



Information Please



When I was quite young, my family had one of the first telephone in our neighbourhood. The shiny receiver hung on the side of the box. I even remembered the number - 105. I was too little to reach the telephone, but used to listen with **fascination** (attraction, charm) when my mother talked into it. Once she lifted me up to speak to my father, who was away for business. Magic ! Then I discovered that somewhere inside that wonderful device lived an amazing person. Her name

was "Information Please" and there was nothing that she did not know. My mother could ask her for anybody's number and whenever our clock stopped, information please immediately supplied the correct time.

My first personal experience with this genie-in-the-receiver came one day while my mother was visiting a neighbour. While I was playing in the **basement** (cellar), I hit my finger with a hammer. The pain was terrible, but there didn't seem to be of much use crying because there was no one home to **offer sympathy** (share the feelings, show concern). I walked around the house **sucking** (sipping) my throbbing finger, finally arriving at the stairway. The telephone ! Quickly, I ran for the stool and dragged it to the telephone. Climbing up, I took the receiver and held it to my ear. "Information Please," I said. And a sweet clear voice

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spoke into my ear. "Information." "I hurt my finger" I cried with pain into the phone. The tears came readily. There was somebody to hear me. "Isn't your mother home?" came the questions. "Nobody's at home but me," "Are you bleeding?" "No." I replied. "I hit it with the hammer and it hurts". "Can you open your icebox?" she asked. I said I could. "Then take a little piece of ice and hold it on your finger. That will stop the pain. Be careful," she advised. "And don't cry. You'll be all right."

Who is this 'Information Please' ? What do you do when you are alone in troubles ?

After That I called *Information Please* for everything. I asked for help with my Geography and she told me where Philadelphia was. She helped me with my Arithmetic, she also told me that a pet squirrel - I had caught, would eat fruits and nuts. And there was the time that Petey, our pet **canary** (name of a bird), died. I called *Information Please* and told her the sad story. She listened, then said things that grown-up say **to soothe** (to calm) a child. But it did not help much. Why should birds sing so beautifully and become a heap of feathers, on the bottom of a cage ? She must have felt my sorrow, for the quietly said, "Paul, always remember that there are other worlds to sing in." Somehow, I felt better.

Another day I was at the telephone, "Information," said the now familiar voice. I asked, "How do you spell fix ?". F-I-X." At that **instant** (moment) my sister, who took unholy joy in **scaring** (frightening) me, jumped off the stairs at me with a **shriek** (high-pitched cry) - "Yaaaaaaaaaaaaa ! I fell off the stool, pulling the receiver out of the box. We were both terrified. Information Please was not longer there. I was not at all sure that I hadn't hurt her when I pulled the receiver out. Minutes later, there was a man on the porch. "I'm a telephone repairman. The operator said there might be some trouble at this number." He reached for the receiver in my hand. "What happened?" I told him. "Well, we can fix that in a minute or two." He opened the telephone box and worked for a while. Then spoke into the phone. "Hi, this is Pete. Everything is under control at 105. The kid's sister scared him and he pulled the cord out of the box." He hung up, smiled, gave me a pat on the head and walked out the door. All this took place in a small town.

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Then when I was nine years old, we moved to Boston—and I missed *Information Please* a lot. *Information Please* belonged in that old wooden box back at home. As I grew into my teens, the memories of those childhood conversation never really left me. Often in moments of doubt I would **recall** (remember) the sense of security I had. Because I knew that I could call *Information Please* and get the right answer. How very patient, understanding and kind she was !

What type of relation will be established between the boy and the 'Information Please' ?

A few years later, on my way back to college, my place landed in Seattle. I had about half an hour and I spent 15 minutes or so on the phone with my sister who lived there now. Then, without thinking what I was doing, I dialled my hometown operator and said, "*Information Please*". Miraculously, I heard again the sweet, clear voice that I knew so well: Information, could you tell me, please, how to spell the word 'fix' ?" There was a long pause. Then came the softly spoken answer. "I guess," said *Information Please*, "that your finger must have healed by now." My voice choked. I tried to laugh. "So it's really still you. I wonder if you have any idea how much you meant to me during all that time...." "I wonder," she replied, "if you know how much you meant to me ? I never had any children, and I used to look forward to your calls. Sally, wasn't it ?" I told her how often I had thought of her over the years, and I asked if I could call her again when I come back to visit my sister when the semester was over. "Please do. Just ask for Sally." "Goodbye Sally." It sounded strange for *Information Please* to have name. "If I find any squirrel, I'll tell it to eat fruits and nuts." "Do that" she said "Well good bye."

Now something tragic is going to happen. What it could be ?

Just three months later, I was back again at the Seattle airport. I dialled, a different voice answered, "Information," and I asked for Sally.

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"Are you a friend?" "Yes," I said, "An old friend." "Then I'm sorry to tell you. Sally had only been working part-time in the last few years because she was ill. She died five weeks ago." But before I could hang up, she said, "Wait a minute. Are you Paul?" "Yes," "Well, Sally left a message for you. She wrote it down." "What was it?" I asked, almost knowing in advance what it would be. "Here it is, I'll read it-" Tell him there are other worlds to sign in. He'll know what I mean?"

I thanked her and hung up,. I did know what Sally meant by that.

Do it Yourself

Q.1 (A) Tick mark the nearest meaning :

1. **cord :** ☐ team o heartily ☐ some electrical item
☐ connection
2. **facination :** ☐ attractive o longing o charity o full
3. **soothe :** ☐ to make less difficult o argue o urge
☐ to make an appeal
4. **miraculously :** ☐ suddenly ☐ like some magic
☐ unplanned o by god's grace
5. **heal :** ☐ end of troubles o healthy
☐ delightful o apply medicine

(B) Use these words or phrases in your own sentences.

- (1) recall (2) offer sympathy (3) under control
(4) look foreword (5) in advance

Q.2 (A) Read these sentences, write True or False against them. Correct the False sentences :

1. When Paul was playing in the terrace, he hit his finger with a hammer . _____
2. With the help of a chair Paul reached the telephone.

3. The telephone operator's name was Sally.

4. Paul's plane landed in Seattle. _____
5. Sally had left a message for Paul. _____

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(B) Answer these questions :

1. What was the magic in receiver ?
 2. Write three sentences on the telephone.
 3. Describe the first telephone of the boy's family.
 4. How did the boy reach the telephone ?
 5. What was "Information Please" ? How did Paul get his problems solved.
 6. Why would Sally look forward to Paul's phone calls ?
 7. What was the shocking information for Paul ?
 8. What was Sally's last message for Paul ?
 9. What did Paul do whenever he had problems ?
 10. How did Paul feel when his pet canary die ? How did Sally console him ?
- What do you mean by "There are other worlds to sing in ?"
 - Why had Paul developed a fascination for a telephone ? Was it merely fascination ?



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