Chapter 5: The Adventure

CONTENTS — 5 exercises · 11 questions

5.1	Understanding the Text	2 Q
5.2	Talking about the Text	2 Q
5.3	Thinking about Language	4 Q
5.4	Working with Words	2 Q
5.5	Noticing Form	1 Q

Exercise 5.1 — Understanding the Text

Q1 Tick the statements that are true.

1. The story is an account of real events.
2. The story hinges on a particular historical event.
3. Rajendra Deshpande was a historian.
4. The places mentioned in the story are all imaginary.
5. The story tries to relate history to science.

SOLUTION

The true statements are:

2. TRUE — The entire story hinges on the Battle of Panipat (1761) and what would have happened if its outcome had been different.

5. TRUE — The story brings together history (the Maratha–Abdali conflict) and science (catastrophe theory and quantum theory of many worlds) to explain Professor Gaitonde's experience.

Statements 1, 3, and 4 are false. The story is fiction, not a real account. Rajendra Deshpande is described as a scientist, not a historian. The places — Pune, Bombay (Mumbai), Azad Maidan, the Town Hall — are all real.

Answer: True: statements 2 and 5. False: 1, 3, and 4.

Q2 Briefly explain the following statements from the text.

1. "You neither travelled to the past nor the future. You were in the present experiencing a different world."
2. "You have passed through a fantastic experience: or more correctly, a catastrophic experience."
3. Gangadharpant could not help comparing the country he knew with what he was witnessing around him.
4. "The lack of determinism in quantum theory!"
5. "You need some interaction to cause a transition."

SOLUTION

1. Rajendra uses this statement to explain that Professor Gaitonde did not time-travel in the conventional sense. He remained in the same present moment but crossed over into a parallel world — one where the Battle of Panipat had a different outcome. The shift was between alternate realities existing simultaneously, not between different points on a single timeline.

2. Rajendra describes the professor's journey as 'fantastic' because it is almost beyond belief — crossing into an alternate world where the Marathas won Panipat and India was never colonised by the British. He calls it more precisely 'catastrophic' because it was the catastrophe theory — the idea that a small change at a critical juncture produces radically different outcomes — that explains both the fork in history and the professor's transition between worlds.

3. Professor Gaitonde, arriving in an alternate Bombay, noticed a very different India: the East India Company was still operating, the carriages bore Union Jacks, British banks lined the streets, and there was no independent India as he knew it. This India had never been subjugated — it had allowed Britain only a small commercial presence. The contrast with his own India, shaped by colonialism, was striking and he could not stop drawing comparisons.

4. Rajendra explains that in quantum mechanics, the behaviour of subatomic particles such as electrons cannot be predicted with certainty, even when all physical laws governing them are known. Unlike a bullet whose trajectory is fully determined by the laws of classical mechanics, an electron's position can only be described in terms of probability. This absence of certainty or determinism is what Rajendra — and even Professor Gaitonde, who calls himself 'an ignoramus historian' — refers to as the lack of determinism in quantum theory.

5. Rajendra cannot fully explain why Professor Gaitonde made the transition between worlds but guesses that a triggering interaction was needed. At the moment of the truck collision, the professor was deeply absorbed in thinking about the catastrophe theory and its application to the Battle of Panipat — specifically wondering what would have happened if the battle's result had gone the other way. Rajendra suggests that this intense mental focus, combined with the physical shock of the collision, caused the neurons in Gaitonde's brain to act as a trigger for the transition.

Answer: 1. He crossed into a parallel present, not a different time. 2. The experience was 'catastrophic' in the theoretical sense — a small event (bullet missing Vishwasrao) produced a completely different history. 3. He saw an India that had never been colonised, which was radically unlike his own. 4. In quantum physics, a particle's exact future position cannot be determined — only probabilities can be stated. 5. The professor's intense thinking about Panipat at the moment of the accident likely triggered his transition to the alternate world.

Exercise 5.2 — Talking about the Text

Q1 Discuss the following statements in groups of two pairs, each pair in a group taking opposite points of view.
(i) A single event may change the course of the history of a nation.
(ii) Reality is what is directly experienced through the senses.
(iii) The methods of inquiry of history, science and philosophy are similar.

SOLUTION

(i) The story strongly supports this view. The Battle of Panipat is presented as a pivotal catastrophic event: when Vishwasrao was killed, the Maratha army lost morale and was routed, allowing the British to eventually colonise India. In the alternate world, a bullet missing Vishwasrao by a hair's breadth reversed the entire course — the Marathas remained the dominant power and Britain was reduced to a minor trading presence. The catastrophe theory supports this: at a critical juncture, a tiny difference in conditions can push a system toward a completely different equilibrium. Counterpoint: individual events rarely occur in isolation; underlying social, economic, and political forces shape history, and a different outcome at Panipat may simply have delayed eventual European dominance.

(ii) This view has intuitive appeal — we rely on direct sensory experience as our primary anchor for what is real. However, Rajendra challenges this by noting that quantum theory reveals a reality that extends beyond what we can directly observe. Electrons behave in ways that defy sensory intuition; alternate worlds arising from quantum bifurcations are real even though we experience only one of them at a time. Professor Gaitonde's transition is itself an example of a reality that could not have been predicted by the senses alone. Counterpoint: without sensory grounding and the instruments that extend our senses, we have no reliable access to reality at all; purely theoretical constructs risk becoming speculation.

(iii) History, science, and philosophy each ask 'why' and 'how' about the world, and each requires logic, evidence, and reasoned argument. Professor Gaitonde approaches the alternate India as a historian: he goes to the library and reads volumes of history to reconstruct what happened. Rajendra approaches the same events as a scientist: he applies catastrophe theory and quantum theory to explain the transition. In this way, the disciplines converge on the same question. Counterpoint: history deals with contingent, unrepeatable events and relies on primary sources and interpretation, while science relies on repeatable experiments and falsifiable hypotheses. Philosophy operates primarily through logical analysis rather than empirical data. Their methods differ even if their goals overlap.

Answer: (i) The story endorses it: a bullet's deflection at Panipat changed everything. (ii) Rajendra's quantum-world argument challenges it: reality can exist beyond direct sense-experience. (iii) All three disciplines seek truth through reasoning, but their methods and evidence bases differ.

Q2 (i) The story is called 'The Adventure'. Compare it with the adventure described in 'We're Not Afraid to Die...'
(ii) Why do you think Professor Gaitonde decided never to preside over meetings again?

SOLUTION

(i) The adventure in 'We're Not Afraid to Die...' is a physical ordeal — the family battles a violent storm in the Southern Ocean, faces mortal danger from flooding and structural damage to their vessel, and must display tremendous courage and seamanship to survive. The threat is entirely external and immediate, and the adventure is shared by the whole family. In 'The Adventure,' Professor Gaitonde's adventure is intellectual and metaphysical. He does not face bodily danger from a storm but instead transitions into an alternate reality and must use his historian's mind to understand a radically different world. The danger he faces — being ejected from the Azad Maidan platform — is mild compared to near-drowning. Yet Gaitonde's adventure involves something far more disorienting: confronting a world where all of known history has been rewritten.

(ii) In the alternate world, when Professor Gaitonde sat in the presidential chair at the lecture in Azad Maidan, the audience reacted with fury. In that world the custom of having a presiding dignitary had been abolished, and the audience strongly resisted any attempt to reinstate it. He was pelted with tomatoes and eggs and eventually physically ejected from the stage. This was a profoundly humiliating experience for a man who had presided over 999 meetings. More significantly, it was on that platform that the professor 'disappeared' — his transition back to his own world seems to have occurred during the chaos. He tells Rajendra that his thousandth presidential address was effectively made on the Azad Maidan, under the most hostile conditions imaginable, and that the 'Professor Gaitonde who disappeared while defending his chair will now never be seen presiding at another meeting.' The experience — both the humiliation and the metaphysical jolt — has led him to give up that particular habit entirely.

Answer: (i) One is a physical adventure against nature; the other is an intellectual and metaphysical one involving an alternate history. (ii) The humiliating ejection from the Azad Maidan platform — his 'thousandth address' — ended in chaos, and the experience convinced him to stop presiding at meetings altogether.

Exercise 5.3 — Thinking about Language

Q1 In which language do you think Gangadharpant and Khan Sahib talked to each other? Which language did Gangadharpant use to talk to the English receptionist?

SOLUTION

Gangadharpant and Khan Sahib most likely conversed in Hindustani (a common lingua franca bridging Hindi and Urdu), which would have been the natural shared language between a Marathi-speaking Maharashtrian professor and a Pathan businessman travelling to Peshawar in this alternate India. It is also possible they used a common trade language such as Urdu, which historically served as the language of commerce and administration across much of the subcontinent.

With the English receptionist at Forbes building, Gangadharpant would have used English, the language of the British-controlled commercial establishment in this alternate Bombay — as is evident from the fact that she understood his request and responded to him clearly.

Answer: With Khan Sahib: likely Hindustani/Urdu (a common lingua franca). With the English receptionist: English.

Q2 In which language do you think Bhausahebanchi Bakhar was written?

SOLUTION

Bhausahebanchi Bakhar would have been written in Marathi, since the Bakhars are a genre of Marathi prose chronicles documenting events from the Maratha period. 'Bhausahebanchi Bakhar' refers to a chronicle about Bhausaheb (Sadashivrao Bhau), the Maratha commander at Panipat, and such texts were composed in Marathi by scribes close to the Peshwa court.

Answer: Marathi — Bakhars are Marathi prose chronicles from the Maratha period.

Q3 There is mention of three communities in the story: the Marathas, the Mughals, the Anglo-Indians. Which language do you think they used within their communities and while speaking to the other groups?

SOLUTION

Within their own communities: the Marathas would have used Marathi among themselves; the Mughals would have used Urdu/Persian, the court language of the Mughal administration; the Anglo-Indians, being of mixed British and Indian heritage, would have used English within their community.

Between communities: Urdu or Hindustani, as the shared administrative and trade language of the subcontinent, would have served as the most likely inter-community medium. English would have been used in formal or commercial contexts involving the British or Anglo-Indians, particularly in the alternate Bombay where British commercial presence remained significant.

Answer: Within: Marathi (Marathas), Urdu/Persian (Mughals), English (Anglo-Indians). Between communities: likely Hindustani/Urdu as a common tongue, and English in formal/commercial contexts.

Q4 Do you think that the ruled always adopt the language of the ruler?

SOLUTION

Not always, though there is a strong historical tendency for the ruled to learn the ruler's language out of practical necessity — for administration, commerce, education, and social mobility. In colonial India, English became essential for those seeking government employment or access to higher education, and it spread widely among the educated classes.

However, the ruled do not simply abandon their own languages. Marathi, Hindi, Tamil, Bengali and other Indian languages survived and flourished even under British rule. In many cases, colonial subjects adopted the ruler's language as an additional skill while retaining their mother tongue and cultural identity. The story itself illustrates this: in the alternate India where British rule was limited, the country developed on its own terms and did not undergo the same linguistic imposition. This suggests that the degree of language adoption depends on the depth and nature of political domination, not on some automatic cultural absorption.

Answer: Not always — the ruled often adopt the ruler's language for practical reasons but need not abandon their own; the extent of adoption depends on the depth of political domination.

Exercise 5.4 — Working with Words

Q1 Tick the item that is closest in meaning to the following phrases.
1. to take issue with: (i) to accept (ii) to discuss (iii) to disagree (iv) to add
2. to give vent to: (i) to express (ii) to emphasise (iii) suppress (iv) dismiss
3. to stand on one's feet: (i) to be physically strong (ii) to be independent (iii) to stand erect (iv) to be successful
4. to be wound up: (i) to become active (ii) to stop operating (iii) to be transformed (iv) to be destroyed
5. to meet one's match: (i) to meet a partner who has similar tastes (ii) to meet an opponent (iii) to meet someone who is equally able as oneself (iv) to meet defeat

SOLUTION

1. to take issue with — (iii) to disagree. Used in the text when Rajendra says 'I take issue with you there,' meaning he disagrees with Professor Gaitonde's point about alternate worlds being mere speculation.

2. to give vent to — (i) to express. In the text, Professor Gaitonde 'gave vent to his views' at the lecture, meaning he expressed his opinions forcefully.

3. to stand on one's feet — (ii) to be independent. The text describes how the alternate India 'had learnt to stand on its feet and knew what self-respect was,' meaning it had achieved independence and self-reliance, not having been subjected to colonialism.

4. to be wound up — (ii) to stop operating. The text states that 'the East India Company had been wound up shortly after the events of 1857,' meaning it had ceased to function/operate.

5. to meet one's match — (iii) to meet someone who is equally able as oneself. The text says the East India Company 'met its match in the new Maratha ruler, Vishwasrao,' meaning it encountered an opponent of equal or superior capability.

Answer: 1. (iii) to disagree; 2. (i) to express; 3. (ii) to be independent; 4. (ii) to stop operating; 5. (iii) to meet someone who is equally able as oneself.

Q2 Distinguish between the following pairs of sentences.
1. (i) He was visibly moved. (ii) He was visually impaired.
2. (i) Green and black stripes were used alternately. (ii) Green stripes could be used or alternatively black ones.
3. (i) The team played the two matches successfully. (ii) The team played two matches successively.
4. (i) The librarian spoke respectfully to the learned scholar. (ii) You will find the historian and the scientist in the archaeology and natural science sections of the museum respectively.

SOLUTION

1. 'Visibly' means in a way that can be seen or noticed by others — 'He was visibly moved' means his emotion was apparent and observable to onlookers. 'Visually' relates to the sense of

sight — 'He was visually impaired' means he had a deficiency in his ability to see.

2. 'Alternately' means occurring by turns in a regular pattern — 'Green and black stripes were used alternately' means the colours appear in a repeating sequence (green, black, green, black...). 'Alternatively' means as another option or choice — 'green stripes could be used or alternatively black ones' means either green or black could be chosen instead of the other.

3. 'Successfully' means with success or a good outcome — 'The team played the two matches successfully' means they won or performed well in both. 'Successively' means one after another in sequence — 'The team played two matches successively' simply means they played one match and then immediately another, with no implication about the result.

4. 'Respectfully' is an adverb describing manner — 'the librarian spoke respectfully' means the librarian spoke with respect and deference. 'Respectively' refers to items mentioned in the same order as a previously listed set — 'the historian and the scientist... in the archaeology and natural science sections respectively' means the historian is in the archaeology section and the scientist is in the natural science section, each corresponding in the order given.

Answer: 1. visibly = noticeable to others; visually = relating to eyesight. 2. alternately = by turns in sequence; alternatively = as a substitute/other option. 3. successfully = with good results; successively = one after another in sequence. 4. respectfully = with respect (manner); respectively = each in the order mentioned.

Exercise 5.5 — Noticing Form

Q1 The story deals with unreal and hypothetical conditions. Notice the conditional sentences given:
1. If I fire a bullet from a gun in a given direction at a given speed, I know where it will be at a later time.
2. If I knew the answer I would solve a great problem.
3. If he himself were dead in this world, what guarantee had he that his son would be alive.
4. What course would history have taken if the battle had gone the other way?
Notice that in an unreal condition, it is clearly expected that the condition will not be fulfilled. How do the forms of the verbs in these sentences reflect this?

SOLUTION

The four sentences illustrate different types of conditional clauses, and the verb forms signal whether the condition is real/possible or unreal/hypothetical:

Sentence 1 uses the simple present ('fire') in the if-clause and simple present/future ('I know / will be') in the main clause. This is a real or open conditional — the speaker is describing a general truth or a situation that is genuinely possible. There is no sense of unreality here.

Sentence 2 uses the simple past ('knew') in the if-clause and 'would + infinitive' ('would solve') in the main clause. This is an unreal present conditional (Type 2). By using 'knew' (past form) rather than 'know,' the speaker signals that the condition is NOT currently true — Rajendra does not know the answer — and the consequence is therefore imaginary.

Sentence 3 uses the subjunctive 'were' ('if he himself were dead') rather than 'was.' The subjunctive 'were' is the classic marker of an unreal or hypothetical condition. The speaker is imagining a possibility — the professor being dead in the alternate world — that is not confirmed as fact. The past perfect construction ('what guarantee had he') reinforces the hypothetical nature.

Sentence 4 uses the past perfect ('had gone') in the if-clause and 'would have taken' in the main clause. This is an unreal past conditional (Type 3). It refers to a past event (the Battle of Panipat) whose actual outcome is known; the speaker is imagining the opposite outcome — a counterfactual that did not happen. This is the central 'what if' question of the entire story.

In short, unreal conditions in English are signalled by a 'backshift' in tense: present meaning is expressed with past-tense forms, and past meaning uses the past perfect. This distancing of the verb form from the present signals to the reader that the condition is not expected to be fulfilled.

Answer: Sentence 1: real conditional (simple present — genuinely possible). Sentences 2 and 3: unreal present conditionals — past tense/subjunctive 'were' signals the condition is currently not true. Sentence 4: unreal past conditional — past perfect signals the condition was not fulfilled in history. The 'backshift' in tense marks unreality.