

03. Iswaran The Storyteller

Question 1. In what way is Iswaran an asset to Mahendra?

Answer: Iswaran was the cook of Mahendra. He would follow him uncomplainingly wherever he was posted. He would cook for him, wash his clothes and chat away with him. He could weave out endless stories and anecdotes on varied subjects. That is how he was an asset to Mahendra.

Question 2. How does Iswaran describe the uprooted tree on the highway? What effect does he want to create in his listeners?

Answer: Iswaran described the uprooted tree on the highway with his hands held out in a dramatic gesture. He said, "The road was deserted and I was all alone. Suddenly I spotted something that looked like an enormous bushy beast lying sprawled across the road. I was half inclined to turn and go back. But as I came closer, I saw that it was a fallen tree, with its dry branches spread out."

He wants to create suspense in his listeners.

Question 3. How does he narrate the story of the tusker? Does it appear to be plausible?

Answer: He narrates the story of the tusker in an exaggerated way. He says that a tusker escaped from the timber yard and began to roam about, tearing up wild creepers, stamping on bushes and breaking branches at will. It came into the main road and smashed the small shops selling fruits, mud pots and clothes. It then entered a school ground. It grunted and wandered about, tearing down the volleyball net, kicking and flattening the drum kept for water, and uprooting the shrubs. Teachers had climbed up to the terrace of the school building and helplessly watched the depredations of the elephant.

Iswaran tells that he was in junior class back then and was watching the drama from the rooftop. He hit the elephant's toenail with a stick. The elephant shivered from head to foot, and then it collapsed.

It does not appear to be plausible because it is close to impossible for a child to control a mad elephant when even the adults were trying to save themselves! Also, getting beaten by a stick on the toenail would not make a huge mammal shiver and collapse.

Question 4. Why does the author say that Iswaran seemed to more than make up for the absence of a TV in Mahendra's living quarters?

Answer: The author says that Iswaran seemed to more than make up for the absence of a TV in Mahendra's living quarters because not a day would pass without Iswaran telling some story packed with adventure, horror and suspense. Whether the story was credible or not, Mahendra enjoyed listening to it because of the inimitable way in which it was told.

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Question 5. Mahendra calls ghosts or spirits a figment of the imagination. What happens to him on a full-moon night?

Answer: Mahendra calls ghosts or spirits a figment of the imagination when Iswaran tells that he has seen a female ghost holding a foetus in its arms.

One full-moon night, Mahendra was woken up from his sleep by a low moan close to his window. He first thought it to be a cat prowling around for a mouse. He was tempted to find the source of the sound. Lowering himself to the level of the windowsill, he looked out at the white sheet of moonlight outside. Not too far away, there was a dark cloudy form clutching a bundle. Mahendra broke into a cold sweat and fell back on the pillow, panting.

Question 6. Can you think of some other ending for the story?

Answer: In the given story, the climax is that Mahendra is acutely frightened by the possibility of the ghost actually entering his room the previous night. He resolves to leave the haunted place the very next day.

In another climax, the story could have ended up with Mahendra being more courageous and trying to find out the reality instead of running away from it. He would have found that the entire story was cooked-up by Iswaran and he was the one holding the bundle in the night to scare Mahendra and make him believe his story.

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Sources : Buju's notes