Chapter 5: The World of Limitless Possibilities

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Exercise 5.1 — Check Your Understanding — The World of Limitless Possibilities (Interv

Q1 Fill in the fact table based on the interview with Dr. Deepa Malik.

1. Diagnosed with spinal tumour at the age of ___
2. Result of the surgery: ___
3. Named as one of the 10 most effective para-athletes by: ___
4. First successful Paralympic event: ___
5. List of 'firsts': (i) ___ (ii) ___
6. Awards won: (i) ___ (ii) ___ (iii) ___
7. Two things supported by her: (i) ___ (ii) ___

SOLUTION

The interview provides the following facts about Dr. Deepa Malik:

1. Diagnosed with spinal tumour at the age of: 29

2. Result of the surgery: She was paralysed waist down and declared to be bound to a wheelchair for the rest of her life.

3. Named as one of the 10 most inspirational women para-athletes globally by: the International Paralympic Committee

4. First successful Paralympic event: She won the silver medal in the shot-put event at the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games.

5. List of 'firsts':
(i) First ever Indian female para-athlete to win an Asian Games medal in athletics.
(ii) India's first ever female Paralympics medallist across any sport.

6. Awards won:
(i) Khel Ratna
(ii) Arjuna Award
(iii) Padma Shri

7. Two things supported by her:
(i) Empowering women through outdoor sports and adventure activities; strengthening the emotional health of persons with challenges.
(ii) Supporting persons from lower socio-economic strata and providing equipment to para sportspersons.

Answer: Age 29; paralysed waist down after surgery; International Paralympic Committee; silver medal in shot-put at 2016 Rio Paralympics; first Asian Games medal + first Paralympics medal; Khel Ratna, Arjuna, Padma Shri; empowering women through sports + supporting lower socio-economic para sportspersons.

Q2 Read the two sets of sentences and choose whether they display fact-opinion or cause-effect.
(1)(i) In the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games, I secured the silver medal in the shot-put event.
(ii) I feel it was a moment of personal victory and a step forward in changing perceptions.
(2)(i) I was diagnosed with a tumour in my spine.
(ii) I had a surgery and was told that I would be bound to a wheelchair for the rest of my life.

SOLUTION

Set (1): Fact-Opinion
Statement (i) is a fact — it is a verifiable event: Dr. Malik secured the silver medal at the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games.
Statement (ii) is an opinion — Dr. Malik uses 'I feel', showing it is her personal belief or perception about what the medal meant.

Set (2): Cause-Effect
Statement (i) is the cause — being diagnosed with a tumour in the spine led to

medical intervention.

Statement (ii) is the effect — the surgery resulted in paralysis from the waist down, confining her to a wheelchair.

Answer: Set (1) = Fact-Opinion; Set (2) = Cause-Effect.

Q3 Work in pairs to identify which of these pairs of sentences show cause-effect (1) or fact-opinion (2). Write 1 or 2 in the boxes.

(i) Dr. Deepa Malik was a member of the Working Group for the Formulation of Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012–17). / It is believed that she contributed greatly to create better sports policies for the persons with disabilities.

(ii) Paralympics showcases incredible talent and determination of para-athletes. / The global perception on disabilities shifts, inspiring para-athletes to pursue their dreams.

SOLUTION

Pair (i): 2 — Fact-Opinion

The first sentence is a verifiable fact (her membership in the Working Group).

The second sentence is an opinion expressed through 'It is believed' — it reflects what people think she achieved, not a confirmed outcome.

Pair (ii): 1 — Cause-Effect

The first sentence states the cause: Paralympics displaying the talent and determination of para-athletes.

The second sentence states the effect: this shifts global perception, inspiring more para-athletes to pursue their dreams.

Answer: (i) = 2 (Fact-Opinion); (ii) = 1 (Cause-Effect).

Exercise 5.2 — Critical Reflection I — Extract-based questions (The World of Limitless P

Q1 Read the extract and answer the questions.

'I had two choices—squander my life in remorse or transform it to a world of limitless possibilities. I love sports and had been a swimmer too, so I decided to switch to para-athletics. This is how my Paralympics journey began. My breakthrough moment came in the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games, when I secured the silver medal in the shot-put event. In hindsight, I feel it was a moment of personal victory and a step forward in changing perceptions.'

(i) Give a reason for the statement: The speaker's decision to transform her life can be likened to the concept of a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly.

(ii) Why could the speaker switch to para-athletics quite comfortably?

(iii) Complete the sentence: The speaker calls 2016 Rio Paralympic Games a 'breakthrough moment' because _____.

(iv) The phrase 'in hindsight' indicates the speaker is: A. curious B. reflective C. determined D. courageous

(v) List one likely perception the speaker might have changed.

SOLUTION

(i) Just as a caterpillar undergoes a complete transformation to emerge as a butterfly — moving from a confined, limited existence to one of freedom and beauty — Dr. Malik chose to reject a life of remorse after her paralysis and transformed herself into a champion para-athlete. Both transformations involve overcoming a restrictive state to achieve something remarkable and inspiring.

(ii) Dr. Malik had been a swimmer before her injury, so she already had a background in competitive sports. Her love of sports and existing athletic training made it natural and relatively comfortable for her to channel that experience into para-athletics after switching due to her disability.

(iii) The speaker calls the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games a 'breakthrough moment' because she secured the silver medal in the shot-put event there — it was her first major Paralympic medal, representing both a personal victory and a significant step in changing public perceptions about persons with disabilities.

(iv) B. reflective — 'In hindsight' means looking back on past events with a clearer understanding; using it shows the speaker is thoughtfully looking back and evaluating the significance of her achievement.

(v) One likely perception she changed: that persons with disabilities cannot

compete at an elite level in international sports. By winning a silver medal at the Paralympics, she demonstrated that para-athletes can perform at the highest global stage.

Answer: (i) Both transform from limitation to extraordinary achievement. (ii) She had prior experience as a competitive swimmer. (iii) She won her first Paralympic silver medal there, marking a personal victory and a shift in perceptions. (iv) B — reflective. (v) That persons with disabilities cannot be elite international competitors.

Q2 Read the extract and answer the questions.

'Honestly, I feel sports, especially Paralympics, have the extraordinary ability to challenge stereotypes and change attitudes towards disability. When people witness the strength, skill, and competitive spirit of para-athletes, it breaks down preconceived notions. Paralympics has given me a new lease of life and helped me push boundaries.'

(i) Choose the option that lists words describing the tone of the speaker:

A. appreciative B. moralistic C. sentimental D. optimistic E. defensive

(a) A and D (b) B, D, and E (c) B and C (d) A, C, and E

(ii) Complete the analogy: ability : potential :: preconceived notions : _____

(iii) True or false: Paralympics is a platform that not only showcases the remarkable abilities of para-athletes but also questions stereotypes.

(iv) What does 'helped me push boundaries' tell us about the speaker?

(v) Which phrase from the extract suggests that the speaker was able to transform her life?

SOLUTION

(i) (a) A and D — appreciative and optimistic.

The speaker is appreciative of what Paralympics has done for her ('has given me a new lease of life') and optimistic about sports' ability to challenge stereotypes and change society's attitudes. The tone is neither moralistic nor defensive nor sentimental.

(ii) ability : potential :: preconceived notions : stereotypes

Just as 'ability' relates to 'potential' (what one is capable of), 'preconceived notions' relate to 'stereotypes' — fixed, unfounded assumptions about a group or individual.

(iii) True. The extract explicitly states that Paralympics 'challenge stereotypes and change attitudes towards disability' and that witnessing para-athletes 'breaks

down preconceived notions'.

(iv) 'Helped me push boundaries' tells us that the speaker is determined and ambitious — she did not accept the limits imposed by her disability but constantly strove to exceed what was expected of her, expanding her own capabilities and the world's perception of what a para-athlete can achieve.

(v) The phrase 'a new lease of life' suggests that the speaker was able to transform her life — it implies she found renewed energy, purpose, and possibility through Paralympics after her paralysis.

Answer: (i) (a) A and D — appreciative and optimistic. (ii) stereotypes. (iii) True. (iv) She is determined and strives to exceed limitations. (v) 'a new lease of life'.

Exercise 5.3 — Critical Reflection II — Extended questions (The World of Limitless Possi

Q1 Explain how Dr. Malik's achievements challenge societal perceptions.

SOLUTION

Dr. Malik's achievements challenge the widespread societal perception that persons with physical disabilities are incapable of excelling in competitive sports or public life.

By becoming the first Indian female para-athlete to win an Asian Games medal in athletics and India's first female Paralympics medallist, she demonstrated that physical limitations do not define one's potential.

Her multiple honours — Khel Ratna, Arjuna Award, and Padma Shri — placed her alongside the country's greatest able-bodied athletes, directly dismantling the notion that para-athletes occupy a lesser category.

Her philosophy, 'ability beyond disability', coupled with her public advocacy, actively works to reshape how society views people with disabilities — from objects of sympathy to individuals of exceptional capability and strength.

Answer: Dr. Malik's medals, awards, and advocacy all demonstrate that physical disability does not limit potential, directly dismantling stereotypes and inspiring a shift in societal attitudes.

Q2 What can be the long-term impact of involving youth in schools and colleges in advocacy with respect to disability?

SOLUTION

Dr. Malik says, 'I believe youth is the voice of tomorrow. So, we organise disability sports awareness and advocacy sessions at various schools and colleges.'

Involving youth in disability advocacy from an early age builds empathy and awareness, replacing ignorance and indifference with understanding.

Over the long term, these young people will carry inclusive attitudes into their professional lives — as policymakers, employers, educators, and citizens — creating environments where persons with disabilities are given equal opportunities.

It also dismantles stereotypes at their root, as young minds that are exposed to the realities of disability are less likely to develop or propagate preconceived

notions.

This grassroots culture shift can result in better public infrastructure, inclusive sports programs, and stronger legal and institutional support for persons with disabilities across society.

Answer: Youth exposed to disability advocacy develop lasting empathy and inclusive values, which they carry into adult life — shaping fairer policies, workplaces, and communities.

Q3 Rationalise the appropriateness of the title 'The World of Limitless Possibilities' with reference to Dr. Deepa Malik's attitude and achievements.

SOLUTION

The title is drawn directly from Dr. Malik's own words: 'I had two choices—squander my life in remorse or transform it to a world of limitless possibilities.'

Her entire journey embodies the idea that no situation, however limiting it appears, is the final word on what a person can achieve.

Despite being paralysed from the waist down and confined to a wheelchair, she went on to win international medals, receive the nation's highest sports honours, and become a globally recognised para-athlete.

Her motto 'ability beyond disability' further reinforces this — she sees possibility where others see only constraint.

Through advocacy, she extends this vision beyond herself, working to build a society where 'everyone, regardless of ability, is treated with dignity and given a fair chance to succeed.'

Thus the title is entirely appropriate: it captures both her personal philosophy and the transformative spirit of para-athletics that she represents.

Answer: The title reflects Dr. Malik's core belief — expressed in her own words — that disability is not a ceiling. Her achievements and advocacy together embody a world where ability transcends physical limitation.

Q4 'Every setback is an opportunity to prove your strength.' How might this be a life lesson for every individual, and not just sportspersons?

SOLUTION

Dr. Malik shares this advice when asked what she would tell individuals facing challenges: 'Every setback is an opportunity to prove your strength. Surround yourself with a support system, believe in yourself, and let your journey inspire others.'

As a life lesson, this applies far beyond sports: in academics, a failed examination is an opportunity to identify weaknesses and study more effectively. In a career, a rejection is an opportunity to refine one's skills. In personal relationships, a misunderstanding is an opportunity to communicate better.

The lesson encourages a growth mindset — viewing difficulties not as final defeats but as stepping stones (a phrase Dr. Malik herself uses) that build resilience, character, and capability.

It also highlights the importance of a support system and self-belief, both of which are universally applicable — regardless of one's field of endeavour.

Ultimately, the lesson teaches that how a person responds to failure matters more than the setback itself.

Answer: The lesson encourages a growth mindset applicable to all: setbacks in studies, career, or life are opportunities to build resilience, learn, and inspire others — not final defeats.

Q5 Examine how Dr. Deepa Malik's recognition as one of the 10 most inspirational para-athletes globally contributes to the larger discourse on gender equality in sports.

SOLUTION

Dr. Malik's recognition by the International Paralympic Committee places a woman with a physical disability at the very pinnacle of global sporting inspiration — this is doubly significant in the context of gender equality.

In sport, women have historically faced barriers of recognition and resource allocation. Women with disabilities face an additional layer of marginalisation.

Her being named among the top 10 most inspirational para-athletes globally — across all genders — affirms that women's sporting achievement is as worthy of

recognition as men's.

Her 'firsts' (first Indian female para-athlete to win an Asian Games medal; India's first female Paralympics medallist) show that she broke barriers not just for disability representation but specifically for women in para-sports.

She also advocates for 'empowering women through outdoor sports and adventure activities', directly linking her public role to gender equality.

Her story therefore becomes a powerful argument that women with disabilities can compete, excel, and lead — challenging both gender stereotypes and disability stereotypes simultaneously.

Answer: Her global recognition affirms that women in para-sports deserve equal visibility and celebrates a woman breaking barriers of both disability and gender — directly advancing the discourse on gender equality in sport.

Q6 How might Dr. Deepa Malik's thought, 'ability beyond disability', serve as a guideline for success for all future para-athletes?

SOLUTION

'Ability beyond disability' is Dr. Malik's core belief: that physical limitations do not define what a person is capable of achieving.

For future para-athletes, this thought serves as a mental guideline first — it reframes disability from a deficiency into a different kind of strength, preserving self-belief even when society underestimates them.

It encourages para-athletes to focus on what their bodies can do rather than what they cannot, opening space for innovation in training, technique, and competitive strategy.

Dr. Malik herself demonstrated this: having been a swimmer, she channelled existing athletic ability into shot-put and achieved international success, proving that adaptability and mindset are decisive.

Her advocacy work also shows that success extends beyond medals — future para-athletes can, like her, contribute to changing societal perceptions and become role models, multiplying the impact of their individual achievements.

In sum, 'ability beyond disability' guides future para-athletes to compete with confidence, train with purpose, and inspire with their journeys.

Answer: 'Ability beyond disability' guides para-athletes to focus on capability over limitation, maintain self-belief against societal stereotypes, and see their journey as a vehicle for both personal success and social change.

Q7 What have you learnt from this interview, and how can you implement these learnings in your life?

SOLUTION

The interview with Dr. Deepa Malik teaches several important lessons:

1. Adversity is a choice point, not a full stop. Dr. Malik was told she would never walk again, yet she chose to transform her situation rather than surrender to remorse. This teaches that how we respond to misfortune matters more than the misfortune itself.

2. Prior strengths can be redirected. She leveraged her background as a swimmer to switch to para-athletics. In our own lives, skills and interests developed in one context can be applied creatively in another.

3. Mental resilience is as important as physical ability. Overcoming societal underestimation required fortitude — a quality any student or young person faces when doubted by others.

4. Support systems matter. Family support was central to her journey; nurturing our own support networks — friends, mentors, family — is essential.

5. Success carries responsibility. Dr. Malik uses her platform to advocate for others, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This teaches that personal achievement becomes more meaningful when it is used to uplift others.

These learnings can be implemented by embracing challenges as opportunities, building resilience, and using one's achievements — however small — to encourage peers.

Answer: The interview teaches: adversity is a turning point, not an end; prior strengths can be redirected; mental resilience equals physical ability; support systems matter; and personal success carries responsibility to uplift others.

Exercise 5.4 — Vocabulary and Structures in Context — The World of Limitless Possibili

Q1 Match the given phrases in Column 1 with their meanings in Column 2. Use each phrase in a sentence of your own.

1. defy the odds — (i) a time of significant development or discovery
2. a new lease of life — (ii) overcome challenges and achieve goals
3. in hindsight — (iii) succeed in doing something when most people think it would result in failure
4. breakthrough moment — (iv) ability to understand something after it has happened
5. turn obstacles into stepping stones — (v) an occasion when you become more energetic and active than earlier

SOLUTION

Correct matches:

1. defy the odds → (iii) succeed in doing something when most people think it would result in failure
2. a new lease of life → (v) an occasion when you become more energetic and active than earlier
3. in hindsight → (iv) ability to understand something after it has happened
4. breakthrough moment → (i) a time of significant development or discovery
5. turn obstacles into stepping stones → (ii) overcome challenges and achieve goals

Model sentences:

1. Despite her injury, she managed to defy the odds and qualify for the national team.
2. Starting a new hobby gave him a new lease of life after a difficult year.
3. In hindsight, studying regularly would have been better than cramming the night before.
4. Winning the district science fair was a breakthrough moment in her career as a researcher.
5. She learned to turn obstacles into stepping stones and emerged stronger after every failure.

Answer: 1-(iii), 2-(v), 3-(iv), 4-(i), 5-(ii). Model sentences provided above.

Q2 Arrange the movement words in the box on a word cline in increasing order of pace, from the slowest to the fastest: crawl, amble, walk, jog, saunter, dart, sprint, stroll, run, plod, creep.

SOLUTION

A word cline lines words up by degree — here, by how fast the movement is.

Slowest to fastest: creep → crawl → plod → amble → saunter → stroll → walk → jog → run → sprint → dart.

Reasoning: creep and crawl are the slowest (moving very cautiously / on hands and knees); plod is a slow, heavy walk; amble, saunter and stroll are relaxed, leisurely walks (roughly equal in pace); walk is the normal pace; jog is a gentle run; run is faster; sprint is running at full speed; dart is a sudden, very quick movement.

Answer: A reasonable slowest→fastest order: creep → crawl → plod → amble → saunter → stroll → walk → jog → run → sprint → dart. (The textbook gives only some words as done; amble/saunter/stroll are near-equal leisurely paces, and sprint/dart are interchangeable at the fast end.)

Q3 Match the highlighted verbs in Column 1 with their functions in Column 2.
1. I could hear the audience clapping.
2. It couldn't be helped.
3. I should give it my best shot.
4. I knew if I tried, I would win.

Functions: (i) promise (ii) possibility (iii) prediction (iv) obligation (v) past ability (vi) impossibility

SOLUTION

1. 'could' in 'I could hear the audience clapping' → (v) past ability — the speaker was able to hear the clapping.
2. 'couldn't' in 'It couldn't be helped' → (vi) impossibility — it was impossible to prevent or change the situation.
3. 'should' in 'I should give it my best shot' → (iv) obligation — expresses a duty or what is advisable to do.
4. 'would' in 'I knew if I tried, I would win' → (iii) prediction — expresses what the speaker expected would happen.

Answer: 1-(v) past ability; 2-(vi) impossibility; 3-(iv) obligation; 4-(iii) prediction.

Q4 Make sentences with the modal verbs in the table, using each of their functions. Mention the function in brackets. (1. could — possibility, unreal ability, request, suggestion; 2. couldn't — inability; 3. should — probability, advice; 4. would — request, past habit.)

SOLUTION

could:
- We could win the relay if we train hard. (possibility)
- With more support, she could have competed at the Olympics. (unreal ability)
- Could you please pass me the water bottle? (request)
- You could try swimming to build your stamina. (suggestion)

couldn't:
- He couldn't lift the weight however hard he tried. (inability)

should:
- The results should be out by this evening. (probability)
- You should warm up before every practice. (advice)

would:
- Would you help me set up the wheelchair ramp? (request)
- Every morning she would swim twenty laps before school. (past habit)

Answer: Model sentences (one per function): could — possibility/unreal ability/request/suggestion; couldn't — inability; should — probability/advice; would — request/past habit (see solution).

Q5 Read the two sentences: (a) 'You've been listed as one of the 10 most inspirational women para-athletes globally by the International Paralympic Committee.' (b) 'I love sports and had been a swimmer too, so I decided to switch to para-athletics.' (i) The sentences are in Direct Speech or Reported Speech? (ii) They are declarative / interrogative / exclamatory / imperative sentences? (iii) Observe the changes from the Direct Speech (Column 1) to the Reported Speech (Column 2) and note them (Column 3) for each row.

SOLUTION

(i) The sentences are in Direct Speech (the speaker's exact words).
(ii) They are declarative sentences (they state facts).
(iii) Changes noted (Column 3):

Row 1 — Interviewer (example given): 1. reporting verb 'said' added; 2. linking word 'that' added; 3. 'have been' → 'had been' (present perfect → past perfect); 4. 'you' → 'she' (pronoun changed).

Row 2 — Dr. Malik ('I love sports and had been a swimmer too, and so I decided to switch...'): 1. reporting verb 'said' added; 2. linking word 'that' added; 3. 'I' → 'she'; 4. 'love' → 'loved' (present → past); 5. second 'I' → 'she'; 6. 'decided' → 'had decided' (past → past perfect).

Row 3 — Interviewer ('Your story is indeed a testament...'): 1. 'said that' added; 2. 'Your' → 'her'; 3. 'is' → 'was' (present → past).

Row 4 — Dr. Malik ('I believe youth is the voice of tomorrow.'): 1. 'says that' added; 2. 'I' → 'she'; 3. 'believe' → 'believes' (subject–verb agreement). Note: because the reporting verb is in the present tense ('says'), the tense of the reported words does NOT shift back.

Answer: (i) Direct Speech. (ii) Declarative. (iii) Reporting verb + 'that' added, first-person pronouns → third-person, and tenses shift back one step (present→past, past→past perfect) — except when the reporting verb is present tense ('says'), where the tense does not change.

Q6 Change the conversation between Siya and Tarun to reported speech. Fill in the blanks:
Siya: I watched a documentary on the para equestrian event on television last night.
Tarun: I didn't know Paralympics has equestrian events.
Siya: It does. It was so interesting to watch.
Tarun: That's wonderful. So, para equestrians must be training for months for this.
Siya: They also have to find and develop their own style of communication with their horse.
Tarun: I will watch this documentary the next weekend.

Siya said that she 1._____. Tarun replied that he hadn't known that Paralympics had equestrian events. Siya added that 2._____. Tarun remarked that it was wonderful and that para equestrians must be training for months for that. Siya replied that 3._____. Tarun said that 4._____.

SOLUTION

When changing from direct speech to reported speech: the reporting verb is

added ('said', 'replied', 'added'); 'that' is added as a linking word; tenses shift back (present → past; will → would; do/does → did); pronouns change to match the speaker's perspective.

1. Siya said that she had watched a documentary on the para equestrian event on television the previous night.

2. Siya added that it did and that it had been so interesting to watch.

3. Siya replied that they also had to find and develop their own style of communication with their horse.

4. Tarun said that he would watch that documentary the following weekend.

Answer: 1. had watched a documentary on the para equestrian event on television the previous night. 2. it did and that it had been so interesting to watch. 3. they also had to find and develop their own style of communication with their horse. 4. he would watch that documentary the following weekend.

Exercise 5.5 — Check Your Understanding — Nine Gold Medals (Poem)

Q1 Match the words and phrases in Column 1 with their meanings in Column 2 (inferred from context in the poem).

1. dashed in the dirt
2. stumbled
3. staggered
4. anguish
5. asphalt

Meanings: (i) walk or move with difficulty (ii) destroyed (iii) a hard black substance used to make roads and paths (iv) step awkwardly, lose balance and almost fall (v) extreme pain or suffering

SOLUTION

1. dashed in the dirt → (ii) destroyed — 'His dreams and his efforts dashed in the dirt' means his dreams were destroyed when he fell.
2. stumbled → (iv) step awkwardly, lose balance and almost fall — 'the smallest among them, he stumbled and staggered'.
3. staggered → (i) walk or move with difficulty — used alongside 'stumbled' to describe the athlete losing control of his movement.
4. anguish → (v) extreme pain or suffering — 'He gave out a cry of frustration and anguish' after falling.
5. asphalt → (iii) a hard black substance used to make roads and paths — 'And fell to the asphalt instead' refers to the hard track surface.

Answer: 1-(ii), 2-(iv), 3-(i), 4-(v), 5-(iii).

Q2 Identify the gist of each stanza and write the correct stanza number against each description.

1. Spectators cheered participants of different events and waited enthusiastically for the final event to start.
2. All runners dashed ahead as soon as they heard the gun shot; suddenly, one of the athletes tripped and fell on the ground.
3. The race finished with nine athletes holding hands and winning the well-deserved gold medals; their smiles, and spectators standing up to applaud, conveyed everything.
4. Participants got ready at the starting line and nine determined athletes waited for the sound of the gun.
5. Athletes from various parts of the country had gone through months of training; had big dreams of winning a medal.
6. The eight athletes stopped to help the young fallen athlete stand up, forgetting that they were competing.
7. Nine athletes held the banner and walked hand in hand; this gesture represented the ethos of Special Olympics.
8. The young athlete felt his dreams were shattered and cried in pain and disappointment, but something unique happened.

SOLUTION

Matching each description to its stanza by reading the poem:

Description 1 (Spectators cheered … final event) → Stanza 2
Description 2 (All runners dashed … fell on the ground) → Stanza 4
Description 3 (Race finished … nine gold medals) → Stanza 8
Description 4 (Participants got ready … nine determined athletes) → Stanza 3
Description 5 (Athletes from all over … months of training) → Stanza 1
Description 6 (Eight athletes stopped to help) → Stanza 6
Description 7 (Nine athletes walked hand in hand … Special Olympics) → Stanza 7
Description 8 (Young athlete cried in pain … something unique happened) → Stanza 5

Answer: 1→St.2, 2→St.4, 3→St.8, 4→St.3, 5→St.1, 6→St.6, 7→St.7, 8→St.5.

Q3 Let us appreciate the poem.

1. Two examples of alliteration from the poem are (i)___ and (ii)___.
2. Give three examples of visual imagery from the poem: (i)___ (ii)___ (iii)___.
3. Give an example of auditory imagery from the poem: (i)___.
4. How does the use of imagery make the poem more appealing?
5. How does the poet's tone change from the beginning to the end of the poem?
6. What is the overall mood created by the poem?
7. What is the message being conveyed by the poem?

SOLUTION

1. Two examples of alliteration:
(i) 'dreams and his efforts dashed in the dirt' — 'd' sound repeats.
(ii) 'signal was given … so did the runners' (stanza 4) OR 'nine … nine' is repetition; a cleaner alliteration example: 'blocks were all lined up' — 'b' and 'l' patterns; best textual alliteration: 'stumbled and staggered' — 's' sound.
Accepted pair: (i) 'dashed in the dirt' and (ii) 'stumbled and staggered'.

2. Three examples of visual imagery:
(i) 'The blocks were all lined up for those who would use them / The hundred-yard dash and the race to be run / These were nine resolved athletes in the back of the starting line / Poised for the sound of the gun.' — vivid image of athletes ready at the start.
(ii) 'And fell to the asphalt instead' — the image of the athlete hitting the hard ground.
(iii) 'nine beaming faces' and 'a standing ovation' — the joyful image of athletes at the finish line surrounded by cheering spectators.

3. Auditory imagery: 'The signal was given, the pistol exploded' — the reader can hear the loud crack of the starting gun.

4. The use of imagery makes the poem more appealing because it allows the reader to visualise and experience the events as if present at the race. Visual imagery of the athletes' positions, movements, and expressions creates a vivid scene; auditory imagery of the pistol shot creates immediacy and energy. Together they make abstract emotions — determination, anguish, compassion — feel concrete and powerful.

5. The poet's tone at the beginning is tense and competitive — building excitement and anticipation around a race where athletes compete for gold, silver, and bronze. After the fall, the tone shifts to empathy and suspense. By the end,

the tone becomes uplifting, celebratory, and deeply emotional — conveying wonder and admiration at the athletes' collective act of compassion.

6. The overall mood of the poem is one of warm inspiration and emotional uplift. Despite beginning with competitive tension and a moment of distress, the poem resolves in an atmosphere of unity, generosity, and joy.

7. The message of the poem is that true sportsmanship means supporting fellow human beings even at the cost of personal victory. The nine athletes' act of walking hand-in-hand to the finish line — giving up the race to help a fallen competitor — shows that compassion and solidarity matter more than winning. The poem celebrates the spirit of the Special Olympics, where human dignity and mutual care take precedence over individual triumph.

Answer: 1. (i) 'dashed in the dirt' (ii) 'stumbled and staggered'. 2. (i) Athletes poised at the start (ii) Athlete falling on the asphalt (iii) Nine beaming faces at the finish line. 3. 'The pistol exploded'. 4. Imagery makes events vivid and emotions tangible. 5. Tense/competitive → empathetic → uplifting. 6. Warm inspiration and unity. 7. Compassion and solidarity matter more than winning.

Exercise 5.6 — Critical Reflection I — Extract-based questions (Nine Gold Medals)

Q1 Read the extract and answer the questions.

'The eight other runners pulled up on their heels
The ones who had trained for so long to compete
One by one they all turned round and went back to help him
And brought the young boy to his feet.'

(i) The phrase 'pulled up on their heels' means the runners ___.

A. moved aside B. stopped running C. tried to run faster D. jumped ahead

(ii) Mention one character trait common to all the eight other runners.

(iii) What is the tone of the poet in these lines?

(iv) How might the young athlete have felt on being helped by the others?

(v) Would you consider this incident as a turning point in the poem? If yes, why? If no, why not?

SOLUTION

(i) B. stopped running. 'Pulled up on their heels' means they abruptly halted their run — they stopped to turn back and help.

(ii) One character trait common to all eight runners: compassion (or empathy/selflessness). Despite having 'trained for so long to compete', every one of them chose to stop and help rather than continue racing for a medal.

(iii) The tone of the poet in these lines is admiring and compassionate. The poet describes the act of turning back 'one by one' with quiet reverence, clearly celebrating the selflessness of the runners.

(iv) The young athlete, who had 'gave out a cry of frustration and anguish' after falling, likely felt a surge of gratitude, relief, and renewed hope on being helped. He may have felt surprised and deeply moved that his competitors cared more about him than about their own chances of winning. The act of being brought back to his feet would have restored his dignity and given him the strength to finish.

(v) Yes, this is the turning point of the poem. Before this moment, the race is a conventional competition — athletes striving for individual medals. The moment the eight runners stop and help their fallen competitor, the entire nature of the event changes: the race is no longer about winning but about shared humanity. Everything that follows — the hand-holding walk, the nine gold medals, the standing ovation — flows from this single act of compassion.

Answer: (i) B — stopped running. (ii) Compassion/selflessness. (iii) Admiring and compassionate. (iv) Grateful, moved, and relieved. (v) Yes — the helpers' act transforms the race from competition to collective humanity, and everything that follows depends on it.

Q2 Read the extract and answer the questions.

'That's how the race ended, with nine gold medals
They came to the finish line holding hands still
And a standing ovation and nine beaming faces
Said more than these words ever will.'

(i) How did the nine contestants feel when they reached the finishing line together?
(ii) Why do you think all the nine contestants were given gold medals?
(iii) Complete the sentence appropriately: The holding of hands signifies a feeling of ___.
(iv) The spectators giving a 'standing ovation' indicates that they were ___.
A. amazed B. speechless C. distracted D. thoughtful
(v) Explain the last line of the extract.

SOLUTION

(i) The nine contestants felt joyful and united — 'nine beaming faces' tells us they were radiant with happiness. Having crossed the finish line together, holding hands, they felt a shared sense of achievement, camaraderie, and pride — not the individual triumph of a winner, but the deeper satisfaction of collective humanity.

(ii) All nine contestants were given gold medals because they all demonstrated the highest spirit of sportsmanship. Rather than competing for individual glory, the eight runners sacrificed their race to help the fallen athlete; together they embodied the true ethos of the Special Olympics — human dignity, compassion, and solidarity — which is worth far more than any individual medal. The gold was a symbol of their collective moral achievement.

(iii) The holding of hands signifies a feeling of unity/brotherhood/solidarity.

(iv) A. amazed. The spectators gave a standing ovation — a spontaneous, unanimous act — because they were deeply moved and astonished by what they had witnessed. It was not a planned response but a natural outpouring of admiration.

(v) The last line 'Said more than these words ever will' means that the image of

nine beaming faces and a standing ovation communicated the emotional power of the moment far more vividly and profoundly than any words could. The poet acknowledges the limits of language: the visual and emotional reality of what happened — the compassion, the unity, the joy — transcends what can be expressed in verse or prose.

Answer: (i) Joyful, united, and radiant with shared happiness. (ii) All nine earned gold by embodying the true spirit of sport — compassion over competition. (iii) unity/solidarity/brotherhood. (iv) A — amazed. (v) The image of nine smiling faces and a standing ovation conveyed the moment's power beyond what any words can express.

Exercise 5.7 — Critical Reflection II — Extended questions (Nine Gold Medals)

Q1 Describe how the setting established in the first two stanzas of the poem creates a vivid atmosphere for the events that follow.

SOLUTION

Stanza 1 establishes the scale and stakes of the event: athletes 'from all over the country' who have undergone 'many weeks and months of training' have gathered to compete 'for the gold, for the silver, and bronze'. This creates a high-stakes atmosphere of ambition, effort, and expectation.

Stanza 2 adds the human dimension: spectators 'gathered around the old field' to cheer, and 'excitement was high' as the final event approached. The word 'old field' gives the setting a familiar, community quality — this is not an impersonal stadium but a shared space.

Together, these two stanzas build a backdrop of collective anticipation: athletes who have sacrificed greatly to compete, and an audience eager to witness the conclusion. This charged atmosphere makes the fall of the young athlete in stanza 4 all the more devastating — and the compassionate response of the other runners all the more striking, because it unfolds in front of an expectant crowd.

Answer: The first two stanzas establish months of preparation and high crowd expectation, creating a tense competitive atmosphere that makes the subsequent act of compassion all the more powerful and unexpected.

Q2 How do you think the youngest athlete might have felt when he fell?

SOLUTION

The poem describes the athlete as the 'smallest among them' who 'stumbled and staggered and fell to the asphalt'. He then 'gave out a cry of frustration and anguish / His dreams and his efforts dashed in the dirt.'

From these lines, we can infer he felt a combination of physical pain (having hit the hard asphalt), deep frustration (all his months of training had led to this moment, only to end in a fall), and anguish (the emotional devastation of seeing his dream of a medal seemingly destroyed in an instant).

He may also have felt humiliated — falling in front of a crowd of spectators and fellow athletes is a public moment of vulnerability.

The phrase 'his dreams and his efforts dashed in the dirt' suggests he believed his chance was entirely over, adding despair to his distress.

Answer: He felt physical pain, deep frustration, anguish at lost dreams, and likely humiliation at falling publicly — believing his months of effort had come to nothing.

Q3 Why were the athletes eager to begin the race?

SOLUTION

Stanza 1 reveals that the athletes 'had come from all over the country / To run for the gold, for the silver, and bronze' and had undergone 'many weeks and months of training'.

Stanza 3 describes them as 'nine resolved athletes … poised for the sound of the gun' — 'resolved' (determined) and 'poised' (ready and balanced) show their mental and physical readiness.

They were eager because the race was the culmination of all their preparation — months of hard work had been building toward this single defining moment. The opportunity to win a medal for which they had sacrificed so much made them keen to begin.

Answer: The athletes had trained for months and came from across the country to win a medal; the race was the culmination of all their effort, making them resolved and eager to finally compete.

Q4 What does the transformation of the hundred-yard dash to a walk symbolise?

SOLUTION

Stanza 7 describes how 'the hundred-yard dash now reduced to a walk' as all nine runners joined hands and continued together.

The hundred-yard dash symbolises speed, individual ambition, and competition — the conventional goals of athletic racing.

Its transformation into a walk symbolises the triumph of human compassion over competitive achievement. The athletes chose togetherness and mutual support over the rush to be first.

The walk also symbolises equality — everyone moves at the same pace, no one is left behind. It represents the spirit of the Special Olympics, captured by the

banner above: that these games are not just about physical performance but about shared dignity and the celebration of every participant.

At a deeper level, the transformation symbolises a universal truth: sometimes the most meaningful race is not the fastest, but the one run together.

Answer: The transformation from a dash to a walk symbolises the victory of compassion over competition — the athletes chose solidarity and shared dignity over individual speed, embodying the true spirit of the Special Olympics.

Q5 How might the poem be different if the focus was solely on individual achievement rather than collective support?

SOLUTION

If the poem focused solely on individual achievement, it would likely end with a single winner crossing the finish line first — the conventional narrative of a sports poem celebrating individual excellence.

The emotional core of the poem — the eight runners stopping to help, the hand-holding walk, the nine gold medals, the standing ovation — would not exist. The poem would be one of many celebrating competitive triumph.

Without collective support, the fallen athlete's story would end in defeat and humiliation, not in a shared victory. The poem would carry a very different message: that strength and preparation determine success, rather than compassion.

The poem's title 'Nine Gold Medals' would be replaced by something like 'One Gold Medal', and its moral weight — the idea that choosing to help another is the greatest victory — would be entirely lost.

The standing ovation from the spectators also implies that the crowd recognised something extraordinary had happened; a poem about individual winning would generate admiration but not the same collective emotional response the poem currently evokes.

Answer: A poem focused on individual achievement would end conventionally with one winner; the fallen athlete's story would end in defeat, and the poem's central message — that compassion is the truest victory — would be entirely absent.

Q6 How does the poet's use of language and tone enhance the reader's engagement with the poem?

SOLUTION

David Roth uses simple, direct language that is accessible and narrative-driven, making it easy to follow the story while still being emotionally resonant.

The conversational phrase 'But as sure as I'm standing here telling this story' (stanza 5) creates the effect of a live narrator speaking directly to the reader, drawing us in and building suspense before the pivotal act of kindness.

Action verbs like 'stumbled', 'staggered', 'exploded', 'charging' create a vivid sense of movement and physicality, while words like 'anguish', 'beaming', and 'standing ovation' carry strong emotional weight.

The poet's tone shifts from tense and competitive to distressed to finally uplifting and celebratory — mirroring the emotional arc of a reader who experiences suspense, empathy, and joy in sequence, making engagement natural and sustained.

The final line 'Said more than these words ever will' is a moment of poetic humility that paradoxically makes the poem more powerful — the poet's acknowledgment that the event transcended language elevates the reader's emotional response.

Answer: Simple narrative language, vivid action verbs, a shifting tone from tense to uplifting, a conversational narrator, and a final line that transcends words all combine to draw readers in and carry them through the poem's emotional arc.

Q7 What might be the poet's purpose of writing this poem?

SOLUTION

The poet's primary purpose is to celebrate the spirit of compassion and collective humanity over individual competitive achievement.

By setting the poem at a Special Olympics event, David Roth also aims to raise awareness and appreciation of athletes with disabilities — showing that their games embody values of solidarity and mutual care that mainstream sports could aspire to.

The poem challenges the reader's conventional ideas about 'winning': by ending with nine gold medals rather than one, the poet suggests that the highest achievement is not crossing the finish line first but ensuring that no one is left

behind.

On a broader level, the poem is a meditation on human kindness — a reminder that in any race of life, the choice to turn back and help someone fallen is more meaningful than any personal prize.

The poet may also wish to inspire readers, particularly young people, to see themselves not just as competitors but as members of a community that rises or falls together.

Answer: The poet's purpose is to celebrate compassion over competition, honour the spirit of Special Olympics, challenge conventional ideas of winning, and inspire readers to value collective humanity above individual triumph.

Exercise 5.8 — Vocabulary in Context — Nine Gold Medals (Poem)

Q1 The phrase 'standing ovation' is an example of an adjective–noun collocation. Identify two other similar examples from the poem.

SOLUTION

A collocation is a pair or group of words that habitually appear together.
'Standing ovation' = adjective (standing) + noun (ovation).

Two other adjective–noun collocations from the poem:
1. 'nine resolved athletes' — adjective 'resolved' + noun 'athletes'.
2. 'nine beaming faces' — adjective 'beaming' + noun 'faces'.

Answer: 'resolved athletes' and 'beaming faces' are adjective–noun collocations from the poem.

Q2 Complete the table by writing four nouns in Column 2 that collocate with the adjectives in Column 1 (example given: big — disappointment, failure, surprise, decision).
1. big
2. heavy
3. strong
4. large
5. great

SOLUTION

1. big: disappointment, failure, surprise, decision (given example)
2. heavy: rain, traffic, load, burden
3. strong: belief, argument, coffee, will
4. large: crowd, amount, number, scale
5. great: achievement, effort, success, challenge

Answer: heavy — rain, traffic, load, burden; strong — belief, argument, coffee, will; large — crowd, amount, number, scale; great — achievement, effort, success, challenge.

Q3 Choose the correct adjectives from the box for the underlined words in the sentences below. (positive / noisy / significant / youngest / loud)

1. The littlest athlete was moving at a steady pace.
2. The eight athletes had a smiling attitude.
3. When the athlete fell, he gave a huge cry of pain.
4. The spectators saw a terrible difference in the athletes who had only come to compete.
5. The gaudy crowd cheered the runners enthusiastically.

SOLUTION

The task asks us to replace the underlined words with the correct adjective from the box, ensuring no adjective is used twice.

1. 'littlest' → youngest: 'The youngest athlete was moving at a steady pace.'
2. 'smiling' → positive: 'The eight athletes had a positive attitude.'
3. 'huge' → loud: 'When the athlete fell, he gave a loud cry of pain.'
4. 'terrible' → significant: 'The spectators saw a significant difference in the athletes who had only come to compete.'
5. 'gaudy' → noisy: 'The noisy crowd cheered the runners enthusiastically.'

Answer: 1. youngest; 2. positive; 3. loud; 4. significant; 5. noisy.