

Mon- English

Q. Read this humorous story by **Ruskin Bond** and answer the questions that follow in your HW Book.

THE PARROT WHO WOULDN'T TALK

'You are no beauty! Can't talk, can't sing, can't dance!'

With these words Aunt Ruby would taunt the unfortunate parakeet, who glared morosely at everyone from his ornamental cage at one end of the long veranda of Granny's bungalow

in north India. In those distant days, almost everyone – Indian or European – kept a pet parrot or parakeet, or 'love-bird' as some of the smaller ones were called. Sometimes these birds became

great talkers, or rather mimics, and would learn to recite entire mantras (religious chants) or admonitions to the children of the house, such as 'Padho, beta, padho!' ('Study child study!') or for the benefit of boys like me, 'Don't be greedy, don't be greedy!' These expressions were, of course, picked by the parrot over a period of time, after many repetitions by some member of the household who had taken on the task of teaching the bird to talk. But our parrot refused to talk.

He'd been bought by Aunt Ruby from a bird-catcher who'd visited all the houses on our road, selling caged birds ranging from colourful budgerigars to chirpy little munnias and even common sparrows that had been dabbed with paint and passed off as some exotic species. Neither Granny nor Grandfather were keen on keeping caged birds as pets, but Aunt Ruby threatened to throw a tantrum if she did not get her way—and Aunt Ruby's tantrums were dreadful to behold! Anyway, she insisted on keeping the parrot and teaching it to talk. But the bird took an instant dislike to my aunt and resisted all her blandishments. 'Kiss, kiss!' Aunt Ruby would coo, putting her face close to the bars of the cage. But the parrot would back away, its beady little eyes getting even smaller with anger at the prospect of being kissed by Aunt Ruby. And on one occasion it lunged forward without warning and knocked my aunt's spectacles off her nose.

After that Aunt Ruby gave up her endearments and became quite hostile towards the poor bird, making faces at it and calling out 'can't talk, can't talk, can't sing, can't dance!' and other nasty comments. It fell upon me, then ten years old, to feed the parrot, and it seemed quite happy to receive green chillies and ripe tomatoes from my hands, these delicacies being supplemented by

slices of mango, for it was then the mango season. This also gave me an opportunity to consume a couple of mangoes while feeding the parrot! One afternoon, while everyone was indoors enjoying a siesta, I gave the parrot its lunch and then deliberately left the cage door open. Seconds later, the bird was winging its way to the freedom of the mango orchard.

At the same time Grandfather came to the veranda and remarked, 'I see your aunt's parrot has escaped!' 'The door was quite loose,' I said with a shrug. 'Well, I don't suppose we'll see it again.'

Aunt Ruby was upset at first, and threatened to buy another bird. We put her off by promising to buy her a bowl of goldfish.

'But goldfish don't talk!' she protested.

'Well, neither did your bird,' said Grandfather. 'So we'll get you a gramophone. You can listen to Clara Cluck all day. They say she sings like a nightingale.'

I thought we'd never see the parrot again, but it probably missed its green chillies, because a few days later I found the bird sitting on the veranda railing, looking expectantly at me with its head cocked to one side. Unselfishly I gave the parrot half of my mango. While the bird was enjoying the mango, Aunt Ruby emerged from her room and, with a cry of surprise, called out, 'Look, it's my parrot come back! He must have missed me!' With a loud squawk, the parrot flew out of her reach and, perching on the nearest rose bush, glared at her and shrieked in my aunt's familiar tones: 'You're no beauty!

Can't talk, can't sing, can't dance!

Aunt Ruby went ruby-red and dashed indoors.

But that wasn't the end of the affair. The parrot became a frequent visitor to the garden and veranda, and whenever it saw Aunt Ruby it would call out, 'You're no beauty, you're no beauty! Can't talk, can't sing, can't dance!' The parrot had learnt to talk after all!

1. Exercise 1

Given below is a summary of the story you have just read but some words are missing. Fill in the blanks.

The Parrot Who Wouldn't Talk is a humorous (a) _____ by the well-known author, Ruskin Bond. It is set in the pre-independence era when most people kept a parrot as a (b) _____. Ruby, the author's aunt, buys a parrot and keeps it in a (c) _____. She tries to teach the parrot to (d) _____. Once, the parrot knocks her (e) _____ off. Aunt Ruby is annoyed and says nasty things to the (f) _____. From then on, the author (who was a young boy at that time) feeds the parrot. One day, he purposely leaves the cage door (g) _____ and the parrot flies away. A few days later, it comes (h) _____. When it sees Aunt Ruby, it says the same nasty things that she had said to it. Aunt Ruby feels embarrassed.

2. Lets do some dictionary work! Find out the meanings of the following words using a dictionary.

- a) Admonition
- b) Endearments
- c) Hostile
- d) Siesta
- e) Shriek

