. She described a perfect tree for the project, one whose trunk was nearly forty feet in diameter. The branches were very long and extended straight out from the trunk, making them perfect platforms for a structure. Later, when determining the height of the lowest branches, the father taught the boys geometry and how to use triangles to measure big objects. He measured a defined distance from the trunk, then he calculated angles using several measured rods, determining that the lowest branch was thirty feet off the ground.

The men knotted a rope at certain intervals and attached pieces of bamboo in each knot. Thus, they created their ladder. Father returned to the beach and collected driftwood, thinking it would be perfect to build a 'sledge,' on runners rather than wheels. Later, they used it to transport materials.

Meanwhile Elizabeth announced that the garden she had been tending was producing healthy plants. Corn,

- ◆ Why did Mother wish to shift the family to a tree-house?

- runners : stripes on which something slides

◆ How did the mother occupy herself while the tree house was being built?

◆ What was the third place the family decided to reside in? Why did they wish to shift there?

◆ What made the family change over to their fourth residence? What precaution did they take before building it?

◆ Do the changes in the family's residence remind you of the history of man's evolution?

- exuding : giving out, emitting.
- abutting : having common boundary.
- oppressive : distressing

melons, pumpkins, and cucumbers were already growing. The next day, only the father and Fritz travelled to the woods, exploring and finding such exotic plants as one with waxy fruit, from which candles could be made. Fritz discovered a tree exuding a rubbery sap, from which his father claimed that they could make boots.

Thinking ahead of the next winter, father decided to create a place safe from the elements, a strong storage spot to protect themselves and their belongings. Fritz came up with the idea of a cave. Not finding one, they thought of carving out their own cave in the rock abutting their camping site. On the smooth face of the rock, father marked the dimensions for an opening and they picked away at the hard surface with their axes, chisels, hammers, and shovels. Over the next several days, the family cut windows in the rocks to allow for crosscurrents of air and for sunlight to enter the cave. When they had finished, they had four rooms, complete with a fireplace. They now had a new winter home.

Because of the low light, the cave house they had built felt oppressive. To remedy this, father and Jack rigged up a new light. They found a bamboo pole that would reach from the floor to the ceiling. Then after securing it, Jack climbed to the top of the pole and hung a large oil lamp that they had rescued from the ship.

One day, they found that one of the family's huts had been completely destroyed and the cultivated fields around it had been trampled and ruined. There were huge footmarks everywhere. Father saw massive damage to trees as well as many huge footprints, which he identified as belonging to an elephant herd.

The next morning, the family began to design a new defence to discourage all wild animals from entering their cultivated lands. They also finalised their ideas about the new residence. Rather than building a house on stilts, which the elephants could knock down easily, they would use four strong trees growing in a square near one another as the foundation. The trees were of equal size, approximately twelve feet apart. Thus, they built another safe home.

Ten years passed and the young boys were now young men, and their parents were very proud. They called the island New Switzerland. Many adventures occurred over the years.

On the shore of another island, Fritz had knocked down an albatross, which was threatening to attack him and found a rag tied to the large bird's leg. On the rag was a message that an Englishwoman had been stranded on the 'smoking rock.' Fritz had no idea how old the message was. His father suggested that "smoking rock" sounded like a reference to a volcano. Since there were no volcanoes in the vicinity, the bird might have come from hundreds of miles away. However, Fritz felt that someone needed his help, and he was determined to do his best to find the sender. Before returning home, he had written his own note on the rag, retied it to the albatross's leg, and had watched the bird fly off. The note told whoever received it "Do not despair. Help is near!" Fritz, then successfully, rescued the young woman, Jenny Montrose. Though shy at first, soon, she got used to living with the Robinson family.

One day, they saw a ship, which had laid anchor. An encampment had been set up on one of the smaller islands. After checking the people through their spyglass, Fritz and his father decided to announce themselves after they had returned home and cleaned it up. They did not want the crew to think they were savages. The next day, Fritz and his father, met the captain and told him their own history as well as Jenny's. To everyone's surprise, it had been Jenny's father who had inspired the captain's search; he believed his daughter was still alive after three years. The captain had decided to attempt to find her.

With a burst of celebration, the family, passengers, and crew of the British vessel headed towards New Switzerland. Everyone was amazed by the prosperity and good health of the survivors.

As the day ended, the father realised that decisions must be made about who wanted to stay on the island or return with the ship. Elizabeth and her husband did not wish to live anywhere but on the island. They had

◆ How did Fritz learn about another victim, forsaken on a far away island?

◆ Who was the victim and how long had she survived?

◆ Who is included in the word 'Everyone' in 'Everyone was amazed...'?

● albatross : a large, long-winged sea-bird.

● stranded : left alone helpless

● vicinity : close to



- ◆ How does the adventure come to a happy end?

been there for so long and had grown used to their life. Jenny asked if anyone would support her return to England. Fritz was the first to respond. He offered cheers for 'us' who were going to Europe. Ernest, on the other hand, wanted to stay on the island. Jack also decided to stay back. Franz, the youngest boy, decided to join Fritz in leaving. Franz wanted a chance to receive an academic education. Before Fritz left, he told his parents of his love for Jenny and his wish to marry her.

The father had kept a record of all the adventures they had had on the island. He handed over the journals to the captain to be published. Then the ship departed.

## ■■■ ENGLISH WORKSHOP ■■■■■■

1. Two separate words combine together to make a new word with a different meaning. They form **Compound Words**. Using a dictionary, find the meanings of the following compound words.

- |                        |                    |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| ● armloads .....       | ● footprints ..... |
| ● driftwood .....      | ● fireplace .....  |
| ● cross-currents ..... | ● spyglass .....   |

2. The following words can be used as nouns as well as verbs. Make two sentences of your own, using them as a noun in one and a verb in another.

(a) hold : (a) Noun- She has a strong **hold** over her children

(b) Verb- Let me **hold** the bag for you

(b) value : (a) Noun- ..... (f) reach : (a) Noun- .....

(b) Verb- ..... (b) Verb- .....

(c) knot : (a) Noun- ..... (g) knock : (a) Noun- .....

(b) Verb- ..... (b) Verb- .....

(d) travel : (a) Noun- ..... (h) attack : (a) Noun- .....

(b) Verb- ..... (b) Verb- .....

(e) return : (a) Noun- ..... (i) mark : (a) Noun- .....

(b) Verb- ..... (b) Verb- .....

3. Given in a mixed order below are some good human attributes of the family. Pick out each from the box and write it against each line that reflects it.

(1) courage and daring (2) perseverance and positive attitude (3) foresight  
(4) family bonds (5) humanity and sensitivity (6) resourcefulness (7) knowledge and its application (8) cautiousness

- (a) The father told Fritz, the gourds would make excellent bowls and spoons and they cut them into various utensils. ....
- (b) After some days, Elizabeth informed that she wanted the family to move to a safer place. ....
- (c) Thinking ahead of winter, father decided to create a place safe from the elements. ....
- (d) Father taught the boys geometry and how to use triangles to measure big objects. ....
- (e) ..... he believed, his daughter was still alive, after three years. ....
- (f) Ten years had passed and the young boys grew to be young men and their parents were proud of them. ....
- (g) Fritz felt that someone needed his help and he was determined to find the sender. ....
4. Write in your own words, how the Robinson family made each of their homes.

First home

Second home

Third home

Fourth home

5. Expand the following ideas in a paragraph or two :-

(1) Where there is a will, there is a way.

(2) Courage and resourcefulness are the keys to overcome problems.



6. **Individual Project :**

Choose any novel/book that you enjoyed. Prepare a **synopsis** of the novel. It should include the major events and the links between them as described in the novel. You may prepare a chapterwise outline first, and then put the outlines together to write a brief synopsis.

7. **Read about** the novel 'Robinson Crusoe' by Daniel Defoe and 'Gulliver's Travels' by Jonathan Swift.

