Notes for the Teacher

General

- Learning a language means using it for a wide variety of purposes. Language is best acquired when attention is focused on meaning, not on form.
- Words and phrases not closely related to objects and action remain empty and lifeless to young learners. Language comes alive when presented in meaning-making contexts.
- Words/phrases that are used to accomplish many useful purposes follow a certain system inherent in the language itself.
- Learners become familiar with the system through continuous exposure to the language in meaning-focused situations.
- Interaction, discussion and sharing of ideas among learners provide opportunities that elicit 'real' information about them and their experiences and opinions.
- Encourage learners to work in pairs and small groups and let them go beyond the textbook by providing a variety of language inputs for spontaneous and natural use of language.
- Build on the exercises given in the textbook and design more tasks/activities in keeping with learners' interests, needs and surroundings. Employ free-response exercises (with more than one possible response).
- Promote reading habits through story reading (not merely teaching stories as texts), story retelling, choral reading, shared reading, etc.
- Create class libraries for exchange of books and shared reading. The library may also move with children to the next higher class.
- Poems need not be taught line by line, word by word. You may give a model reading but let every child read the poem on her/his own to feel the richness of language, rhythm and music of words. Exercises accompanying the poem are more for understanding the poem as a whole than for teaching language items.
- Advertisement is also literary genre. You will find that some advertisements have been given on the inner covers of the textbook. Have a discussion in the class on these concerns. You

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may ask them to do a project on these social issues and concerns. Such as educating the girlchild, environment protection.

- Encourage learners to tell new stories, narrate anecdotes, compose short poems in English or their own language, talk about pictures, illustrations in the book and cartoons in newspapers/magazines. Don't get anxious about the errors they will make. Constant exposure, practice and correction in the form of feedback will help them improve themselves by and by.
- Every page has a column for words and meanings. Encourage children to write down other words they find difficult, along with their meanings, in this column.

Units 1-3

The Best Christmas Present in the World

Some suggestions given below are applicable to all prose lessons in the book.

- A war story against the backdrop of Christmas, a festival marked by family reunion, exchange of presents and universal bonhomie. Connie, aged 101, receives a present from a stranger whom she mistakes for her long-awaited husband. What is the present — the letter or the mistaken identity of the visitor?
- Spend about 20 minutes discussing the dates and events given under Before you read. Since the answers are given later in the book, the focus should be on the nature of each event — whether, in human terms, the event recalls defeat and destruction or endeavour and success. Let children express their own views. Even if their observations do not reveal any understanding of the nature of events, the discussion session will provide an excellent base for initiating work on the story under reference.
- The story is sectioned into three parts. Parts II and III may be sectioned further according to convenience and time available.
- Discuss each illustration with reference to the story. Illustrations are given for better comprehension and sharper visual appeal.
- Comprehension Check at the end of each section is a recall of what children have read so far. Design while-reading comprehension exercises in the form of factual comprehension questions, multiple choice questions and/or completion of sentences, etc.

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- Here is one example in three formats:
  - Factual or inferential comprehension (Answer the question in your own words.)

    Why is Jim 'ashamed to say' that Fritz 'began it'?
  - Multiple choice (Mark the right answer.)

    Jim is 'ashamed to say' that Fritz 'began it' because

    (i) he didn't know how to do it.

    (ii) he wishes he had done it first.

    (iii) he didn't want to do it.
  - Sentence completion : (Choose the right item and complete the sentence.)

    But it is true, _____, that Fritz began it.

    (much to my delight / shame / dismay)
- A related item here is the use of 'begin' and 'start' in appropriate contexts.

  Use 'begin' or 'start' appropriately in the following sentences.

  (i) What time do you _____ work in the morning?

  (ii) If we want to get there, we should _____ now.

  (iii) The film _____ at 7 pm.

  (iv) No matter how you try, the car won't _____.
  - Very often 'begin' and 'start' can be used in the same way, though 'start' is more common in informal speech. [See sentences (i) and (iii)]
  - In some constructions only 'start' can be used. [See sentences (ii) and (iv)].
- Questions under working with the text to be answered orally, later to be written in the copy book.
- At the end of the lesson, draw children's attention to the two quotations given in the box. Let them discuss how the story illustrates the same ideas. Then, ask them to find sentences in the story which appeal to them most. Here are some examples:
  - We agreed about everything and he was my enemy.
  - No one dies in a football match. No children are orphaned. No wives become widows.
  - I know from all that happened today how much both armies long for peace. We shall be together again, I'm sure of it. (It's a good example of the use of 'irony' in the story.)

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The Ant and the Cricket

- Spend about 15 minutes eliciting, and listening to, fables or fable-like stories from children, preferably in their own language(s). Help them retell one or two in English by providing appropriate words and phrases.
- The story about the Sun and the Wind at the end of 'Glimpses of the Past' may be used here. Ask them if it's a fable, though there are no animals in it.
- Try the following writing task.

  Rearrange the following sentences to construct a story. Start with sentence 4.

  1. One cold day, a hungry grasshopper came to the anthill and begged for a little something to eat.
  2. He replied, "Alas! I spent all my time singing and playing and dancing, and never thought about winter."
  3. One ant asked him how he had spent his time during summer and whether he had saved anything for winter.
  4. A nest of ants had been occupied all through the summer and autumn collecting food for winter.
  5. They carefully stored it in the underground chambers of their home.
  6. Then we have nothing to give you.
  7. Thus, when winter came, they had plenty to eat.
  8. People who play and sing all summer should only dance in winter.
  9. The ant answered.

- Find three adjectives in the first stanza associated with summer and spring.
- Find four phrases/lines in the same stanza associated with the onset of winter.
- Suppose the last line of the first stanza were to be rewritten as '*Oh! What will become of me? Says the cricket.*' Would you find it acceptable in the poem? If not, why not?
- Speak the words given below. Ask children to write the word, and against it two new words that rhyme.

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sing _____ _____

crumb _____ _____

through _____ _____

wished _____ _____

(Last sound in 'crumb' is 'm'. In 'wished' it is 't'.)

- Activity 4 under working with language needs patience and time. Punctuation in writing sentences is an important teaching point. Since the activity is to be taken up in groups, there will be several versions of each sentence to begin with. Encourage children to discuss why only one version is grammatically acceptable and not the other.

The Tsunami

- A natural calamity causing huge destruction and loss of life and property. Alongside the story of deep sorrow are reassuring details of courage, survival and resilience.
- While covering sections and sub sections of the text, focus on situations in which children realise the importance of doing whatever possible to save human and animal life, to participate in relief work and to understand the concept of disaster management.
- Elicit their comments on, and reactions to, the stories of Meghna and Almas. Focus on values such as courage, care and compassion in the bitter struggle for survival and rehabilitation.
- The activity under Before you read is like an elementary geography lesson. Map reading along with language work (asking/answering questions, spotting location/ direction and describing them with precision) is a good example of softening subject boundaries and conforming to the idea of language across the curriculum. Use other maps from the geography/ history textbook for further practice.
- While dealing with 'Active/Passive voice' (working with language: Activity 3), provide samples of texts exemplifying the use of passive voice such as short newspaper reports and descriptions of processes/experiments. As far as possible, avoid a mechanical transformation exercise confined to isolated sentences. Try a simple exercise given here.

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Complete the passage using passive forms of the verbs given in brackets.

Olive oil _____ (use) for cooking, salad dressing, etc. Olives_____ (pick) in autumn when they are ripe. They _____(shake) from the trees and _____ (gather) up, usually by hand. Then they _____ (grind) to a thick paste which _____ (spread) onto special mats. The mats then _____ (layer) up on the pressing machine which will gently squeeze them to produce olive oil.

- The last activity under speaking and writing is a step towards reducing the gap between children's life at school and their life outside the school.

Geography Lesson

- Children already know words like 'aeroplane, airport', etc. Draw their attention to words like 'jetliner', 'jet engine' and 'jetlag' in the following activity.

  (i) Match items under **A** with those under **B**

A	B
Jetliner	• fatigue/tiredness after a long flight
Jetlag	• rich social group flying around the world for business or pleasure
Jet engine	• aircraft powered by a jet engine
(the) jet set	• engine that emits high-speed hot gases at the back when it moves forward.

  (ii) Check the meaning of 'jet black' and 'jetsam' in the dictionary. Complete the idiom : jetsam and _____

- Today, if there is a border dispute or any other contentious issue between two countries, an organisation called the United Nations acts as a mediator to keep peace and order in the world. Encourage children to gather information about the UN and its constituent bodies.
- Peace Memorial Park is the only park of its kind in the world. It is in Hiroshima, Japan, and marks the spot where the first atomic bomb was dropped on _____ (Children will remember the date and event if they recall the activity under

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Before you read in *The Best Christmas Present in the World).* A mini project could be planned on this.

- Ask children to draw a map of their locality/village depicting its physical features and distances between places, etc.
- Recite and write on the blackboard the following poem and discuss the items given at the end of the poem.

Wake
gently this morning
to a different day.

Listen
There is no bray
of buses,
no horns blow.

There is only
the silence
of a city
hushed
with snow.

- Name a few cities in India which the poem reminds you of.
- Which words/phrases in the poem evoke images different from those suggested by 'the silence of the city'?

Glimpses of the Past

- 'Glimpses' of the history of our country to be understood through pictures with strips of text for support. Children have a natural enthusiasm for this kind of material in the textbook.
- Children may read the comic strip aloud. Then they break up into small groups, discuss what they have read and write a summary. Each group presents its summary one by one. The whole class then enters into a general discussion, and a consolidated draft of the composition is prepared with the active support of the teacher.
- Conversely, divide the class into small groups. Let each group look at and describe a set of pictures (assigned to them) and construct their own text. Texts thus produced can be put together to form a coherent story, to be edited for accuracy.

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- If necessary, texts may first be produced in the child's own language and the teacher can help them to reformulate these in English. For children fluent in English, this may be an opportunity to formulate equivalent texts in their own languages.
- Some details of each 'glimpse' of the past may be had from the history textbook of the same class. The history teacher may be invited to facilitate the activity.
- Picture reading under speaking and writing to be attempted in the same manner.
- Creating a comic (Activity 5) will be great fun if children can be persuaded to draw/learn to draw matchstick figures. Enlist the help of the art teacher.

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1 The Best Christmas Present in the World

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Before you read

There are some dates or periods of time in the history of the world that are so significant that everyone knows and remembers them. The story you will read mentions one such date and event: a war between the British and the Germans in 1914. Can you guess which war it was?

Do you know which events the dates below refer to?

(a) 4 July 1776 *(b) 17 December 1903*
(c) 6 August 1945 *(d) 30 January 1948*
(e) 12 April 1961 *(f) 20 July 1969*

The answers are on page 23.

I

I spotted it in a junk shop in Bridport, a roll-top desk. The man said it was early nineteenth century, and oak. I had wanted one, but they were far too expensive. This one was in a bad condition, the roll-top in several pieces, one leg clumsily mended, scorch marks all down one side. It was going for very little money. I thought I could restore it. It would be a risk, a challenge, but I had to have it. I paid the man and brought it back to my workroom at the back of the garage. I began work on it on Christmas Eve.

I removed the roll-top completely and pulled out the drawers. The veneer had lifted almost everywhere — it

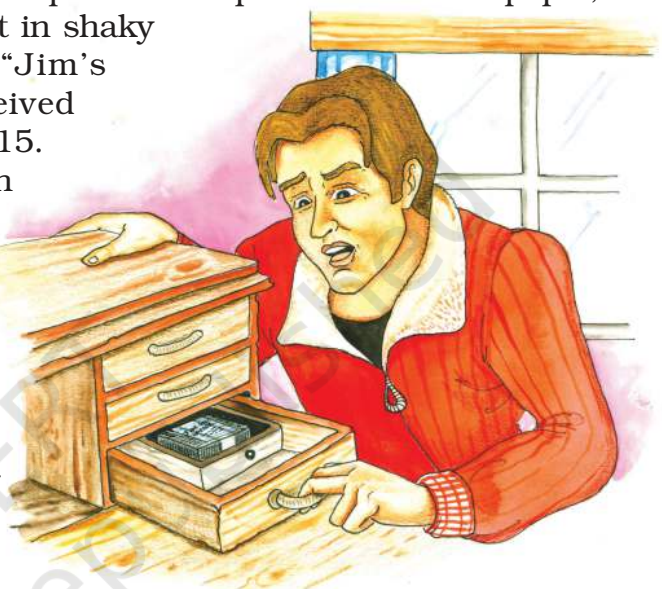
spotted it: saw it; found it (informal)
scorch marks: burn marks
was going for: was selling for (informal)
restore: (*here*) repair
veneer: a thin layer of plastic or decorative wood on furniture of cheap wood

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looked like water damage to me. Both fire and water had clearly taken their toll on this desk. The last drawer was stuck fast. I tried all I could to ease it out gently. In the end I used brute force. I struck it sharply with the side of my fist and the drawer flew open to reveal a shallow space underneath, a secret drawer. There was something in there. I reached in and took out a small black tin box. Sello-taped to the top of it was a piece of lined notepaper, and written on it in shaky handwriting: "Jim's last letter, received January 25, 1915. To be buried with me when the time comes." I knew as I did it that it was wrong of me to open the box, but curiosity got the better of my scruples. It usually does.

taken their toll on: damaged

stuck fast: shut tight



scruples: feelings that make you hesitate to do something wrong

Inside the box there was an envelope. The address read: "Mrs Jim Macpherson, 12 Copper Beeches, Bridport, Dorset." I took out the letter and unfolded it. It was written in pencil and dated at the top — "December 26, 1914".

Comprehension Check

1. *What did the author find in a junk shop?*
2. *What did he find in a secret drawer? Who do you think had put it in there?*

II

Dearest Connie,

I write to you in a much happier frame of mind because something wonderful has just happened that I must tell

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you about at once. We were all standing to in our trenches yesterday morning, Christmas morning. It was crisp and quiet all about, as beautiful a morning as I've ever seen, as cold and frosty as a Christmas morning should be.

I should like to be able to tell you that we began it. But the truth, I'm ashamed to say, is that Fritz began it. First someone saw a white flag waving from the trenches opposite. Then they were calling out to us from across no man's land, "Happy Christmas, Tommy! Happy Christmas!" When we had got over the surprise, some of us shouted back, "Same to you, Fritz! Same to you!" I thought that would be that. We all did. But then suddenly one of them was up there in his grey greatcoat and waving a white flag. "Don't shoot, lads!" someone shouted. And no one did. Then there was another Fritz up on the parapet, and another. "Keep your heads down," I told the men, "it's a trick." But it wasn't.

One of the Germans was waving a bottle above his head. "It is Christmas Day, Tommy. We have schnapps. We have sausage. We meet you? Yes?" By this time there were dozens of them walking towards us across no man's land and not a rifle between them. Little Private Morris was the first up. "Come on, boys. What are we waiting for?" And then there was no stopping them. I was the officer. I should have stopped them there and then, I suppose, but the truth is that it never even occurred to me I should. All along their line and ours I could see men walking slowly towards one another, grey coats, khaki coats meeting in the middle. And I was one of them. I was part of this. In the middle of the war we were making peace.

You cannot imagine, dearest Connie, my feelings as I looked into the eyes of the Fritz officer, who approached me, hand outstretched. "Hans Wolf," he said, gripping my hand warmly and holding it. "I am from Dusseldorf. I play the cello in the orchestra. Happy Christmas."

standing to: taking up positions

trenches: long deep ditches in the ground where soldiers hide from the enemy

Fritz: (*here*), a name for a German soldier (Fritz is a common German name)

Tommy: a common English name, used here to refer to British soldiers

that would be that: that was all; that was the end of the matter

schnapps (pronounced, *sh-naps*): a German drink made from grain

cello: a musical instrument like a large violin

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"Captain Jim Macpherson," I replied. "And a Happy Christmas to you too. I'm a school teacher from Dorset, in the west of England."

"Ah, Dorset," he smiled. "I know this place. I know it very well." We shared my rum ration and his excellent sausage. And we talked, Connie, how we talked. He spoke almost perfect English. But it turned out that he had never set foot in Dorset, never even been to England. He had learned all he knew of England from school, and from reading books in English. His favourite writer was Thomas Hardy, his favourite book *Far from the Madding Crowd.* So out there in no man's land we talked of Bathsheba and Gabriel Oak and Sergeant Troy and Dorset. He had a wife and one son, born just six months ago. As I looked about me there were huddles of khaki and grey everywhere, all over no man's land, smoking, laughing, talking, drinking, eating. Hans Wolf and I shared what was left of your wonderful Christmas cake, Connie. He thought the marzipan was the best he had ever tasted. I agreed. We agreed about everything, and he was my enemy. There never was a Christmas party like it, Connie.

marzipan: a sweet covering on a cake made from sugar, eggs and almonds

Then someone, I don't know who, brought out a football. Greatcoats were dumped in piles to make goalposts, and the next thing we knew it was Tommy against Fritz out in the middle of no man's land. Hans Wolf and I looked on and cheered, clapping our hands and stamping our feet, to keep out the cold as much as anything. There was a moment when I noticed our breaths mingling in the air between us. He saw it too and smiled. "Jim Macpherson," he said after a while, "I think this is how we should resolve this war. A football match. No one dies in a football match. No children are orphaned. No wives become widows."

"I'd prefer cricket," I told him. "Then we Tommies could be sure of winning, probably." We laughed at that, and together we watched the game. Sad to say,

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Connie, Fritz won, two goals to one. But as Hans Wolf generously said, our goal was wider than theirs, so it wasn't quite fair.

The time came, and all too soon, when the game was finished, the schnapps and the rum and the sausage had long since run out, and we knew it was all over. I wished Hans well and told him I hoped he would see his family again soon, that the fighting would end and we could all go home.

"I think that is what every soldier wants, on both sides," Hans Wolf said. "Take care, Jim Macpherson. I shall never forget this moment, nor you." He saluted and walked away from me slowly, unwillingly, I felt. He turned to wave just once and then became one of the hundreds of grey-coated men drifting back towards their trenches.

That night, back in our dugouts, we heard them singing a carol, and singing it quite beautifully. It was *Stille Nacht*, Silent Night. Our boys gave them a rousing chorus of *While Shepherds Watched*. We exchanged carols for a while and then we all fell silent. We had had our time of peace and goodwill, a time I will treasure as long as I live.

dugout: a shelter for soldiers made by digging a hole in the ground and covering it

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Dearest Connie, by Christmas time next year, this war will be nothing but a distant and terrible memory. I know from all that happened today how much both armies long for peace. We shall be together again soon, I'm sure of it.

Your loving, Jim.

Comprehension Check

1. *Who had written the letter, to whom, and when?*
2. *Why was the letter written — what was the wonderful thing that had happened?*
3. *What jobs did Hans Wolf and Jim Macpherson have when they were not soldiers?*
4. *Had Hans Wolf ever been to Dorset? Why did he say he knew it?*
5. *Do you think Jim Macpherson came back from the war? How do you know this?*

III

I folded the letter again and slipped it carefully back into its envelope. I kept awake all night. By morning I knew what I had to do. I drove into Bridport, just a few miles away. I asked a boy walking his dog where Copper Beeches was. House number 12 turned out to be nothing but a burned-out shell, the roof gaping, the windows boarded-up. I knocked at the house next door and asked if anyone knew the whereabouts of a Mrs Macpherson. Oh yes, said the old man in his slippers, he knew her well. A lovely old lady, he told me, a bit muddle-headed, but at her age she was entitled to be, wasn't she? A hundred and one years old. She had been in the house when it caught fire. No one really knew how the fire had started, but it could well have been candles. She used candles rather than electricity, because she always thought electricity was too expensive. The fireman had got her out just in time. She was in a nursing home now, he told me, Burlington House, on the Dorchester road, on the other side of town.

burned out: destroyed by fire

boarded-up: covered with wooden boards

muddle-headed: confused

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Comprehension Check

1. *Why did the author go to Bridport?*
2. *How old was Mrs Macpherson now? Where was she?*

I found Burlington House Nursing Home easily enough. There were paper chains up in the hallway and a lighted Christmas tree stood in the corner with a lopsided angel on top. I said I was a friend come to visit Mrs Macpherson to bring her a Christmas present. I could see through into the dining room where everyone was wearing a paper hat and singing. The matron had a hat on too and seemed happy enough to see me. She even offered me a mince pie. She walked me along the corridor. "Mrs Macpherson is not in with the others," she told me. "She's rather confused today so we thought it best if she had a good rest. She has no family you know, no one visits. So I'm sure she'll be only too pleased to see you." She took me into a conservatory with wicker chairs and potted plants all around and left me.

The old lady was sitting in a wheelchair, her hands folded in her lap. She had silver white hair pinned into a wispy bun. She was gazing out at the garden. "Hello," I said. She turned and looked up at me vacantly. "Happy Christmas, Connie," I went on. "I found this. I think it's yours." As I was speaking her eyes never left my face. I opened the tin box and gave it to her. That was the moment her eyes lit up with recognition and her face became suffused with a sudden glow of happiness. I explained about the desk, about how I had found it, but I don't think she was listening. For a while

lit up: became bright with happiness, excitement

suffused with: (glow of happiness) spread all over her face



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she said nothing, but stroked the letter tenderly with her fingertips.

Suddenly she reached out and took my hand. Her eyes were filled with tears. "You told me you'd come home by Christmas, dearest," she said. "And here you are, the best Christmas present in the world. Come closer, Jim dear, sit down."

I sat down beside her, and she kissed my cheek. "I read your letter so often Jim, every day. I wanted to hear your voice in my head. It always made me feel you were with me. And now you are. Now you're back you can read it to me yourself. Would you do that for me, Jim dear? I just want to hear your voice again. I'd love that so much. And then perhaps we'll have some tea. I've made you a nice Christmas cake, marzipan all around. I know how much you love marzipan."

MICHAEL MORPURGO

Comprehension Check

1. *Who did Connie Macpherson think her visitor was?*
2. *Which sentence in the text shows that the visitor did not try to hide his identity?*

working with the text

1. For how long do you think Connie had kept Jim's letter? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Why do you think the desk had been sold, and when?
3. Why do Jim and Hans think that games or sports are good ways of resolving conflicts? Do you agree?
4. Do you think the soldiers of the two armies are like each other, or different from each other? Find evidence from the story to support your answer.
5. Mention the various ways in which the British and the German soldiers become friends and find things in common at Christmas.
6. What is Connie's Christmas present? Why is it "the best Christmas present in the world"?
7. Do you think the title of this story is suitable for it? Can you think of any other title(s)?

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working with language

1. Look at these sentences from the story.

   I *spotted* it in a junk shop in Bridport... The man *said* it was made in the early nineteenth century... This one *was* in a bad condition...

   The *italicised verbs* are in the past tense. They tell us what happened in the past, before now.

   (i) Read the passage below and underline the verbs in the past tense.

   A man got on the train and sat down. The compartment was empty except for one lady. She took her gloves off. A few hours later the police arrested the man. They held him for 24 hours and then freed him.

   Now look at these sentences.

   The veneer *had lifted* almost everywhere. Both fire and water *had taken* their toll on this desk.

   Notice the verb forms *had lifted*, *had taken* (their toll).

   The author found and bought the desk in the past.
   The desk was damaged before the author found it and bought it.
   Fire and water had damaged the desk *before* the author found it and bought it.

   - We use verb forms like *had damaged* for an event in the 'earlier past'. If there are two events in the past, we use the 'had...' form for the event that occurred first in the past.
   - We also use the past perfect tense to show that something was wished for, or expected before a particular time in the past. For example, *I had always wanted one...*
   - Discuss with your partner the difference in meaning in the sentences below.

     When I reached the station, the train left.
     When I reached the station, the train had left.

   (ii) Fill in the blanks using the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

   My little sister is very naughty. When she _____ (come) back from school yesterday, she had _____ (tear) her dress. We _____ (ask) her how it had _____ (happen). She _____ (say) she _____ _____ (have, quarrel) with a boy. She _____ _____ (have, beat) him in a race and he _____ _____ (have, try) to push her. She _____ _____ (have,

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tell) the teacher and so he _____ _____ (have, chase) her, and she _____ _____ (have, fall) down and _____ _____ (have, tear) her dress.

(iii) Underline the verbs and arrange them in two columns, Past and Earlier past.

(a) My friends set out to see the caves in the next town, but I stayed at home, because I had seen them already.

(b) When they arrived at the station, their train had left. They came back home, but by that time I had gone out to see a movie!

(c) So they sat outside and ate the lunch I had packed for them.

(d) By the time I returned, they had fallen asleep!

Past	Earlier past

2. Dictionary work

By the end of the journey, we had run out of drinking water.

Look at the verb *run out* of in this sentence. It is a phrasal verb: it has two parts, a verb and a preposition or an adverb. Phrasal verbs often have meanings that are different from the meanings of their parts.

Find these phrasal verbs in the story.

burn out light up look on run out keep out

Write down the sentences in which they occur. Consult a dictionary and write down the meaning that you think matches the meaning of the phrasal verb in the sentence.

3. Noun phrase

Read the following sentence.

I took out a *small black tin box*.

- The phrase in *italics* is a noun phrase.
- It has the noun — *box* — as the head word, and three adjectives preceding it.

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- Notice the order in which the adjectives occur — *size* (small), *colour* (black) and *material* (tin) of which it is made.
- We rarely use more than four adjectives before a noun and there is no rigid order in which they are used, though there is a preferred order of modifiers/adjectives in a noun phrase, as given below.

determiner	modifier 1 (opinion, feeling)	modifier 2 (size, shape, age)	modifier 3 (colour)	modifier 4 (material)	head word
a/an/ the	nice/lazy/ beautiful	tall/ round/ old/young	red/white/ light/dark	silk/cotton/ woollen	woman man/ table/chair

4. The table below contains a list of nouns and some adjectives. Use as many adjectives as you can to describe each noun. You might come up with some funny descriptions!

Nouns	Adjectives
elephant	circular, striped, enormous, multicoloured, round, cheerful, wild, blue, red, chubby, large, medium-sized, cold
face	
building	
water	

speaking

1. In groups discuss whether wars are a good way to end conflicts between countries. Then present your arguments to the whole class.
2. What kind of presents do you like and why? What are the things you keep in mind when you buy presents for others? Discuss with your partner. (For example, you might buy a book because it can be read and re-read over a period of time.)

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writing

1. Imagine that you are Jim. You have returned to your town after the war. In your diary record how you feel about the changes you see and the events that occur in your town. You could begin like this

   25 December, 1919
   It's Christmas today, but the town looks.....

   Or

   Suppose you are the visitor. You are in a dilemma. You don't know whether to disclose your identity and disappoint the old lady or let her believe that her dear Jim has come back. Write a letter to a friend highlighting your anxiety, fears and feelings.

2. Given below is the outline of a story. Construct the story using the outline.

   A young, newly married doctor _____ freedom fighter _____ exiled to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands by the British _____ infamous Cellular Jail _____ prisoners tortured _____ revolt by inmates _____ doctor hanged _____ wife waits for his return _____ becomes old _____ continues to wait with hope and faith.

War is the greatest plague that can afflict humanity; it destroys religion, it destroys states, it destroys families.

— Martin Luther

This book is to be neither an accusation nor a confession, and least of all an adventure, for death is not an adventure to those who stand face to face with it. It will try simply to tell of a generation of men who, even though they may have escaped shells, were destroyed by the war.

— Erich Maria Remarque, author of *All Quiet on the Western Front*

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The Ant and the Cricket

A fable is a story, often with animals as characters, that conveys a moral. This poem about an ant and a cricket contains an idea of far-reaching significance, which is as true of a four-legged cricket as of a 'two-legged one'. Surely, you have seen a cricket that has two legs!

A silly young cricket, accustomed to sing
Through the warm, sunny months of gay summer and spring,
Began to complain when he found that, at home,
His cupboard was empty, and winter was come.
Not a crumb to be found
On the snow-covered ground;
Not a flower could he see,
Not a leaf on a tree.
"Oh! what will become," says the cricket, "of me?"

At last by starvation and famine made bold,
All dripping with wet, and all trembling with cold,
Away he set off to a miserly ant,
To see if, to keep him alive, he would grant
Him shelter from rain,
And a mouthful of grain.
He wished only to borrow;
He'd repay it tomorrow;
If not, he must die of starvation and sorrow.



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Says the ant to the cricket, "I'm your servant and friend,
But we ants never borrow; we ants never lend.
But tell me, dear cricket, did you lay nothing by
When the weather was warm?" Quoth the cricket, "Not I!

My heart was so light
That I sang day and night,
For all nature looked gay."
"You sang, Sir, you say?
Go then," says the ant, "and dance the winter away."

Thus ending, he hastily lifted the wicket,
And out of the door turned the poor little cricket.
Folks call this a fable. I'll warrant it true:
Some crickets have four legs, and some have two.

adapted from *Aesop's Fables*

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glossary

accustomed to sing: used to singing; in the habit of singing
famine: scarcity of food; having nothing to eat
lay nothing by: save nothing
quoth: (old English) said

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working with the poem

1. The cricket says, "Oh! what will become of me?" When does he say it, and why?
2. (i) Find in the poem the lines that mean the same as "Neither a borrower nor a lender be" (Shakespeare).
   (ii) What is your opinion of the ant's principles?
3. The ant tells the cricket to "dance the winter away". Do you think the word 'dance' is appropriate here? If so, why?
4. (i) Which lines in the poem express the poet's comment? Read them aloud.
   (ii) Write the comment in your own words.

If you know a fable in your own language, narrate it to your classmates.

Answers to Questions on page 9.

(a) American Declaration of Independence.

(b) Wilbur and Orville Wright made the first flight, remaining in the air for 12 seconds and covering 120 feet.

(c) Hiroshima Day: an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima in Japan on this day.

(d) Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

(e) Yuri A. Gagarin became the first human to orbit the Earth.

(f) Neil Armstrong became the first human to set foot on the Moon.

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