



Page No: 127

Thinking about the Text

1. What was Valli's deepest desire? Find the words and phrases in the story that tell you this.

Answer:

Valli's deepest desire was to ride on the bus she saw everyday. The sentences in the story which depict this are as follows:

"Day after day she watched the bus, and gradually a tiny wish crept into her head and grew there: she wanted to ride on that bus, even if just once. This wish became stronger and stronger, until it was an overwhelming desire."

2. How did Valli plan her bus ride? What did she find out about the bus, and how did she save up the fare?

Answer:

Valli planned that she would take the one o'clock afternoon bus, reach the town at one forty-five, and be back home by about two forty-five. She found out that the town was six miles from her village. The fare was thirty paise one way. The trip to the town took forty-five minutes. On reaching the town, if she stayed in her seat and paid another thirty paise, she could return home on the same bus. She had carefully saved whatever stray coins came her way, resisting every temptation to buy peppermints, toys, balloons, and the like, and finally she had saved sixty paise.

3. What kind of a person is Valli? To answer this question, pick out the following sentences from the text and fill in the blanks. The words you fill in are the clues to your answer.

(i) "Stop the bus! Stop the bus!" And a tiny hand was raised

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(ii) "Yes, I _____ go to town," said Valli, still standing outside the bus.

(iii) "There's nobody here _____," she said haughtily. "I've paid my thirty paise like everyone else."

(iv) "Never mind," she said, "I can _____. You don't have to help me. "I'm not a child, I tell you," she said, _____.

(v) "You needn't bother about me. I _____," Valli said, turning her face toward the window and staring out.

(vi) Then she turned to the conductor and said, "Well, sir, I hope _____."

Answer:

(i) "Stop the bus! Stop the bus!" And a tiny hand was raised commandingly.

(ii) "Yes, I simply have to go to town," said Valli, still standing outside the bus.

(iii) "There's nobody here who's a child," she said haughtily. "I've paid my thirty paise like everyone else."

(iv) "Never mind," she said, "I can get on by myself. You don't have to help me. "I'm not a child, I tell you," she said, irritably.

(v) "You needn't bother about me. I can take care of myself" Valli said, turning her face toward the window and staring out.

(vi) Then she turned to the conductor and said, "Well, sir, I hope to see you again."

For Valli, the bus journey probably symbolised the adult world. Like anyone else, she spent her money to buy the ticket. She would have attained a great sense of pride and satisfaction in doing so. Therefore, though a child, Valli wanted to be treated as a grown-up on the bus. She had a great sense of self respect which prevented her from taking anyone's help. She felt she was able to take care of herself very well, and was easily irritated when anyone treated her as a child.

4. Why does the conductor refer to Valli as 'madam'?

Answer:

When the conductor stretched out his hand to help her get on the bus, Valli said commandingly that she could get on by herself, and that she did not require his help. She did not act like a child, but as a grown-up girl and therefore, the conductor called her 'madam'. When the elderly man called her a child and asked her to sit down on her seat, she replied that nobody was a child on the bus. She kept stressing on the fact that she had paid her fare like everybody else and therefore, she should not be treated differently.

5. Find the lines in the text which tell you that Valli was enjoying her ride on the bus.

Answer:

The following lines in the text show that Valli was enjoying her ride on the bus:

(i) "Valli devoured everything with her eyes."

(ii) "On the one side there was the canal and, beyond it, palm trees, grassland, distant mountains, and the blue, blue sky. On the other side was a deep ditch and then acres and acres of green fields – green, green, green, as far as the eye could see. Oh, it was all so wonderful!"

(iii) "Everyone laughed, and gradually Valli too joined in the laughter. Suddenly, Valli clapped her hands with glee."

(iv) "Somehow this was very funny to Valli. She laughed and laughed until there were tears in her eyes."

(v) "Valli wasn't bored to the slightest and greeted everything with the same excitement she'd felt the first time."

6. Why does Valli refuse to look out of the window on her way back?

Answer:

Valli refused to look out of the window on her way back because she saw a young cow lying dead by the roadside, just where it had been struck by some fast-moving vehicle. It was the same cow that was running in front of their bus, during their trip to the town. She was overcome with sadness. The memory of the dead cow haunted her and therefore, she refused to look out of the window.

7. What does Valli mean when she says, "I was just agreeing with what you said about things happening without our knowledge."

Answer:

Valli's mother said that many things happen around us, but we are usually unaware of them. Valli had gone on a bus ride to town, all alone, and had come back without any harm. She did all this without the knowledge of her mother. Hence, she agreed with what her mother said.

8. The author describes the things that Valli sees from an eight-year-old's point of view. Can you find evidence from the text for this

statement?

Answer:

The author has described the things that Valli saw from an eight-year-old's point of view. She was fascinated by a bus. Watching the bus filled with a new set of people each time was a source of unending joy for her. Her strongest desire was to ride the bus. She saved money by cutting on peppermints, toys, and balloons, and even resisting the temptation to ride the merry-go-round at the fair. When the author describes the bus, the points he stresses on are the colour and look of the bus. It was a 'new bus', painted a 'gleaming white'. The overhead bars 'shone like silver'. The seats were 'soft and luxurious'. The descriptions that the author gives when Valli looked outside are also typical for an eight-year-old. The 'blue, blue sky' and the 'acres and acres of green fields – green, green, green' show the enthusiasm of a kid on looking at different colours. Valli clapped her hands in glee on watching a cow run right in front of the bus. She found it so funny that tears came into her eyes. On the other hand, she was overcome with sadness on her way back when she saw the same cow lying dead. It had been a 'lovable, beautiful creature' and later it 'looked so horrible'. The memory of the dead cow haunted her so much that she refused to look outside the window. These are the typical reactions of a young child.

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