

Supplementary Reader (Moments)

The Lost Child

Introduction

This story has been written by Mulk Raj Anand who is an Indian writer in English. It is a story about a small child who goes to a fair with his parents. He demands a number of things but is denied. Then he is lost. A man offers to buy him all the things that he demanded but he refuses saying that he only wants his father and mother.

Summary

It was the festival of spring. A child walked along with his parents to the fair. Sometimes he was left behind when he was drawn towards some attractive things displayed on the way. He saw a toy shop. He wanted a toy. But his father looked at him with red-eyes. Then he moved on with his parents.

They reached the fair. They came across a sweetmeat seller. The child's mouth began to water for *burfi*. He asked for *burfi* knowing that his plea would not be heeded. So he walked on farther.

A flower seller was selling garlands of gulmohur. The child was drawn towards his basket and he murmured that he wanted that garland. But at the same time he knew that his parents will not heed to his wish and he moved on. Farther on, a man was selling balloons of different colours. The child desired to have them all, but he knew that his parents will say that he is too old to play with them. So, he moves on.

He then sees a snake-charmer who was playing a flute to a dancing snake. The child goes towards him but then he remembers that his father has forbidden him to hear such coarse music and he ventures ahead.

There he sees a roundabout in full swing. The child watches men, women and children being carried in a whirling motion and laughing aloud. He makes a bold request, 'I want to go on the roundabout.' But there was no reply. He turned to look at his parents but they were not there. Probably, they had gone farther. Thus, the child was lost.

All his desires ended. He started crying aloud and panic-stricken, he ran here and there, shouting for his parents. But there was no sign of either his father or his mother. Then, he went to the temple in search of his parents. The temple was crowded. The child might have been trampled underfoot if a man had not lifted him up.

The man tried to console the child but to no effect. He offered him a ride on the roundabout, he tried to distract him by taking him to the snake charmer and he even offered to buy him balloons, garland and a piece of burfi. But he failed him to keep him quiet. The child wanted nothing. He only wished to go to his father and mother.

Message

The story conveys the message that for a child the most important thing is the love of his parents.



Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

- As he came to where they had stopped to wait for him, he could not suppress the desire of his heart, even though he well knew the old, cold stare of refusal in their eyes.
 - In this extract, 'he' refers to the and 'they' refers to
 - State whether the given statement is True or False.
The child could not suppress the desire of taking a toy.
 - The 'cold stare of parents' shows that
 - Select the word that can replace the word 'stare' in the extract.
 - Consent
 - Gaze
 - Desire
 - Acceptance.

Answers

- little child: the parents of the child
 - True
 - the parents of the child will refuse him the things that he wanted to take
 - Gaze
- The child watched them intently and then he made a bold request : "I want to go on the roundabout, please, Father, Mother."
 - In the extract, 'them' refers to
 - State whether the given statement is True or False.
The child made a bold request to the owner of the roundabout.

- (c) What was the bold request of the child?
 (i) To take a toy
 (ii) To take a balloon
 (iii) To take a ride on the roundabout
 (iv) None of the above
- (d) The word that is an antonym of 'timid' in the extract is

Answers

- (a) men, women and children
 (b) False
 (c) (iii) To take a ride on the roundabout
 (d) bold
3. A man in the surging crowd heard his cry and, stooping with great difficulty, lifted him up in his arms.
 (a) A man heard the cry of
 (b) State whether the given statement is True or False. The child was crying because he had been separated from his parents.
 (c) Where was the surging crowd?
 (i) Near the toys' shop
 (ii) Near the entrance to the temple
 (iii) Near the roundabout
 (iv) Near the sweet shop
 (d) The word that means the same as 'bending' in the extract is

Answers

- (a) the lost child
 (b) True
 (c) (ii) Near the entrance to the temple
 (d) stooping
4. Thinking to humour his disconsolate charge by a gift of sweets, the man took him to the counter of the sweet shop.
 (a) In the extract, 'him' refers to
 (b) Why did the man take the child to the counter of the sweet shop?
 (i) To give him a gift of sweets
 (ii) To make him console
 (iii) To divert his attention from his separated parents
 (iv) To make him happy by showing sweets
 (c) The child did not become when he was brought to the counter of the sweet shop.
 (d) The word that means 'extremely sad' in the extract is

Answers

- (a) the lost child
 (b) (iii) To divert his attention from his separated parents
 (c) happy
 (d) disconsolate
5. "I want that garland." But he well knew his parents would refuse to buy him those flowers because they would say that they were cheap. So, without waiting for an answer, he moved on.

- (a) What did the child want?
 (i) A garland of gulmohur (ii) A piece of burfi
 (iii) A red balloon (iv) A toy
- (b) State whether the given statement is True or False. Without waiting for an answer, the child moved on because he had money to buy the garland.
- (c) The child knew well that his parents would refuse to buy him
 (d) The word that is opposite to 'accept' in the extract is

Answers

- (a) (i) A garland of gulmohur
 (b) False
 (c) that garland
 (d) refuse



Short Answer Type Questions

Q 1. What was the mood of child when he passed through the mustard fields?

Ans. When the child passed through the mustards fields he was in a very happy mood. He saw flowers and dragon flies. He saw insects and doves. He was greatly excited. He tried to catch the dove but it flew away.

Q 2. How did the child react when he saw a flower-seller?

Ans. The child saw a flower-seller selling garlands of gulmohur. The child was attracted towards them. He went near the flower basket. He wanted to have one garland. But he knew that his parents will refuse his request. So, he moved on.

Q 3. When does the child realise that he has been lost?

Ans. The child requests his parents to allow him to go on the roundabout. He does not get any reply. He turns to look at his parents. They were not there. Then the little child realises that he has been lost.

Q 4. Who is the most dear for a child?

Ans. The dearest thing in the world for a child is his parents' love. If they are not with him, he feels no interest in sweets, garlands, balloons, music and swinging in roundabout. The parents love and support matter the most to a child.



Long Answer Type Questions

Q 1. What are the things the child sees on his way to the fair? Why does he lag behind?

Ans. The child sees the following things on his way to the fair:

- (i) **The Toys:** The child was attracted by the toys in the shops that lined the way.
- (ii) **Dragon-flies:** The child saw a group of dragon-flies over a flowering mustard-field. The child followed them in the air with his gaze. One of them would still its wings and rest, and the child would try to catch it. But it would go fluttering, flapping, up into the air



(iii) **Little Insects and Worms:** The child was next attracted by the little insects and worms along the footpath that were teeming out from their hiding places to enjoy the sunshine.

(iv) **Young Flowers:** A shower of young flowers fell upon the child as he entered the grove. He began to gather the raining petals in his hands.

These things made the child lag behind his parents.

Q 2. In the fair the child wants many things. What are they? Why does he move on without waiting for an answer?

Ans. The child sees the following things in the fair:

(i) **Sweetmeats:** The child's mouth watered for the *burfi*. He slowly murmured, 'I want that *burfi*.' But he half knew that his parents would not buy him *burfi*. They would say he was greedy. So, without waiting for an answer, he moved on.

(ii) **A Garland of Gulmohur:** The child half murmured, 'I want that garland.' But he well knew that his parents would say that they were cheap. So, without waiting for an answer, he moved on.

(iii) **Balloons:** The child had a desire to possess all the balloons. But he well knew his parents would say he was too old to play with them. So, he walked on farther.

(iv) **Music of Snake Charmer:** The child went towards the snake-charmer. But, knowing his parents had forbidden him to hear such coarse music, he proceeded farther.

(v) **Swing in Roundabout:** The child finally requests that he wants to go on the roundabout. But his parents were nowhere to be found.

Q 3. When does the child realise that he has lost his way? How have his anxiety and insecurity been described?

Ans. As the child reached the roundabout, he requests his parents that he wants to go on it. On getting no reply, he turns around to find that he is all alone and his

parents are not there. He then realises that he has been lost.

A full, deep cry rose from within his dry throat. With a sudden jerk of his body he ran away, crying in real fear, 'Mother, Father'. Tears rolled down from his eyes. The tears were hot and fierce. His flushed face was convulsed with fear. Panic-stricken, he ran to one side first, then to the other in all directions. 'Mother, Father', he wailed.

Having run to and fro in a rage of running for a while, he stood defeated. His cries suppressed into sobs. Thus, he felt anxious and insecure.

Q 4. Why does the lost child lose interest in the things that he had wanted earlier?

Ans. The child loves his parents most. The dearest object in the world for the child is his parents love. If they are not with him, he feels no interest in sweets, garlands, balloons and other things. The lost child in the story like sweets, balloons, music, etc., as long as his parents are with him. But when he loses his father and mother, the child finds no attraction in the balloons and the flowers. The only thing that he wants is his parents.

Thus, the story-writer points out that the things which appear beautiful and charming, lovely and attractive to the child in the presence of his father and mother lose their interest when his parents are not with him.

Q 5. What do you think happens in the end? Does the child find his parents?

Ans. I think that in the end the child will be able to find his parents. The man who has found him appears to be kind and loving. He is trying to keep the child happy. So, it appears that he will make all possible efforts to find his parents. Also from the story it can be interpreted that the parents child, though strict, love their child. So, they will also try to find their child. So, in the end, the child will be definitely united with his parents. ●

