NOTES FOR THE TEACHER



UNITS 4–8

The Ashes That Made Trees Bloom

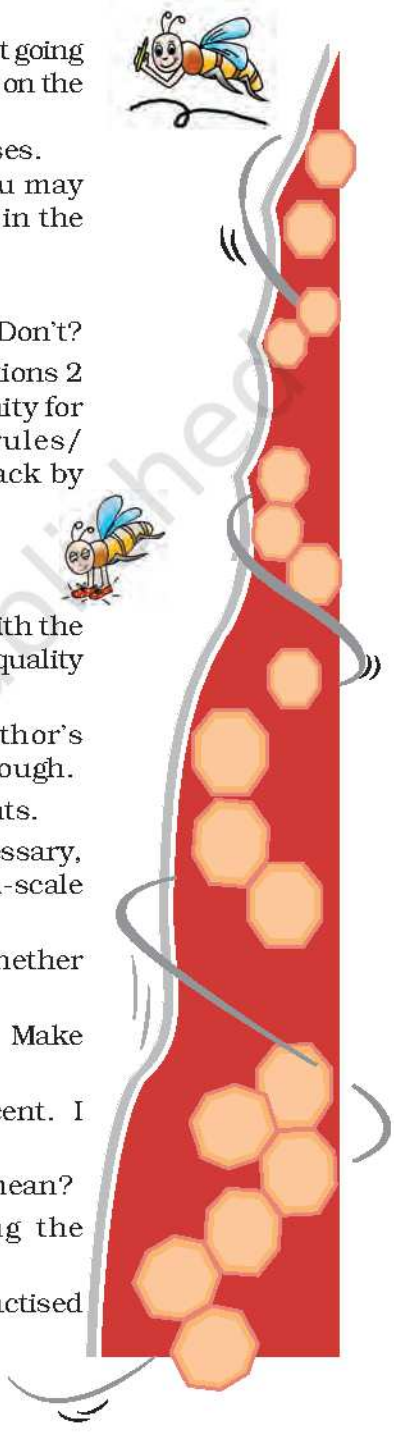
- A Japanese story — underscores values such as honesty, compassion, diligence, etc. with a hint of magical realism. The spirit of the dog is the old couple's make-believe determination to get past personal setbacks and begin anew.
- Activity II under 'Working with Language' is about the use of articles. The following explanatory notes may be useful.
  - the indefinite article 'a' is used before a singular countable noun when it is used for the first time. When the same item is referred to again, the definite article 'the' is used before it.
  - 'the' is also used before an adjective like 'poor' or 'rich' to refer to the whole class.
    - the poor and the weak
    - the rich and the prosperous
    - the down-trodden
- Articles used in connected sentences are better understood than when used in isolated examples. Here is an additional exercise. Use 'a'/'an'/'the' appropriately.

  My neighbour is moving into _____ new house next month. He is taking some furniture from _____ old house, and is also buying some new furniture because _____ new house is bigger than _____ old house.

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Chivvy

- Groups of children jointly discuss the question without going through the Introduction (Ask the question or write it on the blackboard).
- Spend a few minutes to find out their real responses.
- Let them now read the Introduction silently. You may ask the following questions about the joke given in the Introduction.
  - What was the child's name?
  - If it was Michael, why did he say it was Michael Don't?
- Children will be keenly interested to discuss questions 2 and 3 in particular. Here is an excellent opportunity for them (a) to assess the practical value of rules/ prescriptions, and (b) to get a bit of their own back by laying down instructions for grown-ups.



Quality

- A story about dedication to work of high quality with the passion of an artist and the eventual loss of art and quality in a world of competition and consumerism.
- Re-read and discuss episodes where the author's admiration for Mr Gessler and his craft comes through.
- Using simple language, discuss the following points.
  - Production of goods on a large scale is necessary, though it goes against the interests of small-scale industry.
  - It is necessary to maintain quality of goods whether they are produced on a big or small scale.
- Explain 'accent' with reference to spoken language. Make a distinction between 'accent' and (word) 'stress'.
  - Mr Gessler speaks English with a German accent. I speak it with an Indian accent.

  What does 'with a German/Indian accent' really mean?
- Minimal pairs to be said clearly maintaining the distinction between the two vowel sounds.
- The sound 'sh' as in *sh*ine, a*sh*es and fi*sh* to be practised carefully in the activity under 'Speaking'.

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Trees

- Before reciting the poem, explain the phrase 'to rake this fall'.
  - 'Fall' (in American English) means the same as autumn, when trees shed their leaves.
  - 'To rake' is to sweep or put away. (It is quite a job to *rake* heaps of dead leaves day after day to keep the place clean.)
- Looking at trees shedding their leaves,
  (i) what will "mothers" want to do ?
  (ii) what will "fathers" want to do ?
- Why has 'timber' been written as TIMBER-R-R ? (Perhaps it is related to the act of chopping down trees for timber! There may be other ideas in children's minds.)
- Take children round to show them different trees and shrubs growing in the vicinity.



Expert Detectives

- Two detectives in the making with a talent for spotting evidence, more imaginary than incriminating, against a polite recluse with a health problem, Nishad and Maya represent a special dimension of the children's world of curiosity and creativity.
- Tasks 1 and 3 under 'Working with Language' merit more time and attention. Ask children to separate idiomatic expressions with 'tip' from its non-idiomatic uses.
  - She has the entire chemistry book *at her finger tips*. (idiomatic : knows it thoroughly)
  - You don't have to go to the Beauty Parlour to clean your *finger tips*. (non-idiomatic)
  - She is an artist *to her finger tips*. (in every way)
  - His name is on *the tip of my tongue*, but I just can't think of it. (almost but not quite spoken or coming to mind)
  - Over a hundred thefts are reported every month, but that's just the *tip of the iceberg*. (small but evident part of a bigger but hidden problem)

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- Her greater experience *tipped the scale/balance* in her favour, and she got the job. (became the deciding factor in her favour)

❖ Draw children's attention to some of the following uses of 'break'.

- break the law: do something unlawful
- break the journey: halt temporarily
- break … serve/service: win a game (tennis, etc) when the opponent is serving
- break down: start crying (humans); cease to function (machines)
- break into: enter stealthily

Now give children *a break*. Switch over to another task after a short *break*.

❖ Children will be keenly interested to play detectives under 'Speaking'. Prepare them for this activity with care and necessary caution.

Mystery of the Talking Fan

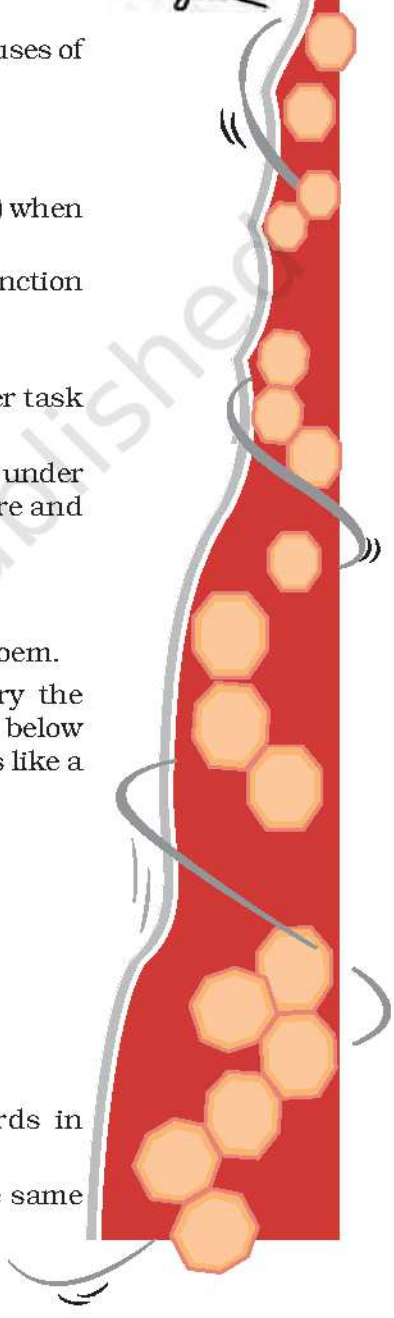
❖ Discuss the points given at the beginning of the poem.

❖ After completing the exercises, children may try the following activity. Ask them to rearrange the lines below (write them on the blackboard first) so that it reads like a poem. The first line is the opening line.

Once there was a talking fan,
Could with confidence scan
And the way it talked, no man
The message of the talking fan.
However quiet, crazy or wild,
Or woman or child,

❖ Draw children's attention to the rhyming words in re-ordering lines.

❖ Provide simple stanzas from other poems for the same activity for further practice.



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The Invention of Vita-Wonk

- A fantasy depicting children's fanciful wishes/ideas. Wonka-Vite, an exotic potion invented by Mr Willy Wonk, enables people to become old, older, oldest at will. He is now trying to invent something of counter effect.
- The piece is short, and need not take up more than two periods for both parts. Names of people, plants and other items may be difficult to pronounce, but the weirdness of the recipe speaks for itself.
- Activities that follow are numerous and of different types, and it is expected that they will evoke the desired response. Spend sufficient time on each activity under 'Speaking and Writing'.
- Recipe for Easy *Palak–Dal* may actually be tried at home. Children should be encouraged to bring other recipes, preferably area-specific, from home.
- A recipe can also be used to demonstrate the use of the passive voice in class.

Dad and the Cat and the Tree

- In the lines that come after

  The Cat gave a yell
  And sprang to the ground,
  Pleased as Punch...

  there are five words beginning with the letter S. Each refers to the cat. Find these words.
- Draw children's attention to the vertical arrangement of the last five words of the poem. Does the vertical order suggest something? Does it remind them of the tree in which Dad is stuck?
- Dad in this poem is somewhat like Uncle Podger in Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat*. Read aloud an appropriate excerpt from the book and discuss who creates greater confusion — Dad or Uncle Podger. Highlight parallels between them.



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Garden Snake

- Recite the poem with correct pauses.
- Draw children's attention to the following.

1. That *snake in the grass* reported me to the Headmistress.

   Does 'snake' refer to a snake in the meadow/grass or to a treacherous person who pretends to be a friend? 'A snake in the grass' is an idiom.

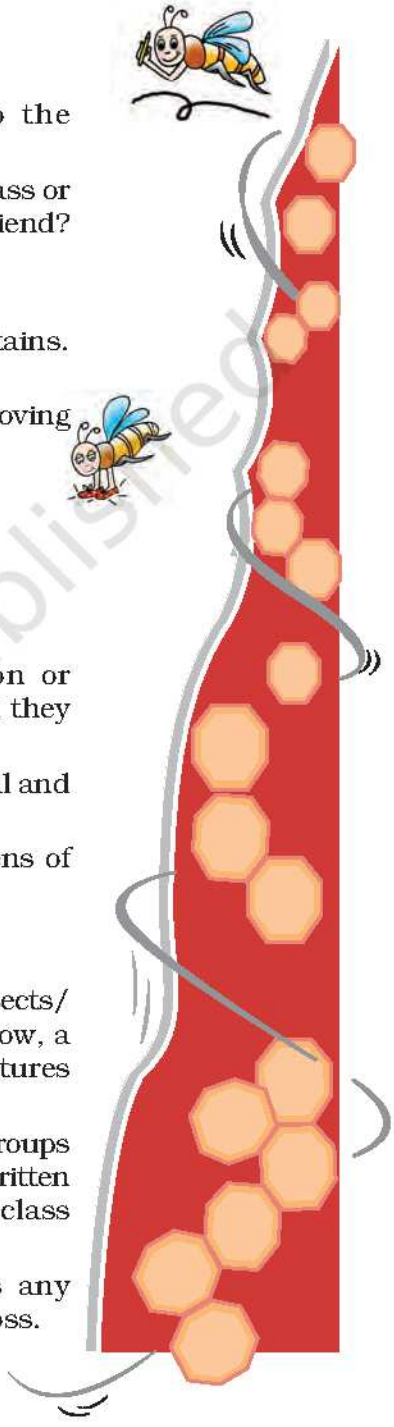
2. 'Snake' can be used as a verb.
   - The road *snakes* its way through the mountains. (follows a twisting, winding course)
   - The river *snaked* away into the distance. (moving like a snake, disappeared)
3. 'snaky' (like a snake)
   - the *snaky* movements of the young dancers
   - narrow *snaky* paths through the hill

A Homage to our Brave Soldiers

- Encourage children to share their observation or interesting experiences about brave soldiers that they may have come across.
- Let children find picture of monuments of historical and educational interest.
- Focus on the duties and responsibilities as citizens of a nation.

Meadow Surprises

- Let children find pictures of a butterfly and other insects/ birds, a buttercup and other flowers that they know, a rabbit and/or a running brook and arrange the pictures in a patchwork design of their choice.
- Activity 4 can be taken up as a mini project. Involve groups of children in doing it. The paragraph(s) or poem(s) written at the end of the week may be put up on the class bulletin board.
- Encourage children to share with their peers any interesting 'surprise' that they may have come across.



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4

Before you read

This is a story about an honest and hardworking old couple and their pet dog. The neighbours are troublesome, and the dog dies a sad death. The spirit of the dog gives solace and support to his master in unexpected ways.



The Ashes That Made Trees Bloom

I



daimios: (in 19th century Japan) wealthy landowners

snug: comfortable

a being with a soul: like a human child (showing emotion)

In the good old days of the daimios, there lived an old couple whose only pet was a little dog. Having no children, they loved it as though it were a baby. The old dame made it a cushion of blue crape, and at mealtime Muko—for that was its name—would sit on it as snug as any cat. The kind people fed the pet with tidbits of fish from their own chopsticks, and all the boiled rice it wanted. Thus treated, the dumb creature loved its protectors like a being with a soul.

The old man, being a rice farmer, went daily with hoe or spade into the fields, working hard from morning until O Tento Sama (as the sun is called) had gone down behind the hills. Every day the dog followed him to work, never once

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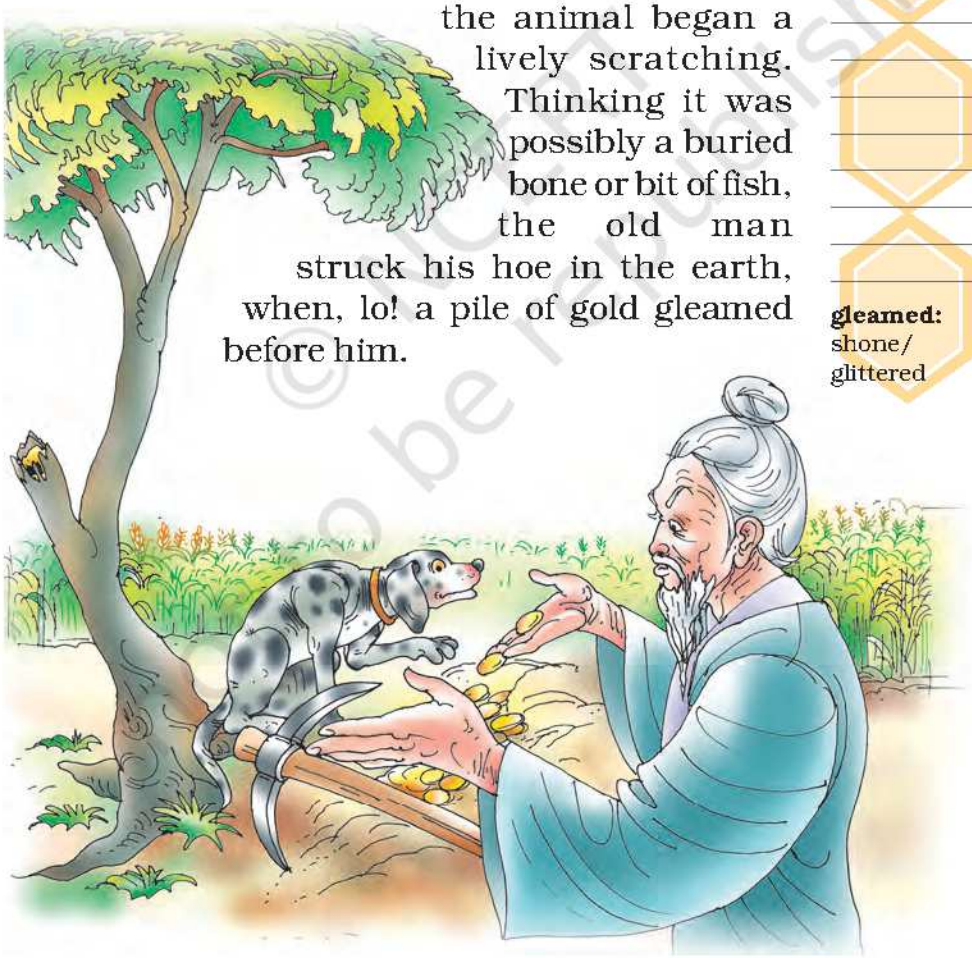
harming the white heron that walked in the footsteps of the old man to pick up the worms. For the old fellow was patient and kind to everything that had life, and often turned up a sod on purpose to give food to the birds.

One day the dog came running to him, putting his paws against his legs and motioning with his head to some spot behind. The old man at first thought his pet was only playing and did not mind it. But the dog kept on whining and running to and fro for some minutes. Then the old man followed the dog a few yards to a place where the animal began a lively scratching. Thinking it was possibly a buried bone or bit of fish, the old man struck his hoe in the earth, when, lo! a pile of gold gleamed before him.

turned up: dug up

on purpose: intentionally

gleamed: shone/ glittered



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Thus in an hour the old couple were made rich. The good souls bought a piece of land, made a feast for their friends, and gave plentifully to their poor neighbours. As for the dog, they petted him till they nearly smothered him with kindness.

Now in the same village there lived a wicked old man and his wife, not a bit sensitive and kind, who had always kicked and scolded all dogs whenever any passed their house. Hearing of their neighbours' good luck, they coaxed the dog into their garden and set before him bits of fish and other dainties, hoping he would find treasure for them. But the dog, being afraid of the cruel pair, would neither eat nor move.

coaxed: persuaded; enticed

dainties: tasty food

Then they dragged him out of doors, taking a spade and hoe with them. No sooner had the dog got near a pine tree growing in the garden than he began to paw and scratch the ground, as if a mighty treasure lay beneath.

"Quick, wife, hand me the spade and hoe!" cried the greedy old fool, as he danced with joy.

Then the covetous old fellow, with a spade, and the old crone, with a hoe, began to dig; but there was nothing but a dead kitten, the smell of which made them drop their tools and shut their noses. Furious at the dog, the old man kicked and beat him to death, and the old woman finished the work by nearly chopping off his head with the sharp hoe. They then flung him into the hole and heaped the earth over his carcass.

covetous: greedy

crone: old woman (old man's wife)

flung: threw

carcass: dead body

The owner of the dog heard of the death of his pet and, mourning for him as if he had been his own child, went at night under the pine tree. He

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set up some bamboo tubes in the ground, such as are used before tombs, in which he put fresh flowers. Then he laid a cup of water and a tray of food on the grave and burned several costly sticks of incense. He mourned a great while over his pet, calling him many dear names, as if he were alive.

That night the spirit of the dog appeared to him in a dream and said, "Cut down the pine tree over my grave, and make from it a mortar for your rice pastry and a mill for your bean sauce."

mortar: bowl



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So the old man chopped down the tree and cut out of the middle of the trunk a section about two feet long. With great labour, partly by fire, partly by the chisel, he scraped out a hollow place as big as a small bowl. He then made a long-handled hammer of wood, such as is used for pounding rice. When New Year's time drew near, he wished to make some rice pastry. When the rice was all boiled, granny put it into the mortar, the old man lifted his hammer to pound the mass into dough, and the blows fell heavy and fast till the pastry was all ready for baking. Suddenly the whole mass turned into a heap of gold coins. When the old woman took the hand-mill, and filling it with beans began to grind, the gold dropped like rain.

pounding: crushing; grinding

Meanwhile the envious neighbour peeped in at the window when the boiled beans were being ground.

"Goody me!" cried the old hag, as she saw each dripping of sauce turning into yellow gold, until in a few minutes the tub under the mill was full of a shining mass of gold.

So the old couple were rich again. The next day the stingy and wicked neighbour came and borrowed the mortar and magic mill. They filled one with boiled rice and the other with beans. Then the old man began to pound and the woman to grind. But at the first blow and turn, the pastry and sauce turned into a foul mass of worms. Still more angry at this, they chopped the mill into pieces, to use as firewood.

stingy: miserly

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Comprehension Check





1. *Why did the neighbours kill the dog?*
2. *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.*

II

Not long after that, the good old man dreamed again, and the spirit of the dog spoke to him, telling him how the wicked people had burned the mill made from the pine tree. "Take the ashes of the mill, sprinkle them on the withered trees, and they will bloom again," said the dog-spirit.

withered: bare and dry

The old man awoke and went at once to his wicked neighbour's house, where he found the miserable old pair sitting at the edge of their square fireplace, in the middle of the floor, smoking and spinning. From time to time they warmed their hands and feet with the blaze from

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turned up their noses: treated him with contempt

some bits of the mill, while behind them lay a pile of the broken pieces.

The good old man humbly asked for the ashes. Though the covetous couple turned up their noses at him and scolded him as if he were a thief, they let him fill his basket with the ashes.

On coming home, the old man took his wife into the garden. It being winter, their favourite cherry tree was bare. He sprinkled a pinch of ashes on it, and, lo! it sprouted blossoms until it became a cloud of pink blooms which perfumed the air. The news of this filled the village, and everyone ran out to see the wonder.

The covetous couple also heard the story, and, gathering up the remaining ashes of the mill, kept them to make withered trees blossom.

The kind old man, hearing that his lord, the daimio, was to pass along the high road near the



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village, set out to see him, taking his basket of ashes. As the train approached, he climbed up into an old withered cherry tree that stood by the wayside.

Now, in the days of the daimios, it was the custom, when their lord passed by, for all the loyal people to shut up their high windows. They even pasted them fast with a slip of paper, so as not to commit the impertinence of looking down on his lordship. All the people along the road would fall upon their hands and knees and remain prostrate until the procession passed by.

The train drew near. One tall, competent man marched ahead, crying out to the people by the way, "Get down on your knees! Get down on your knees!" And every one kneeled down while the procession was passing.

Suddenly the leader of the van caught sight of the aged man up in the tree. He was about to call out to him in an angry tone, but, seeing he was such an old fellow, he pretended not to notice him and passed him by. So, when the daimio's palanquin drew near, the old man, taking a pinch of ashes from his basket, scattered it over the tree. In a moment it burst into blossom.

The delighted daimio ordered the train to be stopped and got out to see the wonder. Calling the old man to him, he thanked him and ordered presents of silk robes, sponge-cake, fans and other rewards to be given him. He even invited him to his castle.

So the old man went gleefully home to share his joy with his dear old wife.



train: procession

prostrate: lying on the ground face downward

palanquin: royal van/ cart

gleefully: happily

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But when the greedy neighbour heard of it, he took some of the magic ashes and went out on the highway. There he waited until a daimio's train came along and, instead of kneeling down like the crowd, he climbed a withered cherry tree.

When the daimio himself was almost directly under him, he threw a handful of ashes over the tree, which did not change a particle. The wind blew the fine dust in the noses and eyes of the daimio and his wife. Such sneezing and choking! It spoiled all the pomp and dignity of the procession. The man whose business it was to cry, "Get down on your knees," seized the old fool by the collar, dragged him from the tree, and tumbled him and his ash-basket into the ditch by the road. Then, beating him soundly, he left him for dead.

Thus the wicked old man died in the mud, but the kind friend of the dog dwelt in peace and plenty, and both he and his wife lived to a green old age.

WILLIAM ELLIOT GRIFFIS

[*a Japanese tale*]

a particle: even a little bit

seized: caught

green: (here) healthy, active and prosperous

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Working with the Text

Answer the following questions.

1. The old farmer is a kind person. What evidence of his kindness do you find in the first two paragraphs.
2. What did the dog do to lead the farmer to the hidden gold?
3. (i) How did the spirit of the dog help the farmer first?
   (ii) How did it help him next?

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

Working with Language

1. Read the following conversation.

RAVI : *What* are you doing?
MRIDU : I'm reading a book.
RAVI : *Who* wrote it?
MRIDU : Ruskin Bond.
RAVI : *Where* did you find it?
MRIDU : In the library.



Notice that 'what', 'who', 'where', are ***question words.*** *Questions that require information begin with question words. Some other question words are 'when', 'why', 'where', 'which' and 'how'.*

Remember that

- *What* asks about actions, things, etc.
- *Who* asks about people.
- *Which* asks about people or things.
- *Where* asks about place.
- *When* asks about time.
- *Why* asks about reason or purpose.
- *How* asks about means, manner or degree.
- *Whose* asks about possessions.

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.*

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(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

(iv) _____

(v) _____

(vi) _____

(vii) _____

2. 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.

3. 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.

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4. 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.

5. Read the following sentences.

It was *a* cold morning and stars still glowed in *the* sky. *An* old man was walking along *the* road.

The words in italics are articles. 'A' and 'an' are ***indefinite articles*** *and 'the' is the* ***definite article****. 'A' is used before a singular countable noun. 'An' is used before a word that begins with a vowel.*

- a boy
- a mango
- a university
- an actor
- an apple
- an hour

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.

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6. Encircle the correct article.

Nina was looking for (a / the) job. After many interviews she got (a / the) job she was looking for.

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.



Speaking and Writing

1. Do you remember an anecdote or a story about a greedy or jealous person and the unhappy result of his/her action? Narrate the story to others in your class.

Here is one for you to read.

Seeing an old man planting a fig tree, the king asked why he was doing this. The man replied that he might live to eat the fruit, and, even if he did not, his son would enjoy the figs.

"Well," said the king, "if you do live to eat the fruit of this tree, please let me know." The man promised to do so, and sure enough, before too long, the tree grew and bore fruit.

Packing some fine figs in a basket, the old man set out for the palace to meet the king.

The king accepted the gift and gave orders that the old man's basket be filled with gold.

Now, next door to the old man, there lived a greedy old man jealous of his neighbour's good fortune. He also packed some figs in a basket and took them to the palace in the hope of getting gold.

The king, on learning the man's motive, ordered him to stand in the compound and had him pelted with figs. The old man returned home and told his wife the sad story. She consoled him by saying, "You should be thankful that our neighbour did not grow coconuts."

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2. Put each of the following in the correct order. Then use them appropriately to fill the blanks in the paragraph that follows. Use correct punctuation marks.
   - English and Hindi/both/in/he writes
   - and only/a few short stories/many books in English/ in Hindi
   - is/my Hindi/than my English/much better

   Ravi Kant is a writer, and _____ _____. Of course, he is much happier writing in English than in Hindi. He has written _____ _____. I find his books a little hard to understand. _____.

3. Are you fond of reading stories? Did you read one last month? If not, read one or two and then write a paragraph about the story. Use the following hints.
   - title of the story
   - name of author
   - how many characters
   - which one you liked
   - some details of the story
   - main point(s) as you understand it

   Tell your friends why they should also read it.

Thought What?

I thought a thought.
But the thought I thought wasn't
the thought
I thought I thought.

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Chivvy

Ask yourself as well as your partner: Do you like to be always told what to do or not to do? Do grown-ups do this, in your experience?

When Michael was five years old, his mother took him to a nearby school for admission. The teacher asked, "What does your mother call you at home, child?" "Michael Don't," came the confident reply.

Note: *To chivvy is to nag, "to continuously urge someone to do something, often in an annoying way", according to the dictionary.*

Read the poem now.

Grown-ups say things like:
Speak up
Don't talk with your mouth full
Don't stare
Don't point
Don't pick your nose

Sit up
Say please
Less noise
Shut the door behind you
Don't drag your feet
Haven't you got a hankie ?
Take your hands out of
your pockets



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Pull your socks up
Stand up straight
Say thank you
Don't interrupt
No one thinks you're funny
Take your elbows off the table

Can't you make your own
mind up about anything ?

MICHAEL ROSEN

Working with the Poem

1. 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.
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. If you had to make some rules for grown-ups to follow, what would you say? Make at least five such rules. Arrange the lines as in a poem.

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