Chapter 4: The Ashes that Made Trees Bloom

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Exercise 4.1 — Comprehension Check

Q1 Why did the neighbours kill the dog?

SOLUTION

The wicked neighbours had heard how the dog led the kind old couple to a pile of buried gold and made them rich.

Greedy for the same luck, they dragged the dog to a pine tree in their garden. He began to scratch the ground, but when they dug they found only a dead kitten with a foul smell.

Furious that the dog had brought them worthless filth instead of treasure, they kicked and beat him to death.

Answer: The greedy neighbours had seen the dog make the kind couple rich by leading them to buried gold, so they took him to their garden hoping for the same. When his scratching turned up only a smelly dead kitten instead of treasure, they were furious and beat him to death.

Q2 Mark the right item.

(i) The old farmer and his wife loved the dog

(a) because it helped them in their day-to-day work.

(b) as if it was their own baby.

(c) as they were kind to all living beings.

(ii) When the old couple became rich, they

(a) gave the dog better food.

(b) invited their greedy neighbours to a feast.

(c) lived comfortably and were generous towards their poor neighbours.

(iii) The greedy couple borrowed the mill and the mortar to make

(a) rice pastry and bean sauce.

(b) magic ash to win rewards.

(c) a pile of gold.

SOLUTION

(i) Having no children, the couple loved the dog “as though it were a baby” — so option (b).

(ii) After becoming rich they bought land, made a feast for their friends and “gave plentifully to their poor neighbours” — so option (c).

(iii) The greedy couple borrowed the mortar and mill hoping to turn boiled rice and beans into gold — i.e. to make a pile of gold — so option (c).

Answer: (i) (b) as if it was their own baby.
(ii) (c) lived comfortably and were generous towards their poor neighbours.
(iii) (c) a pile of gold.

Exercise 4.2 — Working with the Text

Q1 The old farmer is a kind person. What evidence of his kindness do you find in the first two paragraphs?

SOLUTION

The couple, having no children, loved their dog Muko as though it were a baby, made it a soft cushion, and fed it fish from their own chopsticks and all the boiled rice it wanted.
The old man was patient and kind to everything that had life: he never harmed the white heron that followed him, and he often turned up a sod on purpose to give food to the birds.

Answer: He treated his dog Muko like his own baby, giving it a soft cushion and fish from his own chopsticks. He was patient and kind to every living thing — he never harmed the white heron that followed him and even turned up the soil on purpose to give food to the birds.

Q2 What did the dog do to lead the farmer to the hidden gold?

SOLUTION

The dog ran to the old man, put his paws against his legs and motioned with his head towards a spot behind.
He kept whining and running to and fro, then led the man a few yards to a place where he began to scratch the ground lively. When the old man struck the earth with his hoe, a pile of gold gleamed before him.

Answer: The dog ran to the farmer, pushed his paws against his legs and pointed with his head to a spot. He whined and ran to and fro until the man followed him, then scratched at the ground. When the old man dug there with his hoe, he found a pile of gold.

Q3 (i) How did the spirit of the dog help the farmer first?
(ii) How did it help him next?

SOLUTION

(i) After the dog was killed and buried under the pine tree, its spirit came to the farmer in a dream and told him to cut down the pine tree over its grave and make from it a mortar for rice pastry and a mill for bean sauce. When he used them, the rice and beans turned into gold.
(ii) After the wicked neighbours burnt the mill, the spirit came again in a dream and told the farmer to take the ashes of the mill and sprinkle them on withered trees so that they would bloom again.

Answer: (i) The dog's spirit appeared in a dream and told the farmer to cut down the pine tree over its grave and make a mortar and a mill from it; when used, these turned rice and beans into gold. (ii) When the neighbours had burnt the mill, the spirit came again and told him to sprinkle the mill's ashes on withered trees to make them bloom again.

Q4 Why did the daimio reward the farmer but punish his neighbour for the same act?

SOLUTION

The kind farmer had real magic ashes. As the daimio's procession passed, he climbed a withered cherry tree and scattered a pinch of ash, and the tree at once burst into blossom. Delighted at the wonder, the daimio stopped and gave him silk robes, sponge-cake, fans and other rewards.

The greedy neighbour had only ordinary ash. He climbed a withered tree and threw a handful over it, but it did not change a particle. Instead the wind blew the dust into the daimio's nose and eyes, making him sneeze and choke and spoiling the dignity of the procession, so he was dragged down and beaten.

Answer: The two men did the same act but with very different results. The kind farmer had the true magic ashes, so his sprinkled ash made the withered cherry tree burst into blossom, delighting the daimio, who rewarded him. The neighbour had only ordinary ash, which failed to bloom the tree and instead blew into the daimio's nose and eyes, making him choke and spoiling the procession — so he was punished.

Exercise 4.3 — Working with Language

Q1 Read the following paragraph and frame questions on the italicised phrases.

Anil is in school. I am in school too. Anil is sitting in the left row. He is reading a book. Anil's friend is sitting in the second row. He is sharpening his pencil. The teacher is writing on the blackboard. Children are writing in their copybooks. Some children are looking out of the window.

(i) _____
(ii) _____
(iii) _____
(iv) _____
(v) _____
(vi) _____
(vii) _____

SOLUTION

Each italicised phrase answers a question word, so frame a question that this phrase would answer.

(i) 'in school' → place, so use 'Where'.
(ii) 'in the left row' → place, so use 'Where'.
(iii) 'reading a book' → action, so use 'What'.
(iv) 'in the second row' → place, so use 'Where'.
(v) 'sharpening his pencil' → action, so use 'What'.
(vi) 'The teacher' (is writing on the blackboard) → person, so use 'Who'.
(vii) 'looking out of the window' → action, so use 'What'.

Answer: (i) Where is Anil?
(ii) Where is Anil sitting?
(iii) What is Anil (he) doing?
(iv) Where is Anil's friend sitting?
(v) What is he doing?
(vi) Who is writing on the blackboard?
(vii) What are some children doing?

Q2 Write appropriate question words in the blank spaces in the following dialogue.

Neha : _____ did you get this book?
Sheela : Yesterday morning.
Neha : _____ is your sister crying?
Sheela : Because she has lost her doll.
Neha : _____ room is this, yours or hers?
Sheela : It's ours.
Neha : _____ do you go to school?
Sheela : We walk to school. It is near by.

SOLUTION

‘Yesterday morning’ answers time → When.
‘Because she has lost her doll’ gives a reason → Why.
‘yours or hers’ asks about possession → Whose.
‘We walk to school’ tells the manner/means of going → How.

Answer: 1. When did you get this book?
2. Why is your sister crying?
3. Whose room is this, yours or hers?
4. How do you go to school?

Q3 Fill in the blanks with the words given in the box.
[how what when where which]
(i) My friend lost his chemistry book. Now he doesn’t know _____ to do and _____ to look for it.
(ii) There are so many toys in the shops. Neena can’t decide _____ one to buy.
(iii) You don’t know the way to my school. Ask the policeman _____ to get there.
(iv) You should decide soon _____ to start building your house.
(v) Do you know _____ to ride a bicycle? I don’t remember _____ and _____ I learnt it.
(vi) “You should know _____ to talk and _____ to keep your mouth shut,” the teacher advised Anil.

SOLUTION

(i) ‘what to do’ (action) and ‘where to look’ (place).
(ii) ‘which one’ chooses among the many toys.
(iii) ‘how to get there’ asks the way/manner.
(iv) ‘when to start’ asks the time.
(v) ‘how to ride’ (manner), and remembering the time/manner of learning → ‘when and how’.
(vi) knowing the right time → ‘when to talk’ and ‘when to keep your mouth shut’.

Answer: (i) what … where
(ii) which
(iii) how
(iv) when
(v) how … when … how
(vi) when … when

Q4 Add im- or in- to each of the following words and use them in place of the italicised words in the sentences given below.
[patient proper possible sensitive competent]
(i) The project appears very difficult at first sight but it can be completed if we work very hard.
(ii) He lacks competence. That's why he can't keep any job for more than a year.
(iii) "Don't lose patience. Your letter will come one day," the postman told me.
(iv) That's not a proper remark to make under the circumstances.
(v) He appears to be without sensitivity. In fact, he is very emotional.

SOLUTION

The prefixes: im- before words starting with p (patient → impatient, proper → improper, possible → impossible), and in- before the others (competent → incompetent, sensitive → insensitive).
(i) 'very difficult' → 'impossible' (though the project appears impossible … it can be completed).
(ii) 'lacks competence' → 'is incompetent'.
(iii) 'Don't lose patience' → 'Don't be impatient'.
(iv) 'not a proper remark' → 'an improper remark'.
(v) 'without sensitivity' → 'insensitive'.

Answer: (i) impossible — The project appears impossible at first sight but it can be completed if we work very hard.
(ii) incompetent — He is incompetent. That's why he can't keep any job for more than a year.
(iii) impatient — "Don't be impatient. Your letter will come one day," the postman told me.
(iv) improper — That's an improper remark to make under the circumstances.
(v) insensitive — He appears to be insensitive. In fact, he is very emotional.

Q5 Use a, an or the in the blanks.
There was once _____ play which became very successful. _____ famous actor was acting in it. In _____ play his role was that of _____ aristocrat who had been imprisoned in _____ castle for twenty years. In _____ last act of _____ play someone would come on _____ stage with _____ letter which he would hand over to _____ prisoner. Even though _____ aristocrat was not expected to read _____ letter at each performance, he always insisted that _____ letter be written out from beginning to end.

SOLUTION

Use 'a/an' when a thing is mentioned for the first time and 'the' when it is referred to again or is definite.
'a play' (first mention), 'A famous actor' (first mention, starts a sentence), 'the play' (already mentioned).
'an aristocrat' (first mention, before a vowel sound), 'a castle', 'the last act' (definite), 'the play' (again).
'the stage' (definite), 'a letter' (first mention), 'the prisoner' (= the aristocrat, already known), 'the aristocrat', 'the letter' (already mentioned), 'the letter' (again).

Answer: There was once a play which became very successful. A famous actor was acting in it. In the play his role was that of an aristocrat who had been imprisoned in a castle for twenty years. In the last act of the play someone would come on the stage with a letter which he would hand over to the prisoner. Even though the aristocrat was not expected to read the letter at each performance, he always insisted that the letter be written out from beginning to end.

Q6 Encircle the correct article.

A : Would you like (a/an/the) apple or (a/an/the) banana?

B : I'd like (a/an/the) apple, please.

A : Take (a/an/the) red one in (a/an/the) fruit bowl. You may take (a/an/the) orange also, if you like.

B : Which one?

A : (A/An/The) one beside (a/an/the) banana.

SOLUTION

'an apple' (vowel sound), 'a banana' (first mention, consonant sound).

'an apple' (asking for one apple, vowel sound).

'the red one' (a particular apple), 'the fruit bowl' (definite), 'an orange' (first mention, vowel sound).

'The one' (a particular orange) beside 'the banana' (the definite one).

Answer: A : Would you like an apple or a banana?

B : I'd like an apple, please.

A : Take the red one in the fruit bowl. You may take an orange also, if you like.

B : Which one?

A : The one beside the banana.

Exercise 4.4 — Working with the Poem (Chivvy)

Q1 Discuss these questions in small groups before you answer them.
(i) When is a grown-up likely to say this? Don't talk with your mouth full.
(ii) When are you likely to be told this? Say thank you.
(iii) When do you think an adult would say this? No one thinks you are funny.

SOLUTION

(i) This is said at the dining table — grown-ups tell a child not to speak while eating, because it is bad manners and hard to understand.
(ii) A child is told this when someone gives them a gift, does them a favour or offers them something, to make them show good manners and gratitude.
(iii) An adult says this when a child is showing off, making silly jokes or acting up to get attention, to stop the child's foolish or annoying behaviour.

Answer: (i) A grown-up says "Don't talk with your mouth full" at the table, when the child is eating and talking at the same time. (ii) You are told "Say thank you" when someone gives you a gift or does you a favour. (iii) An adult says "No one thinks you are funny" when a child is showing off or making silly jokes to get attention.

Q2 The last two lines of the poem are not prohibitions or instructions. What is the adult now asking the child to do? Do you think the poet is suggesting that this is unreasonable? Why?

SOLUTION

The last two lines are: "Can't you make your own / mind up about anything?" Here the adult is now asking the child to think and decide things for himself.
This is unreasonable because throughout the poem the grown-ups keep giving orders and telling the child exactly what to do and what not to do. After never letting him decide anything, they suddenly blame him for not being able to make up his own mind — the poet shows this contradiction is unfair to the child.

Answer: In the last two lines the adult is asking the child to make up his own mind and decide things for himself. Yes, the poet suggests this is unreasonable, because all through the poem grown-ups keep telling the child exactly what to do and not do, never letting him decide anything — and then unfairly blame him for not being able to make his own decisions.

Q3 Why do you think grown-ups say the kind of things mentioned in the poem? Is it important that they teach children good manners, and how to behave in public?

SOLUTION

Grown-ups say such things because they care for children and want them to grow up well-behaved, polite and disciplined.
Yes, it is important to teach children good manners and how to behave in public. But it should be done kindly and in moderation — constant nagging (chivvying) only annoys the child, so

children should also be given some freedom to think and decide for themselves.

Answer: Grown-ups say such things because they love children and want them to learn good manners, politeness and discipline. It is important to teach children how to behave in public, but it should be done gently and not by constant nagging, and children should also be allowed some freedom to think and decide for themselves.