

4.2 Unke Munke Timpetoo

“It will be a fantastic birthday this year,” I said in a mocking tone. “All I will get is a pair of shoes and a hand-knitted pullover. I had asked for a table tennis set, but my mother said, ‘It is totally out of the question this year’.”

My friend, Muk looked at me thoughtfully. He drew a bit closer and said, “Well, Rohan, I don’t say I believe in it, but my cousin said it works. And there is no harm trying, don’t you think?”

“Trying what?” I asked.

“Well, my cousin said, ‘If you really want something badly, all you have to do is to run around a banyan tree at midnight and chant seventeen times: Unke, Munke, Timpetoo’.”

I desperately wanted my wish to come true. Still I asked, “Why seventeen times and why at midnight?”

“Don’t ask me,” replied Muk, who was my best friend. “That is how it is done, I suppose. Why not try it? It would not do any harm.”

I thought it was all nonsense. Besides, I couldn’t think of any banyan tree in our neighbourhood. There was one in old Mrs Groover’s garden. But who dared to enter her garden? Not me ! And not at midnight ! Mrs Groover had been the principal of our school till last year. One look from her piercing pale green eyes was enough to silence bullies like Rinkoo Lal of Class X. I had seen it happen with my own eyes.

“Forget it,” I said. However, the thought kept haunting me till the day before my birthday and I just could not think of anything else.

“Okay,” I said to Muk, “if you come along with me, I will go to Mrs Groover’s garden tonight and do it.”



- ✿ Find the sentences in which the author and his friend claim that they do not believe in magic ?
- ✿ What do their actions show ?

The teacher should discuss the issue of blind belief in charms and chants with the students, and encourage a rational attitude to help them understand the story better.



“Why should I come along?” asked Muk, “I have no secret wish.”

“Come on, let us go and wish for my table tennis set.” So, at ten minutes to twelve Muk and I met at the back of old Mrs Groover’s garden. We climbed and sat on the boundary wall. We looked down into the garden, which lay dark and silent in the dim light of the moon. And there was a banyan tree, its aerial roots swaying in the gentle breeze of the night. We jumped down, reached the tree and looked around carefully.

“Imagine, if she is awake!” I whispered and pointed at Mrs Groover’s house.

“Nobody is awake at this ghostly hour of the night,” hissed Muk. “Now get going. Run!”

I ran. I ran as fast as I could, chanting “Unke, Munke, Timpetoo, I wish my wish is coming true!” over and over again. I felt a bit scared. That was why I tried to get it over quickly and increased my speed. I increased the chanting too! And all the while I went on listening to the sounds of the night, a crackle here, a swish there.

✂ Note the description of the scene which creates an atmosphere of mystery.

Read it aloud in a suitable manner.

✂ If you hear about something that fulfils your wishes, would you try it?

✂ Do you think the author is brave?



Suddenly a ferocious bark tore the stillness of the night! I froze. Inside Mrs Groover's house, lights flashed on and the backdoor was pushed open.

"Who is there?" called Mrs Groover. "Answer, or I will send the dog at you."

"Muk, Muk," I mumbled, "Say something." But Muk was climbing up the tree. When I saw Mrs Groover bend down to unleash the dog, I pleaded, "Please don't send the dog at us. I will explain everything, if you let me."

"Speak out soon," Mrs Groover shouted.

I told her everything. I feared, she might not believe me. But she listened to me without interruption. She just looked at me with the hard, light green eyes of hers as if she was trying to see right into my heart.

"So?" she asked finally, "and you believe in Unke, Munke, Timpetoo? Do you think it will help?" I dropped my head and said softly, "I hope it will!"

"Well," she returned, "if you believe so, go and finish your rounds." She turned saying, "and while leaving, would you mind using the front gate?"

I did finish the remaining six rounds and left her garden using the front gate. I swore that I would never return.

And then the great moment came. I opened my gifts, rejoiced over my new pair of shoes and the hand-knitted pullover! And then my eyes fell on a parcel. A big parcel!

I had never received such a big parcel earlier.

"To Rohan Khanna," I read, "From Unke, Munke, Timpetoo!"

I stared at Muk, and he looked as surprised as I was. My mother asked, "Who is Unke, Munke,

⌘ How do we know that Muk was frightened?

⌘ What opinion do you form of Mrs Groover from the way she treats the boys? Discuss.

⌘ Did the author really rejoice over his shoes and pullover?



⌘ The table tennis set was not new, but was a fabulous set, what does it imply?

⌘ Did the surprise gift really come from Unke, Munke, Timpetoo?

⌘ In your opinion, who must have sent the gift?

Discuss.

⌘ What is 'Unke, Munke, Timpetoo' – a charm or an act of friendliness?

Timpetoo? Isn't that an unusual name?"

"Yes," I said, "very unusual indeed."

I bent over the parcel and began to unpack it. I removed the strings and the paper impatiently. Finally I removed the colourful gift wrapping and found a table tennis set! It was not a brand new table tennis set, but it was a fabulous one. "Wow," I whispered, just "Wow!"

Till today Muk swears he has nothing to do with it. And so do my parents. I wondered if old Mrs Groover was responsible for the surprise. I wondered for a very long time. One day I gathered up all the courage I possessed and went to meet Mrs Groover. I used the front gate and rang the bell. I had gone over my lines a hundred times, but when she looked down on me with her pale green eyes, I felt my heart sink, and my courage vanish and all I could do was stutter like an idiot. "Good afternoon, Madam, do you, I mean did you, have you ... sorry, but ... do you believe in ... Unke, Munke, Timpetoo?"

Mrs Groover continued to look at me with a strange look in her eyes. She replied softly but seriously, "Yes, I do believe in Unke, Munke, Timpetoo. I had wished to have somebody over for tea today. And here you are! Now isn't it a perfect example of Unke, Munke, Timpetoo?"

She smiled, and she looked so different, almost human!

From that day onwards Muk and I went to see old Mrs Groover quite often. Not only because she made the best tea and had the best cookies. No! we went because we liked her. And then we had one thing in common. We all believed in Unke, Munke, Timpetoo!

– by Sigrun Srivastava
from 'Some More Short Stories'

* * *

ENGLISH WORKSHOP

1. Make adjectives from the following.
 - harm • continu(e) • believe
 - fear • thought • wish
 - question • courage
2. Choose the correct alternative.
 - (a) Rohan desperately wished for
 - (i) a pair of shoes (ii) a warm pullover
 - (iii) a good friend (iv) a table-tennis set
 - (b) Rohan and Muk entered the garden at midnight
 - (i) to frighten Mrs Groover (ii) to chant around the banyan tree
 - (iii) to steal some fruits (iv) to look for a table-tennis set
 - (c) Rohan had finished rounds of the tree before Mrs Groover discovered him.
 - (i) seventeen (ii) six (iii) eleven (iv) twelve
 - (d) The table-tennis set was gifted by
 - (i) Mrs Groover (ii) Rohan's parents (iii) Muk (iv) Timpetoo
 - (e) The Principal turned out to be a very lady.
 - (i) poor and simple (ii) proud and rich
 - (iii) kind and understanding (iv) sad and lonely
3. The story has a very heart-warming and touching end. Now try to **change the end of the story** to make it sound (i) very funny (ii) full of horror and mystery.
4. 'Unke, Munke, Timpetoo,
I wish, my wish is coming true.'
Try to **compose** two other funny magical chants that have rhyming lines.
5. Language study : **Prefix and suffix** : A letter or group of letters added to the front of a word to change its meaning and make a new word is called a **prefix**. Examples :
 - un + tie → untie • non + stop → non-stop
 - dis + like → dislike • super + man → superman
 - inter + national → international
 - Find at least 5 words with prefixes and identify the prefix in each word.

A letter or group of letters added at the end of a word to make another word is called a **suffix**. Examples :
 - teach + er → teacher
 - act + or → actor • child + hood → childhood • friend + ship → friendship
 - king + dom → kingdom • use + ful → useful • frequent + ly → frequently
 - act + ion → action • star + ry → starry

 - Find 5 examples of words with the following suffixes from the lessons you have studied so far, or from other sources :
 - -ship • -less • -ness • -ly • -ful • -able

