Chapter 1: Three Questions

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Exercise 1.1 — Comprehension Check

Q1 Why did the king want to know answers to three questions?

SOLUTION

The story opens by telling us the king's motive.
"The thought came to a certain king that he would never fail if he knew three things."
The three things were: the right time to begin something, which people he should listen to, and the most important thing for him to do.
So he wanted the answers because he believed knowing them would keep him from ever failing in whatever he did.

Answer: The king believed that he would never fail in anything he did if he knew the answers to these three questions — the right time to begin something, the right people to listen to, and the most important thing to do.

Q2 Messengers were sent throughout the kingdom
(i) to fetch wise men.
(ii) to find answers to the questions.
(iii) to look for the wise hermit.
(iv) to announce a reward for those who could answer the questions.
Mark your choice.

SOLUTION

The text says the king "sent messengers throughout his kingdom, promising a large sum of money to anyone who would answer these three questions."
So the messengers were sent to announce the reward, which made the wise men come to the king.
Option (iv) matches this exactly.

Answer: (iv) to announce a reward for those who could answer the questions.

Exercise 1.2 — Comprehension Check

Q1 Complete the following sentence by adding the appropriate part of the sentence given in the box.
Many wise men answered the king's questions, _____

SOLUTION

Many wise men came, but each answered differently, so the king was not satisfied and gave no reward.
The matching clause from the box is "but their answers were so varied that the king was not satisfied."

Answer: Many wise men answered the king's questions, but their answers were so varied that the king was not satisfied.

Q2 Complete the following sentence by adding the appropriate part of the sentence given in the box.
Someone suggested that there should be a council of wise men _____

SOLUTION

The text says the king needed a council of wise men "who would help him act at the proper time."
The matching clause from the box is "to help the king act at the right time."

Answer: Someone suggested that there should be a council of wise men to help the king act at the right time.

Q3 Complete the following sentence by adding the appropriate part of the sentence given in the box.
Someone else suggested that the king should have a timetable _____

SOLUTION

Some said the king "must prepare a timetable, and then follow it strictly."
The matching clause from the box is "and follow it strictly."

Answer: Someone else suggested that the king should have a timetable and follow it strictly.

Q4 Complete the following sentence by adding the appropriate part of the sentence given in the box.
The king requested the hermit _____

SOLUTION

The king went to the wise hermit and begged him "to answer my questions."
The matching clause from the box is "to answer three questions."

Answer: The king requested the hermit to answer three questions.

Q5 Complete the following sentence by adding the appropriate part of the sentence given in the box.

The king washed and dressed the bearded man's wound, _____

SOLUTION

The king washed and covered the wound, "but the blood would not stop flowing" until he re-dressed it.

The matching clause from the box is "but the bleeding would not stop."

Answer: The king washed and dressed the bearded man's wound, but the bleeding would not stop.

Exercise 1.3 — Working with the Text

Q1 Why was the king advised to go to magicians?

SOLUTION

Some people argued that certain matters are urgent and cannot wait for the decision of a council.

To decide the right time for such urgent things, one must be able to look into the future.

The story says "only magicians could do that" — foresee the future — so the king was advised to go to magicians.

Answer: The king was advised to go to magicians because some urgent things could not wait for the council's decision. Deciding the right time for such things needed looking into the future, and only magicians were believed able to see the future.

Q2 In answer to the second question, whose advice did the people say would be important to the king?

SOLUTION

The second question was about which people the king most needed.

Different people named different groups: "some said that the people most necessary to the king were his councillors; others said, the priests. A few others chose the doctors. And yet others said that his soldiers were the most necessary."

Answer: People gave different answers — some said his councillors, others said the priests, a few chose the doctors, and yet others said his soldiers were the most necessary to the king.

Q3 What suggestions were made in answer to the third question?

SOLUTION

The third question asked what was the most important thing for the king to do.

The text says "some said science. Others chose fighting, and yet others religious worship."

Answer: In answer to the third question, some said science was most important, others chose fighting, and yet others said religious worship.

Q4 Did the wise men win the reward? If not, why not?

SOLUTION

No, the wise men did not win the reward.

"As the answers to his questions were so different, the king was not satisfied and gave no reward."

Because their answers were so varied and none satisfied him, he decided instead to seek out the hermit.

Answer: No, the wise men did not win the reward. Their answers to the questions were so different and varied that the king was not satisfied with any of them, so he gave no reward.

Q5 How did the king and the hermit help the wounded man?

SOLUTION

The bearded man ran up bleeding from a wound in his stomach and fainted.
The king washed the wound, covered it with his handkerchief, and re-dressed it until the bleeding stopped.
He gave the man fresh water to drink, and with the hermit's help carried him into the hut and laid him on the bed to rest.

Answer: The king washed the man's wound, covered it with his handkerchief and re-dressed it until the bleeding stopped. He gave the man fresh water to drink, and with the hermit's help carried him into the hut and laid him on the bed.

Q6 (i) Who was the bearded man?
(ii) Why did he ask for the king's forgiveness?

SOLUTION

(i) The bearded man was the king's enemy, who had sworn revenge because the king had put his brother to death and seized his property.
(ii) He had planned to kill the king on his way home, but the king's bodyguard wounded him instead. When the king unknowingly saved his life by dressing his wounds, the man was filled with regret and asked forgiveness, vowing to serve the king faithfully.

Answer: (i) The bearded man was an enemy of the king, who had sworn revenge because the king had put his brother to death and seized his property. (ii) He asked for forgiveness because he had come to kill the king but was wounded by the king's bodyguard, and the king, without knowing this, had saved his life by dressing his wounds — so he repented and promised to serve the king faithfully.

Q7 The king forgave the bearded man. What did he do to show his forgiveness?

SOLUTION

The king was glad to make peace with his enemy so easily.
"He not only forgave him but said he would send his servants and his own doctor to look after him, and he promised to give back the man's property."

Answer: To show his forgiveness, the king promised to send his own servants and his personal doctor to look after the wounded man, and he promised to give back the property he had earlier seized from him.

Q8 What were the hermit's answers to the three questions? Write each answer separately. Which answer do you like most, and why?

SOLUTION

The hermit answered each question through what had just happened.

1. The right time: There is only one important time, and that is 'Now', because it is the only time we have any power to act.

2. The most necessary person: The one you are with at that moment, for no one knows whether they will ever meet anyone else.

3. The most important thing to do: To do good to the person you are with, because that is the purpose for which we were sent into this world.

The 'like most' part is a personal choice — any of the three, with a reason, is acceptable.

Answer: 1. The most important time is 'Now', because it is the only time we have the power to act. 2. The most necessary person is the one you are with at the moment, since no one knows whom they will meet in the future. 3. The most important thing to do is to do good to that person, for that is the purpose we were sent into the world. (I like the answer about 'Now' most, because it reminds us not to waste the present moment, which is the only time we can truly act.)

Exercise 1.4 — Working with Language

Q1 Match items in List A with their meanings in List B.
A: (i) wounded (ii) awoke (iii) forgive (iv) faithful (v) pity (vi) beds (vii) return
B: got up from sleep / give back / small patches of ground for plants / severely injured / pardon / loyal / feel sorry for

SOLUTION

Match each word to its meaning based on how it is used in the story.
(i) wounded → severely injured
(ii) awoke → got up from sleep
(iii) forgive → pardon
(iv) faithful → loyal
(v) pity → feel sorry for
(vi) beds → small patches of ground for plants
(vii) return → give back

Answer: (i) wounded – severely injured; (ii) awoke – got up from sleep; (iii) forgive – pardon; (iv) faithful – loyal; (v) pity – feel sorry for; (vi) beds – small patches of ground for plants; (vii) return – give back.

Q2 Each of the following sentences has two blanks. Fill in the blanks with appropriate forms of the word given in brackets.
(Example: He has ____ to help me. Do you think he will remember his ____? (promise) → He has promised to help me. Do you think he will remember his promise?)
(i) The _____ said that only fresh evidence would make him change his _____. (judge)

SOLUTION

The first blank needs a person (noun), the second needs the thing he might change (noun). "judge" (the person) said he would not change his "judgement" (his decision/opinion).

Answer: (i) The judge said that only fresh evidence would make him change his judgement. (judge)

Q3 (ii) I didn't notice any serious _____ of opinion among the debaters, although they _____ from one another on small points. (differ)

SOLUTION

The first blank needs a noun (a serious ... of opinion) → "difference".
The second blank needs a verb (they ... from one another) → "differed".

Answer: (ii) I didn't notice any serious difference of opinion among the debaters, although they differed from one another on small points. (differ)

Q4 (iii) It's a fairly simple question to _____, but will you accept my _____ as final? (answer)

SOLUTION

The first blank needs a verb (a question to ...) → "answer".
The second blank needs a noun (my ... as final) → "answer".

Answer: (iii) It's a fairly simple question to answer, but will you accept my answer as final? (answer)

Q5 (iv) It isn't _____ that _____ should always be the mother of invention. (necessary)

SOLUTION

The first blank needs an adjective (It isn't ...) → "necessary".
The second blank needs a noun (... should always be the mother of invention) → "necessity".
This plays on the proverb 'Necessity is the mother of invention.'

Answer: (iv) It isn't necessary that necessity should always be the mother of invention. (necessary)

Q6 (v) Hermits are _____ men. How they acquire their _____ no one can tell. (wise)

SOLUTION

The first blank needs an adjective (... men) → "wise".
The second blank needs a noun (acquire their ...) → "wisdom".

Answer: (v) Hermits are wise men. How they acquire their wisdom no one can tell. (wise)

Q7 (vi) The committee has _____ to make Jagdish captain of the team. The _____ is likely to please everyone. (decide)

SOLUTION

The first blank needs a verb (The committee has ...) → "decided".
The second blank needs a noun (The ... is likely to please) → "decision".

Answer: (vi) The committee has decided to make Jagdish captain of the team. The decision is likely to please everyone. (decide)

Q8 (vii) Asking for _____ is as noble as willingness to _____. (forgive)

SOLUTION

The first blank needs a noun (Asking for ...) → "forgiveness".
The second blank needs a verb (willingness to ...) → "forgive".

Answer: (vii) Asking for forgiveness is as noble as willingness to forgive. (forgive)

Exercise 1.5 — Working with the Poem — The Squirrel

Q1 Why does the poet say the squirrel "wore a question mark for tail"? Draw a squirrel, or find a picture of a squirrel sitting on the ground. How would you describe its tail?

SOLUTION

When a squirrel sits up to eat, its bushy tail curves upward and then curls over at the top.
This curved shape looks exactly like a question mark (?).
So the poet uses the comparison to describe the tail's shape.

Answer: The poet says the squirrel "wore a question mark for tail" because its bushy tail curves up and curls over at the end, so its shape looks just like a question mark (?). The tail can be described as long, bushy and curved, like the punctuation mark used at the end of a question.

Q2 Do we usually say that an animal 'wears' a tail? What do we say? (Think: Does an animal wear a coat? Consult a dictionary if you like, and find out how 'wear' is used in different ways.)

SOLUTION

No, we do not usually say an animal 'wears' a tail; a tail is a natural part of its body.
We normally say an animal 'has' a tail.
The poet uses 'wore' as a playful, imaginative way of saying the tail and the grey fur look like clothes the squirrel is wearing (a 'question mark' tail and an 'overcoat of gray').

Answer: No, we do not usually say an animal 'wears' a tail. We say an animal 'has' a tail, because it is a natural part of its body. The poet uses 'wore' imaginatively, as if the tail and the grey fur were clothes, to make the description more fun and vivid.

Q3 "He liked to tease and play". Who is teasing whom? How?

SOLUTION

The squirrel is teasing the people (the children) who are watching or chasing it.
The poem says, "And if we ran around his tree, / He went the other way."
So it teases by always dodging to the opposite side of the tree, staying just out of reach and making a playful game of it.

Answer: The squirrel is teasing the people watching it (the children, 'we' in the poem). It teases them by playing hide-and-seek around the tree — whenever they ran around his tree to catch or see him, he quickly moved to the other side, staying just out of reach.