

CHAPTER – 8

THE BANYAN TREE

2 MARK QUESTIONS

1. Who were the other two spectators? What did they do? (Did they watch, or did they join in the fight?)

Answer:

The other two spectators were a myna and a jungle crow. They settled on the cactus to watch the outcome. They were not content only to watch the fight. They took part in the proceedings and hurled themselves at the cobra.

2. The word ‘round’ usually means a kind of shape. What is its meaning in the story?

Answer:

The word ‘round’ in the story denotes the different courses of the fight that took place between the snake and the mongoose.

3. Describe the mongoose's strategy in fighting the cobra.

Answer:

The mongoose employs a strategy of constant movement and quick reflexes to outmaneuver the cobra. By jumping out of the snake's striking range and attacking from different directions, the mongoose tires and discourages the cobra. Eventually, the mongoose is able to close in, avoiding the venomous bite, and buries its teeth in the snake's neck.

4. Why did the myna and the crow become spectators in the mongoose and cobra fight?

Answer:

The myna and the crow became spectators in the mongoose and cobra fight after observing the preparations for battle. They settled on a cactus plant to watch the outcome. Initially content to observe, they later attempted to intervene, resulting in a collision in mid-air. Despite their interference, the myna and crow continued to watch the fight unfold.

5. What was the mongoose's reaction when the cobra struck during their fight?

Answer:

When the cobra struck during their fight, the mongoose displayed incredible agility. The mongoose jumped neatly to one side, avoiding the cobra's attack. The mongoose then swiftly darted in, biting the snake on the back, and retreated out of the cobra's reach.

6. How did the fight between the mongoose and the cobra conclude?

Answer:

The mongoose emerged victorious in the fight against the cobra. As the cobra weakened, the mongoose fearlessly approached it, raised itself on its short legs, and with a lightning snap, seized the cobra by the snout. Despite the cobra's attempts to coil around the mongoose, the little fellow held on until the snake ceased to struggle. The mongoose then dragged the defeated cobra into the bushes.

7. Why did the myna fly away with a shrill cry of congratulation?

Answer:

The myna flew away with a shrill cry of congratulation after witnessing the mongoose's triumph over the cobra. The myna, having cautiously observed the fight and the mongoose's victory, expressed its approval and satisfaction by flying away with the cry.

4 MARK QUESTIONS

1. “It was to be a battle of champions.”

(i) What qualities did the two champions have? Pick out words and phrases from the paragraph above this line in the text and write them down.

Mongoose	Cobra
(a)	(a)
(b)	(b)
(c)	(c)

(ii) What did the cobra and the mongoose do, to show their readiness for the fight?

Answer:

1. (i)

Mongoose	Cobra
(a) superb fighter	(a) skilful
(b) clever	(b) experienced fighter

(c) aggressive

(c) swift

(ii) To show the readiness for their fight, the cobra hissed defiantly with his forked tongue darting in and out; he raised half its total length off the ground and spread his broad, spectacled hood. On the other hand, the mongoose bushed his tail, and the long hair on his spine stood up.

2. Read the descriptions below of what the snake did and what the mongoose did. Arrange their actions in the proper order.

(i) ceased to struggle	● grabbed the snake by the snout
(ii) tried to mesmerise the mongoose	● dragged the snake into the bushes
(iii) coiled itself around the mongoose	● darted away and bit the cobra on the back
(iv) struck the crow	● pretended to attack the cobra on one side
(v) struck again and missed	● refused to look into the snake's eyes
(vi) struck on the side that the mongoose pretended to attack	● sprang aside, jumped in and bit

Answer:

Snake

Mongoose

(ii) tried to mesmerize the mongoose	refused to look into the snake's eyes
(vi) struck on the side that the mongoose pretended to attack	pretended to attack the cobra on one side
(v) struck again and missed	sprang aside, jumped in and bit
(iv) struck the crow	darted away and bit the cobra on the back
(iii) coiled itself around the mongoose	grabbed the snake by the snout
(i) ceased to struggle	dragged the snake into the bushes

3. (i) What happened to the crow in the end?

(ii) What did the myna do finally?

Answer:

1. Towards the end of the fight, the crow flung nearly twenty feet across the garden as the cobra whipped his head back and struck with great force. His snout thudded against the crow's body and it fluttered about for a while, then it lay still and dead.

2. The myna dropped cautiously to the ground, hopped about, peered into the bushes from a safe distance and then with a shrill cry of congratulation flew away.

4. Describe the significance of the banyan tree in the author's life as portrayed in the passage.

Answer:

The banyan tree holds great significance in the author's life, providing a personal sanctuary. Despite the house and grounds belonging to his grandparents, the tree becomes the author's own because his grandfather, at sixty-five, couldn't climb it. The tree's spreading branches, forming twisting passages, become a source of endless pleasure, serving as a place of observation, reflection, and friendship. The author's first friend, a small grey squirrel, marks the beginning of a connection with nature, making the banyan tree a cherished space for him.

5. Elaborate on the author's interactions with the small grey squirrel and its symbolic significance.

Answer:

Initially, the small grey squirrel resents the author's presence in the tree. However, the author's decision not to harm the squirrel with weapons like a catapult or air gun transforms their relationship. Through offerings of cake and biscuit morsels, a bond develops, and the squirrel becomes bold, delving into the author's pockets. This interaction symbolizes trust, breaking the barrier between human and

animal. The squirrel's friends and relatives might view it as headstrong for trusting a human, emphasizing the unconventional friendship formed.

6. Discuss the role of the myna and jungle crow as spectators in the mongoose and cobra fight.

Answer:

The myna and jungle crow become spectators in the mongoose and cobra fight, settling on a cactus plant to watch the battle unfold. Initially content to observe, their interference leads to a collision in mid-air. The myna and crow's attempt to participate in the proceedings adds a layer of complexity to the fight. Despite witnessing the mongoose's victory, they wisely decide not to interfere again, concluding their role as spectators who inadvertently become a part of the drama.

7. Analyze the mongoose's strategy in its fight against the cobra and the ultimate outcome.

Answer:

The mongoose employs a strategy of constant movement and quick reflexes to outmaneuver the cobra. It jumps out of the snake's striking range and attacks from different directions, tiring and discouraging the cobra. The mongoose's agility allows it to evade the cobra's strikes and deliver precise counterattacks. Ultimately, the mongoose emerges victorious by fearlessly approaching the weakening cobra, seizing it

by the snout, and persevering until the snake ceases to struggle. The mongoose's strategy and resilience lead to a successful outcome in this classic drama of the Indian wilds.

8. Explore the author's emotions and experiences associated with the banyan tree during the fig season.

Answer:

During the fig season, the banyan tree becomes the noisiest place in the garden, attracting various birds like the red-bottomed bulbul, parrots, myna, and crows. The author builds a platform halfway up the tree where he spends afternoons. This time becomes an opportunity to read books and enjoy the vibrant atmosphere created by the birds. The fig season transforms the banyan tree into a lively and engaging space, enhancing the author's connection with nature.

9. Describe the mongoose and cobra fight as witnessed by the author.

Answer:

The author, sitting in the banyan tree, witnesses a classic fight between a mongoose and a cobra. The warm breezes of approaching summer set the stage. A huge black cobra emerges from a clump of cactus, and simultaneously, a mongoose appears from the bushes, initiating a face-to-face encounter in the clearing beneath the banyan tree. The author describes the characteristics of both, highlighting the

mongoose's agility and the cobra's skill in a battle that unfolds as a dramatic and intense spectacle.

10. Explain the significance of the myna and jungle crow's interference in the mongoose and cobra fight.

Answer:

The myna and jungle crow, initially content to watch the fight from a cactus plant, decide to interfere in the mongoose and cobra battle. Their attempts, however, lead to a mid-air collision, distracting them from the main event. This interference adds a touch of humor and unpredictability to the fight, showcasing how even unintended participants become part of the wild drama. Despite their involvement, the myna and crow wisely refrain from interfering again, allowing the natural course of the fight to unfold.

11. Reflect on the mongoose's resilience and strategy during the fight, emphasizing its ultimate triumph.

Answer:

The mongoose displays remarkable resilience and strategy throughout the fight. Despite the cobra's swift strikes and attempts to mesmerize, the mongoose remains focused and avoids eye contact. Its quick movements, jumps, and bites demonstrate a clever and aggressive fighting style. The mongoose's ability to evade the cobra's attacks, coupled with its fearlessness, eventually leads to the weakening of the cobra. In the end, the mongoose seizes the cobra by the snout,

enduring the snake's struggles until it ceases. The mongoose's persistence and strategic approach result in a victorious outcome in this intense battle.

GRAMMAR

1. Find five words in the following paragraph, which are generally associated with trees. But here, they have been used differently. Underline the words.

Hari leaves for work at nine every morning. He works in the local branch of the firm of which his uncle is the owner. Hari's success is really the fruit of his own labour. He is happy, but he has a small problem. The root cause of his problem is a stray dog near his office. The dog welcomes Hari with a loud bark every day.

Answer:

Hari *leaves* for work at nine every morning. He works in the local *branch* of the firm of which his uncle is the owner. Hari's success is really the *fruit* of his own labour. He is happy, but he has a small problem. The *root* cause of his problem is a stray dog near his office. The dog welcomes Hari with a loud *bark* every day.

2. The words in the box are all words that describe movement. Use them to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

dived	gliding	sprang	darting
whipped...back		delving	

1. When he began to trust me, the squirrel began _____
— into my pockets for morsels of cake.
2. I saw a cobra _____ out of a clump of cactus.

3. The snake hissed, his forked tongue _____ in and out.
4. When the cobra tried to bite it, the mongoose _____ aside.
5. The snake _____ his head _____ to strike at the crow.
6. The birds _____ at the snake.

Answer:

1. When he began to trust me, the squirrel began *delving* into my pockets for morsels of cake.
2. I saw a cobra *gliding* out of a clump of cactus.
3. The snake hissed, his forked tongue *darting* in and out.
4. When the cobra tried to bite it, the mongoose *sprang* aside.
5. The snake *whipped* his head *back* to strike at the crow.
6. The birds *dived* at the snake.

3. Find words in the story, which show things striking violently against each other.

1. The cobra struck the crow, his snout th — — — ing against its body.
2. The crow and the myna c — ll — — — in mid-air.
3. The birds dived at the snake, but b — — — d into each other instead.

Answer:

1. The cobra struck the crow, his snout **thudding** against its body.
2. The crow and the myna **collided** in mid-air.
3. The birds dived at the snake, but **bumped** into each other instead.

4. Look at these sentences.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the spring, birds of all kinds <i>would</i> flock into the banyan tree's branches. • I <i>would</i> spend the afternoons there. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grandfather, at sixty-five, <i>could</i> no longer climb the banyan tree. • I <i>could</i> hide myself in its branches. • I <i>could</i> look down through the leaves at the world below. • I <i>could</i> read there.
'Would' tells us what the author <i>used to do</i> , or what <i>used to happen</i> .	'Could' tells us what the author was <i>usually able to do</i> , or grandfather is <i>now not able to do</i> .

Choose *would* and *could* to replace the italicised words in the following sentences.

Grandfather says, in the old days,

1. elephants *were able to* fly in the sky, like clouds. They were also *able to* change their shapes. They *used to* fly behind clouds and frighten them. People *used to* look up at the sky in wonder.
2. because there was no electricity, he *used to* get up with the sun, and he *used to* go to bed with the sun, like the birds.

3. like the owl, he *was able to* see quite well in the dark. He *was able to* tell who was coming by listening to their footsteps.

Answer:

1. elephants **could** fly in the sky, like clouds. They **could** also change their shapes. They **would** fly behind clouds and frighten them.

People **would** look up at the sky in wonder.

2. because there was no electricity, he **would** get up with the sun, and he **would** go to bed with the sun, like the birds.

3. like the owl, he **could** see quite well in the dark. He **could** tell who was coming by listening to their footsteps.

5. Look at these sentences.

- The tree was older than Grandfather.
- Grandfather was sixty-five years old.

How old was the tree? Can you guess?

- The tree was as old as Dehra Dun itself.

Suppose Dehra Dun is 300 years old. How old is the tree?

- Probably, the tree was 300 years old too.

When two things are the same in some way, we use as...as.

Here is another set of examples.

- Mr Sinha is 160 centimetres tall.
- Mr Gupta is 180 centimetres tall.
- Mrs Gupta is 160 centimetres tall
- Mrs Gupta is as tall as Mr Sinha.

Use the words in the box to speak about the people and the things below, using as...as or -er than

tall – taller	cold – colder	hot – hotter
strong – stronger	short – shorter	

(Notice that in the word ‘hot’, the letter ‘t’ is doubled when -er is added.)

1. Heights



Zeba (155cm)



Ruby (150cm)



Rani (155cm)

2. Weight Lifters



Vijay (50kg)



Akshay (50kg)



Anwar (65kg)

3. City Temperatures



Shimla (6°)



Gangtok (6°)



Srinagar (2°)

4. Lengths



Romi's pencil
(3 inches long)



Mona's pencil
(5 inches long)



Raja's pencil
(3 inches long)

5. City Temperatures



Delhi (43°)



Chennai (39°)



Nagpur (43°)

Answer:

1. (i) Zeba is as tall as Rani.
- (ii) Zeba is taller than Ruby.
- (iii) Rani is taller than Ruby.
- (iv) Ruby is shorter than Rani as well as Zeba.

1. (i) Vijay is as strong as Akshay.
- (ii) Anwar is stronger than Akshay as well as Vijay.

(iii) Neither Akshay nor Vijay is as strong as Anwar.

1. (i) Shimla is as cold as Gangtok.

(ii) Srinagar is colder than Shimla and Gangtok.

(iii) Neither Gangtok nor Shimla is as cold as Srinagar.

1. (i) Romi's pencil is as long as Raja's pencil.

(ii) Mona's pencil is longer than Romi's pencil and Raja's pencil.

(iii) Neither Romi's pencil or Raja's pencil is as long as Mona's pencil.

1. (i) Delhi is as hot as Nagpur.

(ii) Chennai is not as hot as Delhi or Nagpur.

(iii) Delhi is hotter than Chennai.

(iv) Nagpur is hotter than Chennai.

6. 'My Favourite Place'

Read again the paragraphs of the story in which the author describes the banyan tree, and what he used to do there. Is there a place in your house, or in your grandparents' or uncles' or aunts' houses, that you specially like? Write a short paragraph about it, saying

- where it is
- what you do there
- why you like it

You may instead write about a place you dislike, or are afraid of.

Answer:

My favourite place in my house is the balcony that is attached to my bedroom. There is a huge window in my room that overlooks the garden outside. I usually stand on the balcony and enjoy the beautiful view of the garden. Every morning sunshine peeps through my window and lights up my room. Sometimes, a cool breeze blows inside my room, making it airy. I have a desk next to my window and I sit and do my homework and lessons there. I simply love my room, from where I can enjoy the beauty of nature every single day.

(**Note:** For the second part of the question, students can write about their personal experience).

SUMMARY

In "The Banyan Tree," the narrator recounts his childhood experiences centered around a magnificent old banyan tree that stood on his grandparents' property. The tree becomes a place of refuge and adventure for the young boy, offering a sanctuary among its spreading branches, which hang to the ground and take root again, forming twisting passages.

The boy forms a unique friendship with a small grey squirrel, overcoming initial distrust through acts of kindness. The banyan tree becomes a haven for various creatures, especially during the fig season when birds of different kinds flock to its branches, creating a lively and noisy atmosphere.

The narrator also describes a makeshift platform halfway up the tree, where he spends afternoons reading books from his "banyan tree library." The story takes an exciting turn when, during one such afternoon, the boy witnesses a dramatic confrontation between a mongoose and a cobra.

As the mongoose and cobra engage in a fierce battle beneath the banyan tree, other creatures, including a myna and a jungle crow, become unexpected spectators. The narrator describes the intense struggle between the two foes, highlighting the mongoose's agility and the cobra's deadly venom.

The fight takes a tragic turn when the myna and crow, attempting to intervene, collide mid-air. The crow suffers a fatal blow from the cobra, emphasizing the brutality of the natural world. However, the mongoose ultimately prevails, seizing the weakened cobra and dragging it away.

The story concludes with a sense of resolution as the myna cautiously returns, inspects the scene, and then flies away with a shrill cry of congratulation. The banyan tree, with its vibrant ecosystem and witnessing the cycle of life and death, becomes a powerful backdrop for the narrator's childhood memories.

In this captivating narrative, Ruskin Bond skillfully weaves together elements of nature, friendship, and the harsh realities of the animal kingdom, providing readers with a vivid and poignant glimpse into the author's formative years.