Chapter 2: A Gift of Chappals

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Exercise 2.1 — Comprehension Check (I)

Q1 What is the secret that Meena shares with Mridu in the backyard?

SOLUTION

Meena takes Mridu behind the bitter-berry bush and shows her a tiny kitten they have hidden there, lapping milk from a coconut half-shell.

She explains it must be kept secret because Amma (Paati) has said that Paati will leave for their Paddu Mama's house if she learns they have a cat.

Answer: The secret is that the children have found and hidden a little kitten in the backyard. They must keep it a secret because their grandmother, Paati, has threatened to go away to Paddu Mama's house if she discovers they are keeping a cat.

Q2 How does Ravi get milk for the kitten?

SOLUTION

Ravi cannot ask openly for milk because Paati would become suspicious.

He tells Paati he is very hungry and wants a glass of milk. When she watches him, he drinks most of it to throw her off the scent, then runs and pours the rest into the coconut shell for the kitten, and quickly washes and returns the tumbler before she gets suspicious.

Answer: Ravi tricks Paati. He tells her he is very hungry and asks for a glass of milk. To avoid suspicion, he drinks most of it in front of her, then quickly runs to the backyard and pours the rest into the kitten's coconut shell, washing and returning the tumbler before Paati notices anything.

Q3 Who does he say the kitten's ancestors are? Do you believe him?

SOLUTION

Ravi claims the kitten is a fine breed named Mahendravarma Pallava Poonai (M.P. Poonai). He says its ancestors were the Mahabalipuram Rishi-Cat and, before that, the Egyptian cat-goddess Bastet, whose descendant was a stowaway on a Pallava ship, and that the cat is a

close relative of the lion.

This is clearly a made-up story that shows Ravi's rich imagination, so we do not believe him.

Answer: Ravi says the kitten, whom he calls Mahendravarma Pallava Poonai (M.P. Poonai), is descended from the Mahabalipuram Rishi-Cat and, further back, from the ancient Egyptian cat-goddess Bastet, and is a close relative of the Pallava lion. No, we do not believe him — it is an entertaining story invented by his lively imagination.

Q4 Ravi has a lot to say about M.P. Poonai. This shows that (i) he is merely trying to impress Mridu. (ii) his knowledge of history is sound. (iii) he has a rich imagination. (iv) he is an intelligent child. Which of these statements do you agree/disagree to?

SOLUTION

Ravi weaves an elaborate, fanciful family tree for the kitten linking it to the Pallava kings, the Mahabalipuram Rishi-Cat and the Egyptian cat-goddess.

Statement (i): partly agree — he does enjoy showing off to Mridu.

Statement (ii): disagree — his 'history' is invented, not accurate.

Statement (iii): agree strongly — the tale shows a very rich imagination.

Statement (iv): agree — an intelligent child could dream up such a clever, connected story.

Answer: We agree most strongly with (iii) — Ravi has a rich imagination, since the whole story is his own invention. We can also agree with (iv), that he is an intelligent child, and partly with (i), that he wants to impress Mridu. We disagree with (ii), because his knowledge of history is not sound — the ancestry he gives is entirely made up.

Q5 What was the noise that startled Mridu and frightened Mahendran?

SOLUTION

A strange 'Kreech…!' sound came from the window and went on and on.

Ravi explains it is Lalli practising the violin under her music-master; the frightened kitten Mahendran bounces up, hides among a tray of drying red chillies and tips a few over himself.

Answer: The noise was the harsh 'Kreech…!' sound of Lalli practising the violin with her music-master. It startled Mridu and so frightened the kitten Mahendran that he scurried to a bamboo tray of drying red chillies to hide, tipping some of the chillies over himself.

Exercise 2.2 — Comprehension Check (II)

Q1 The music master is making lovely music. Read aloud the sentence in the text that expresses this idea.

SOLUTION

The passage contrasts Lalli's clumsy playing with the music-master's skilled playing.
The sentence describing his beautiful music likens his notes to a train fitting smoothly onto its tracks.

Answer: "The music-master's notes seemed to float up and settle perfectly into the invisible tracks of the melody." (It continues: "It was like the wheels of a train fitting smoothly into the rails and whizzing along, as Ravi said.")

Q2 Had the beggar come to Rukku Manni's house for the first time? Give reasons for your answer.

SOLUTION

The text shows the beggar was already a regular visitor.
Paati tells Tapi he has been coming there every day for the past week and it is time he found another house to beg from, and the beggar himself says he has kept body and soul together on the family's generosity for a whole week.

Answer: No, it was not his first visit. Paati says he had been coming there every day for the past week and that it was time he found another house to beg from, and the beggar himself admits he had lived on the family's generosity for a whole week. This proves he had visited many times before.

Q3 "A sharp V-shaped line had formed between her eyebrows." What does it suggest to you about Rukku Manni's mood?

SOLUTION

The frown line appears along with a tight, straight line in place of her usually soft, pleasant mouth.
These signs show she is displeased.
Mridu also notices this and thinks with a shiver that Rukku Manni is angry.

Answer: The sharp V-shaped line between her eyebrows suggests that Rukku Manni was angry and upset. Her usually soft, pleasant mouth had also gone tight and straight, and Mridu realises with a shiver that she is annoyed — probably because she suspects the children have taken the music-master's missing chappals.

Exercise 2.3 — Working with the Text

Q1 Complete the following sentences. (i) Ravi compares Lalli's playing the violin to _____. (ii) Trying to hide beneath the tray of chillies, Mahendran _____. (iii) The teacher played a few notes on his violin, and Lalli _____. (iv) The beggar said that the kind ladies of the household _____. (v) After the lesson was over, the music teacher asked Lalli if _____.

SOLUTION

Each blank is completed from the events in the story.

(i) Ravi says the music-master goes on playing like a train whizzing along while Lalli's all the time derailing.

(ii) The frightened kitten tips a few chillies over himself and howls 'Mi-a-aw!' miserably.

(iii) Lalli stumbles behind him on her violin, which looks helpless and unhappy in her hands.

(iv) The beggar praises the ladies for their kindness and generosity, on which he has stayed alive a whole week.

(v) After the lesson the music teacher misses his chappals and asks Lalli whether she has seen them.

Answer: (i) …a train whizzing along the rails, while Lalli is all the time derailing and going off track.
(ii) …tipped a few chillies over himself and howled 'Mi-a-aw!' miserably.
(iii) …stumbled behind him on her violin, which looked quite helpless and unhappy in her hands.
(iv) …were very kind souls, on whose generosity he had kept his body and soul together for a whole week.
(v) …she had seen his chappals, which he remembered having kept in the verandah.

Q2 Describe the music teacher, as seen from the window.

SOLUTION

Mridu watches him through the window while he teaches Lalli.

The text describes his bald head, oiled hair, tuft, gold chain, diamond ring, gold-bordered veshti and the big toe he taps to keep time.

Answer: Seen from the window, the music teacher was a bony man with most of his back to the window. He had a mostly bald head with a fringe of oiled black hair round his ears and an old-fashioned tuft. A gold chain gleamed on his leathery neck and a diamond ring glittered on his hand as it glided up and down the violin. He wore a gold-bordered veshti, and a large foot stuck out from under it, beating time on the floor with the scrawny big toe.

Q3 (i) What makes Mridu conclude that the beggar has no money to buy chappals? (ii) What does she suggest to show her concern?

SOLUTION

(i) The beggar stretches out his feet to show large, pink, peeling blisters on the soles of his bare feet, and complains the hot tar has melted on the road and his feet are already blistered.
(ii) Feeling sorry for him, Mridu whispers to Meena and Ravi to look for an old pair of chappals in the house that could be given to the beggar.

Answer: (i) Mridu concludes he has no money for chappals because he is barefoot and shows large, pink, peeling blisters on the soles of his feet, saying the hot tar on the road has already blistered them. (ii) To show her concern, she suggests that they find an old pair of chappals somewhere in the house and give them to him.

Q4 "Have you children…" she began, and then, seeing they were curiously quiet, went on more slowly, "seen anyone lurking around the verandah?" (i) What do you think Rukku Manni really wanted to ask? (ii) Why did she change her question? (iii) What did she think had happened?

SOLUTION

The music-master's new chappals have gone missing from the verandah, and Rukku Manni comes out looking harassed.
(i) She really wanted to ask the children whether they had taken the chappals.
(ii) Seeing them curiously quiet and not wanting to accuse them directly, she softened and changed her question.
(iii) She feared the chappals had been stolen, perhaps by one of the vendors who come to the door.

Answer: (i) Rukku Manni really wanted to ask the children whether they had taken or seen the music-master's missing chappals. (ii) She changed her question because the children looked curiously quiet, and she did not want to accuse them outright, so she asked instead if they had seen anyone 'lurking around'. (iii) She thought the chappals had been stolen — possibly by one of the many vendors who came to the door.

Q5 On getting Gopu Mama's chappals, the music teacher tried not to look too happy. Why?

SOLUTION

Gopu Mama's chappals were hardly worn and new, much better than his own old lost ones.
He was secretly delighted to get such good chappals but did not want to show his pleasure openly, so as not to appear greedy or unappreciative after complaining.

Answer: The music teacher tried not to look too happy because Gopu Mama's chappals were brand new and hardly worn — far better than the old ones he had lost. He was secretly delighted at this gain, but it would have looked greedy and improper to show his pleasure so openly, so he hid it and pretended to accept them grudgingly.

Q6 On getting a gift of chappals, the beggar vanished in a minute. Why was he in such a hurry to leave?

SOLUTION

The beggar had been begging at the house for a week and had just been told firmly to go away and not come back.

When Ravi suddenly gave him a good pair of chappals, he seized the chance and hurried off before anyone could change their mind or take them back.

Answer: The beggar was in a hurry to leave because he had just been ordered to go away and not return, and then, unexpectedly, he was given a good pair of chappals. He quickly flung his towel over his shoulder, pushed his feet into them and left at once, muttering a blessing — hurrying off before anyone could change their mind and take the chappals back.

Q7 Walking towards the kitchen with Mridu and Meena, Rukku Manni began to laugh. What made her laugh?

SOLUTION

Rukku Manni had given the music-master her brother Gopu Mama's new chappals to replace the ones the children had given away.

She suddenly imagined Gopu Mama's reaction when he came home in a hurry, as he always did, to slip into his chappals and found them gone — and had to be told she had given them to the music-master.

Answer: Rukku Manni laughed as she imagined what her brother Gopu Mama would say that evening. He always rushed home to throw off his shoes and socks and get into his chappals at once, and she thought of his surprise and reaction when she told him she had given his new chappals away to the music-master.

Exercise 2.4 — Working with Language

Q1 Read the following sentences. (a) If she knows we have a cat, Paati will leave the house. (b) She won't be so upset if she knows about the poor beggar with sores on his feet. (c) If the chappals do fit, will you really not mind? Notice that each sentence consists of two parts. The first part begins with 'if'. It is known as if-clause. Rewrite each of the following pairs of sentences as a single sentence. Use 'if' at the beginning of the sentence. (i) Don't tire yourself now. You won't be able to work in the evening. (ii) Study regularly. You'll do well in the examination. (iii) Work hard. You'll pass the examination in the first division. (iv) Be polite to people. They'll also be polite to you. (v) Don't tease the dog. It'll bite you.

SOLUTION

Each pair is joined into one conditional sentence beginning with 'If', following the models given: 'If you walk fast, you'll catch the bus' and 'If you spit on the road, you'll be fined.'
The command is turned into the if-clause and the second sentence becomes the main clause.

Answer: (i) If you tire yourself now, you won't be able to work in the evening.
(ii) If you study regularly, you'll do well in the examination.
(iii) If you work hard, you'll pass the examination in the first division.
(iv) If you are polite to people, they'll also be polite to you.
(v) If you tease the dog, it'll bite you.

Q2 Fill in the blanks in the following paragraph. Today is Sunday. I'm wondering whether I should stay at home or go out. If I _____ (go) out, I _____ (miss) the lovely Sunday lunch at home. If I _____ (stay) for lunch, I _____ (miss) the Sunday film showing at Archana Theatre. I think I'll go out and see the film, only to avoid getting too fat.

SOLUTION

The first-conditional pattern is used: 'if' + present simple, then 'will' + base verb.
Each blank is filled to keep the meaning of the paragraph.

Answer: If I go out, I will miss the lovely Sunday lunch at home. If I stay for lunch, I will miss the Sunday film showing at Archana Theatre.

Q3 Complete each sentence below by appropriately using any one of the following: if you want to/if you don't want to/if you want him to (i) Don't go to the theatre _____. (ii) He'll post your letter _____. (iii) Please use my pen _____. (iv) He'll lend you his umbrella _____. (v) My neighbour, Ramesh, will take you to the doctor _____. (vi) Don't eat it _____.

SOLUTION

Each blank is completed with one of the three given phrases so that the sentence reads sensibly.
'if you want to' suits offers and permissions; 'if you don't want to' suits things you may refuse; 'if you want him to' is used where a third person ('he') does the action.

Answer: (i) Don't go to the theatre if you don't want to.
(ii) He'll post your letter if you want him to.
(iii) Please use my pen if you want to.
(iv) He'll lend you his umbrella if you want him to.
(v) My neighbour, Ramesh, will take you to the doctor if you want him to.
(vi) Don't eat it if you don't want to.

Exercise 2.5 — The Rebel — Working with the Poem

Q1 Answer the following questions. (i) If someone doesn't wear a uniform to school, what do you think the teacher will say? (ii) When everyone wants a clear sky, what does the rebel want most? (iii) If the rebel has a dog for a pet, what is everyone else likely to have? (iv) Why is it good to have rebels? (v) Why is it not good to be a rebel oneself? (vi) Would you like to be a rebel? If yes, why? If not, why not?

SOLUTION

The poem 'The Rebel' by D. J. Enright shows a person who always does the opposite of everybody else.

(i) A uniform is compulsory, so the teacher would object and tell the pupil to wear the school uniform.

(ii) The poem says when everybody is praising the sun (a clear sky), the rebel remarks on the need for rain.

(iii) In the company of dog lovers the rebel prefers cats — so if the rebel keeps a dog, everyone else is likely to keep cats.

(iv) Rebels bring variety and different points of view and make us think, instead of everyone behaving in exactly the same way.

(v) A rebel is always at odds with others, so being one can make life difficult and lonely.

(vi) A personal opinion — either answer is acceptable if a reason is given.

Answer: (i) The teacher would object and tell the student that a uniform must be worn to school. (ii) When everyone wants a clear sky, the rebel wants rain. (iii) Everyone else is likely to have cats, since the rebel always prefers the opposite. (iv) It is good to have rebels because they bring variety and fresh points of view and make people think, instead of everyone doing and saying exactly the same thing. (v) It is not good to be a rebel oneself because a rebel is always going against others, which can make life difficult, tiring and lonely. (vi) (Own view) I would/would not like to be a rebel — for example, being a rebel lets you think for yourself, but always opposing others can leave you alone and misunderstood.

Q2 Find in the poem an antonym (a word opposite in meaning) for each of the following words. (i) long (ii) grow (iii) quietness (iv) sober (v) lost

SOLUTION

Antonyms are found from the words used in the poem.

(i) long → short (the rebel cuts his hair short).

(ii) grow → cut (the rebel cuts his hair short).

(iii) quietness → disturbance (the rebel creates a disturbance).

(iv) sober → fantastic (the rebel dresses in fantastic clothes).

(v) lost → find (You may not find it very good to be one).

Answer: (i) long — short
(ii) grow — cut

(iii) quietness — disturbance
(iv) sober — fantastic
(v) lost — find

Q3 Find in the poem lines that match the following. Read both one after the other. (i) The rebel refuses to cut his hair. (ii) He says cats are better. (iii) He recommends dogs. (iv) He is unhappy because there is no sun. (v) He is noisy on purpose.

SOLUTION

Each statement is matched to the exact lines of the poem.
The paraphrase is paired with the poet's original words.

Answer: (i) The rebel refuses to cut his hair — "When everybody has short hair, / The rebel lets his hair grow long."
(ii) He says cats are better — "In the company of dog lovers, / The rebel expresses a preference for cats."
(iii) He recommends dogs — "In the company of cat lovers, / The rebel puts in a good word for dogs."
(iv) He is unhappy because there is no sun — "When everybody is greeting the rain, / The rebel regrets the absence of sun."
(v) He is noisy on purpose — "When nobody talks during the lesson, / The rebel creates a disturbance."