

CHAPTER – 1

THE BEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT IN THE WORLD

❖ Comprehension check Pg-10

Question 1:

What did the author find in a junk shop?

Answer:

The author found an old roll-top desk for sale in the junk shop. It was made of oak wood and worn out but looked repairable so he bought it.

Question 2:

What did he find in a secret drawer? Who do you think had put it in there?

Answer:

The author found a letter in the secret compartment of the bottom drawer. It was in a small tin box safely kept. I think the previous owner of the desk had put it in there.

❖ Comprehension check Pg-14

Question 1:

Who had written the letter, to whom, and when?

Answer:



Jim Macpherson, a captain in the British army, had written the letter to his wife Connie from the world front on the day after Christmas in 1914.

Question 2:

Why was the letter written? What was the wonderful thing that

the British & German army on the border had made merry together, keeping aside the war for the spirit of festivity.

Question 3:

What jobs did Hans Wolf and Jim Macpherson have when they were not soldiers?

Answer:

Hans Wolf was a cello player in the orchestra and Jim was an English teacher in his hometown of Dorset, England before they joined their respective army for a fight in the World War.

Question 4:

Had Hans Wolf ever been to Dorset? Why did he say he knew it?

Answer:



Hans had never been to Dorset but he knew everything about it from reading books. He had learned all about England from school and from reading books in English. His favourite writer was Thomas Hardy from whose novels he must have learned a lot about England.

Question 5:

Do you think Jim Macpherson came back from the war? How do you know this?

Answer:

No, I don't think Jim Macpherson came home from the war because the author discovered his old wife alone and she had mistaken him to be her returned husband.

❖ Comprehension check Pg-15

Question 1:

Why did the author go to Bridport?

Answer:

The author had gone to Bridport to return Mrs. Jim Macpherson he husband's last letter.

Question 2

How old has Mrs. Macpherson now? Where was she?



Answer:

Mrs. Macpherson was now hundred and one years old and being put up in a nursing home after the accidental fire at her home.

❖ Comprehension check Pg-16

Question 1:

Who did Connie Macpherson think her visitor was?

Answer:

Connie Macpherson thought the visitor was her husband who had returned from the war.

Question 2:

Which sentence in the text shows that the visitor did not try to hide his identity?

Answer:

When Mrs. Macpherson said to the author ‘You had me you’d come home by Christmas’ and asked him to sit closer to her mistaking her for her husband, the author had said nothing to correct her which shows he did not try to hide his identity.



❖ Working with the text

Question 1:

For how long do you think Connie had kept Jim's letter? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer:

I think Connie had kept Jim's letter with her forever. It was safely kept in the secret drawer of the roll-top table which must have been at her house until the unfortunate fire. This can be assumed on the basis of her reactions when she found the letter.

Question 2:

Why do you think the desk had been sold, and when?

Answer:

I think the desk had been sold after the fire accident at the Macpherson. It was old, worn out and had looked a bit damaged in the fire.

Question 3:

Why do Jim and Hans think that games or sports are good ways of resolving conflicts? Do you agree?

Answer:

Hans and Jim were short services commissioned soldiers who had joined their national armies only because there had been a war. Hans was a cello player and Jim was a teacher, they were not



seasoned commanders in the armies to see war as the only rational way of conflict resolution. They had suffered a great loss and hated the war, and felt sports as a better way of reaching a solution. I agree with their ideas of an alternative to expensive wars.

Question 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.

Answer:

The soldiers in either army were no different from one another. Their countries and their leaders might have hated each other but did not have personal differences with the soldiers on the opposite side. They came together to celebrate Christmas on the no man's land and played a football match with sportsmen spirit. It shows human bonding and lack of hate.

Question 5:

Mention the various ways in which the British and the German soldiers become friends and find things in common at Christmas.

Answer:

The British and German soldiers were on the opposite side of the war but they were all humans at the end of the day. They put down weapons for a day and came together to celebrate Christmas as



friends. They shared stories and food, played games together and sang carols in their trenches at night. Soldiers on both sides despised the war and were anxious to go back home.

Question 6:

What is Connie's Christmas present? Why is it the best Christmas present in the world?

Answer:

Connie mistook the author to be her husband. She had long waited for her Jim to come back from the war on Christmas and finally had him by her side. Even if it were a mistake, the old lady was happy after years of waiting, the joy she must have felt was definitely the best Christmas present in the world.

Question 7:

Do you think the title of the story is suitable for it? Can you think of any other title(s)?

Answer:

The title of the story is most suitable for the climax. For old Mrs. Macpherson, no present could have been better than having her husband back from the war and with her at home on Christmas day. She had long waited for him, anxious for his safety and feeling alone in the long journey that her life has been. Since the story is centre around the theme of Christmas and Wars, an alternate title could be 'Christmas Home Coming'.



❖ Working with Language

Question 1 A:

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 italicized verbs are in the past tense. They tell us what happened in the past, before now.

Read the passage below and underline the verb 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.

Answer:

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.

Question 1 B:

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, tell) the teacher and so he



____ (have, chase) her and she ____ (have, fall) down and ____ (have, tear) her dress.

Answer:

My little sister is very naughty. When she came (come) back from school yesterday, she had torn (tear) her dress.

We asked (ask) her how it had happened (happen).

She said (say) she had quarreled (have, quarrel) with a boy.

She had beaten (have, beat) him in a race and he had tried (have, try) to push her. She had told (have, tell) the teacher and so he had chased (have, chase) her and she had fallen (have, fall) down and had torn (have, tear) her dress.

Question 1 C:

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



Answer:

(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
Set out, Stayed	Had seen
Arrived, Came back	Had left, Had gone
Sat, Ate	Had packed
Returned	Had fallen asleep

Question 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
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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.

Answer:

- House no. 12 turned out to be nothing but **burned out** shell.... (destroyed by fire)
- That was the moment her eyes **lit up** with recognition.... (brightened)
- Hans Wolf and I **looked on** and cheered.... (watched)
- The schnapps and the sausages had long since **run out**..... (finished, consumed)
- Hans Wolf and I looked on and cheered clapping our hands and stamping our feet, to **keep out** the cold as much as anything.... (to avoid)

Question 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 headword, and three adjectives preceding it.

- 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 modifies/adjectives in a noun phrase, as given below.

Determiner	Modifier 1 (opinion, feeling)	Modifier 2 (size, shape, age)	Modifier 3 (colour)	Modifier 4 (material)	Headword
a/am/the	nice/lazy/ beautiful	tall/round/ old/young	Red/white/ light/dark	Silk/cotton/ woollen	Woman/ Man table/chair

Answer:

Student do yourself.

Question 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	Adjective
Elephant	circular, striped, enormous
Face	multi – coloured, round, cheerful,
Building	wild, blue, red, chubby,
Water	large, medium – sized, cold



Answer:

- Elephant- enormous grey animal
- Face- beautiful round chubby cheeks
- Building- tall large circular
- Water- deep blue icy cold

❖ Speaking**Question 1:**

In groups discuss whether wars are a good way to end conflicts between countries. Then present your arguments to the whole class.

Answer:

Wars are the worst possible way of conflict resolution and an expensive choice. It means social tension, bloodshed, suffering and economic damage that do no good to either of the warring nations. Wars are best avoided with meaningful discussions that take into accounts the concerns of the conflicting nations, it is the best way of avoiding misunderstanding and reaching a fruitful solution.

Question 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.)



Answer:

I like to give and receive books for presents. Books are one's best friend for life, you can read them in the privacy of your room after a long day or quietly in public when travelling. You can also exchange books with friends who like to read and talk to them about it, it is a good way of making good conversations and friends. I keep in mind the taste of the person when I am buying books for someone, like my father likes to read about history while my mother likes to read poems. I like to gift popular fiction to my friends and discuss the plot and characters of the story at lengths.

❖ Writing**Question 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 be 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, fear, and feelings.

Answer:

Dear Smith,



Merry Christmas! Hope this letter finds you in good spirits and health. You wouldn't believe the day I have had! I had long wanted to buy a roll-top desk, the old kinds that look regal and classic. Yesterday, walking through the street I spotted one at the corner of the street in a garage sale. It was a damaged in many places but seemed repairable, so I decided to invest in it. I was carefully working on it at home last night when I came across a letter hidden in a secret drawer. It was a soldier's letter to his beloved wife, written a day after Christmas day in 1914 from the war trenches somewhere near Germany. He had this amazing Christmas day he had, where the British and the German force that put down weapons and made merry together for the day. They shared food, played football and sang carols in the night. Wonderful as it may sound, I don't think the man ever return home from the war. His wife, now an old lady lived by herself for years waiting for his return. I went to see her at the address on the latter and found the house burned down. She had been rescued in time and been moved to a nursing facility. I went there to see her and return the priced letter but she took me for her dead husband Jim. I was startled and wanted to correct her but she had a bright smile on her face and I decided against it. She was happy, even if mistaken she was contented after years of wait to have met him her Jim. How could I take it away from her? So, I sat there with her until she was tired of talking and the visiting hours were over and she was ready to bid goodbye to her Jim.



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.

Answer:

A young doctor, newly married and happy in his regular life, was inspired to join the freedom struggle and fight for the emancipation of the nation. He took leadership of the struggle in Bengal and as a result, he was arrested and exiled to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands by the British to the infamous cellular jail where political prisoners were kept away, isolated from the chaos that engulfed the rest of the country. The prisoners were tortured and starved which lead to them to revolt. The doctor led the inmates to a peaceful protest and show of strength that intimidated the jail authority. They were scared that the prisoners would at some point turn violent and overpower the fewer numbered guards and break out of jail. They decided to break the revolt and hang the doctor for sedition. His wife never received the news of her husband's demise and waited for him to return for years. He grew old and senile with the wait but still prays for his safe return.

❖ The Ant and the Cricket - Working with the Poem

Question 1:

The cricket says, “Oh! What will become of me?” When does he say it, and why?

Answer:

The cricket says these words when he sees that winter has come, the ground is covered with snow and trees have no leaves. He says this because he has not saved anything to eat and now he cannot find any food.

Question 2 A:

Find in the poem the lines that mean the same as “Neither a borrower nor a lender be” (Shakespeare).

Answer:

The line, ‘but we ants never borrow; we ants never lend’ means the same as the given quote, “Neither a borrower nor a lender be”.

Question 2 B:

What is your opinion of the ant’s principles?

Answer:

The ant’s principles are strong. It teaches everyone to be prepared for the rainy day and not depend upon others for help.



Question 3:

The ant tells the cricket to “dance the winter away.” Do you think the word ‘dance’ is appropriate here? If so, why?

Answer:

Since the cricket sang away the summer, the ant asked him to dance away the winter. The word ‘Dance’ is appropriate here because it is symbolic of making merry and wasting time in the poem.

Question 4 A:

Which lines in the poem express the poet’s comment? Read them aloud.

Answer:

The last two lines of the poem express the poet’s comment;

‘Folks call this fable. I’ll warrant it true:

Some crickets have four legs, and some have two.’

Question 4 B:

Write the comment in your own words.

Answer:

It appears like a moral fable but the story has a lesson to it. Some people live only in the present with no regards to their future



needs. It's wise to save something for tomorrow because good time doesn't last forever.

Question 5:

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

Answer:

Once upon a time, there were two greedy cats who chanced upon a cake. It was big and round. Both the cats jumped upon it and started prowling. Just then, a monkey was swinging by the branches over them. He looked at the cake and the cats and thought of a wicked trick. He came down and pacified the cats, asking them to share the cake instead of fighting for the whole. He said, "Come let me split the cake into two halves for you."

The cake was handed over to the monkey. He broke it into two pieces and found one piece to be bigger. Then he took a bit from the bigger piece to make the two pieces even but now the other piece looked bigger, so he took a bit from it. Thus, we went on eating the cake as the cats watched with hungry eyes and took off.

The cats learned their lesson.

