

2. Birbal the Wise

Birbal is famous for his wit in Indian history. He was appointed a poet and singer in the court of Emperor Akbar. But his wit soon earned him a place of courtier among the Navaratnas of Akbar. Read this story and find out how intelligence and presence of mind helps Birbal solve a tricky situation. Wit is a pivotal part of one's personality. It helps us in building keen perception and mental acuity. This capacity of inventive thought and quick understanding helps one handle awkward and tricky situations in an intelligent way.

Once Surya Singh, the Prince of Manipur, came to Delhi on business. He was travelling alone. It was a secret mission. So he did not bring a single servant with him. On the way, he saw a weak and tired-looking man sitting on the roadside. He stopped his horse and asked him, 'Which way are you going?'

'I have to go to Delhi, sir. I must be there before nightfall, but I will never reach the city for I am tired.'

Surya Singh felt sorry for him. He got off his horse, and asked the man to get on to it.

'You ride my horse and I'll walk. I am also going to Delhi, but I do not know the road very well. You can show me the way.'

The man gladly got on the prince's horse. Surya Singh walked beside him. When they arrived at the city gates, Surya Singh asked the man to get down.

The man looked surprised. 'Why should I get off the horse?' he asked.

The prince explained politely, 'Now that we have reached the city we shall have to go our different ways. I am staying here and do not want to be late.'

'You may go where you like,' was the reply. 'I am not stopping you.'

'But give me my horse first,' said Surya Singh.



Birbal by Mughal Painter

‘Your horse? Do you say it is yours?’

‘Of course, do you doubt it?’

‘You are taking advantage of a kind man,’ was the answer. ‘I showed you the way to the city. Now you say my horse is yours.’

‘*Your* horse?’

‘Yes, *mine*,’ said the man. Before he could ride away, Surya Singh took hold of the reins of the horse.

‘Let’s go to the judge,’ he said.

The two came to Birbal. When Birbal saw them he asked Surya Singh what he could do for him. He heard the story of the horse from the prince and the traveller.

‘Leave the horse with me,’ he said. ‘Tomorrow I will give it to its owner.’

After both the men had left, Birbal told his servant to take the horse, follow the two men at a distance, then free the animal and see which one of the two it followed. Afterwards, he was to bring it back and put it in the stable with other horses of the same size and colour.

The next day, Birbal called Surya Singh and the traveller and took them to the stable. There were about a dozen horses of the same size and colour.

‘Your horse is here,’ said Birbal to the two men.

The traveller could not recognize the horse, but Surya Singh found him at once. The horse knew its master too.

‘This kind man,’ said Birbal to the traveller, ‘offered you a ride on his horse, and you tried to rob him. You shall get fifty strokes of the whip.’ Then he turned to the prince, ‘Surya Singh, I already know your name and address.’

‘You know me, then? I thought it was a secret. I had heard you were a wise judge and I wanted to see you.’

‘I know you are the Prince of Manipur,’ said Birbal. ‘We have a large country to rule and it is our business to know who is coming. The government has arranged for your stay here.’

Surya Singh thanked him. ‘There is one more thing,’ he said. ‘I should like to know how you decided my case.’

‘Willingly,’ replied Birbal. ‘I knew who you were and realized you would not tell a lie. But I needed proof. My servant followed you both with the horse, and set it free. It went after

you, not the traveller. Then again the traveller could not identify the horse in the stable but you had no difficulty.’

The prince was greatly impressed by Birbal’s wisdom, and he knew he had found the right man to solve his problem.

New Words

mission, nightfall, doubt, advantage, rein, stable, recognize, offer, rob, whip, wisdom

Glossary:

| | |
|------------|---|
| mission: | a specific task or duty assigned to a person |
| nightfall: | the approach of darkness; night |
| doubt: | uncertainty about the truth, fact, etc. |
| advantage: | better or more favourable position |
| rein: | a leather strap used to control the horse |
| stable: | a place where horses are kept |
| recognize: | to accept or be aware of |
| offer: | to present |
| rob: | to take something from someone illegally, as by force or threat of violence |
| whip: | a length of leather used to beat a person or urge an animal |
| wisdom: | knowledge, judgement and good sense |

Thinking about the Text**A. Answer these questions:**

1. Who was Surya Singh? Who did he meet on his way?

2. How did Surya Singh help the traveller?

3. Where did the two men go to settle the dispute?

4. How did Birbal settle the dispute?

B. Complete the following sentences:

- a) Surya Singh was kind because he asked the man

- b) The traveller was dishonest because _____

Language Work

A. Horses live in stables and cows live in sheds. In Column A, names of some animals are given. Match them with the places they live in Column B:

Column A

1. horse
2. lion
3. chicken
4. bird
5. cow
6. rabbit
7. spider
8. bee
9. fish
10. owl

Column B

- shed
- web
- water
- tree
- stable
- hive
- coop
- nest
- burrow
- den

B. Phrasal Verbs: A phrasal verb consists of a verb and a particle (preposition, adverb or both).

Its meaning has to be understood as a whole e.g. *look into* means to investigate. Here are some phrasal verbs which have been used in the story. Use them in sentences of your own.

get off get on get down ride away bring back
put in look at arrange for

Grammar Work

A) Past Simple Tense

Look at the following sentence:

1. I met him yesterday.

The above sentence expresses some action which happened at some time in the past.

Thus, Past Simple Tense is used to show an action which happened or took place at some time in the past and the Second Form of the Verb is used with all Subjects.

But in Negative and Interrogative Sentences of Past Simple, 'did' is used to form the sentences.

Thus the Negative sentence of the above will be:

- (a) I did not (didn't) meet him yesterday.

Similarly, the Interrogative sentence of the above will be:

- (b) Did I meet him yesterday?

NOTE: The Second Form of the Verb (met) is changed to the First Form of the Verb (meet) in both the Negative and Interrogative sentences.

This tense is also used to express some past habit, e.g.:

1. She never came here in the daytime.
2. She studied many hours every day.

EXERCISE

Use the correct tense form (Simple Past Tense) in the following sentences:

1. I _____ the zoo last Friday. (visit)
2. He _____ the President last night. (see)
3. She _____ out half an hour ago. (go)
4. The snake _____ the boy. (bite, not)
5. They _____ their fields last week. (plough)
6. _____ they _____ the house last Sunday? (leave)
7. He _____ her last Wednesday. (meet)
8. We _____ the party last week. (enjoy, not)
9. When _____ the rain _____? (stop)

10. We _____ to the movie yesterday. (go)

B) Look at the following sentence used in the text:

- He stopped the horse and asked him, “Which way are you going?”

This sentence is in direct speech or direct narration. The same sentence can be turned into indirect speech in the following way:

- He stopped the horse and asked him which way he was going.

While turning a Wh-question into indirect narration we use the subject before the verb.

Note: Wh-question is a question which starts with a Wh-word e.g. What, Which, Why, Where, When, Who, etc.

Now turn the following sentences into indirect narration:

1. He said to him, “How old are you?”
2. He said to me, “Where do you live?”
3. “When did he arrive?” she asked me.
4. You said to her, “Who told you?”
5. The teacher asked us, “Why are you late?”

Let's Talk

The stories regarding Birbal's wisdom are very popular. Learn any such story and share it with your classmates.

Let's Write

Write a paragraph on your pet animal.

Teacher's Page (Birbal the Wise)

1. Ask the learners to name some wise men about whom they have heard. Let them recollect some incidents of their lives where presence of mind helped them out of an undesirable situation.
2. Let the students know about the judicial system – old and new – and make a comparison and contrast of the two to widen their understanding.
3. Come to the lesson. Talk about the circumstantial evidence in the present story which helped the wise Birbal to reach the correct decision. How does the evidence of the witnesses help judges in deciding complicated cases? Discuss the role of the modern techniques of investigation and the modus operandi of the criminals in modern societies.
4. Discuss the themes like sympathy, pity, treachery, evidence, judiciary, crime, investigation, integrity of man, means of transport, presence of mind and wit, etc. and ask the learners about any more themes of the story – honesty, dishonesty, trust, mistrust and their implications on society.
5. Discuss the change of narration – Direct and Indirect – taking sentences from the lesson. Let the learners construct a dialogue between a lawyer and a witness or judge and the plaintiff/complainant or they can also form a dialogue between a king and his advisor.
6. Discuss phrasal verbs, synonyms and antonyms, etc., and short forms of using words.
7. Ask them to listen to a folk tale from their grandparents at home.
8. Ask the learners to read out the story which should be done at the start of the lesson.

The Shadow

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;
And I see him jump before me when I jump into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow.
Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an India-rubber ball,
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play.
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way;
He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;
I'd think it a shame to stick to nursie as that shadow sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up,
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepyhead,
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.



Robert Louis Stevenson

New Words

shoot up, India-rubber ball, notion, nursie, stick, buttercup, arrant, sleepyhead

Glossary

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| shoot up: | rise or grow quickly |
| India-rubber ball: | a ball that can bounce very high |
| notion: | idea |
| nursie: | nurse |
| stick: | attach |

buttercup: a small wild plant with bright yellow flowers

arrant: bad

sleepyhead: a person who is tired or sleepy

Reading is Fun

1. Who is the speaker of the poem?

2. What are the changes that occur in the poet's shadow?

3. What does the speaker think of his shadow in Stanza 3?

4. What did the speaker find one morning before the sun was up?

5. Why is the shadow funny?

Language Work

1. Match the words in Column A with their opposites in Column B:

Column A

- a. funny
- b. fall
- c. proper
- d. sometimes
- e. foolish
- f. tall
- g. courageous
- h. fast
- i. asleep
- j. close

Column B

- a. awake
- b. short
- c. often
- d. improper
- e. serious
- f. wise
- g. slow
- h. rise
- i. open
- j. cowardly

2. Write down words rhyming with each of the following. One has been done for you.

- | | | | |
|----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Ball | <u>call</u> | <u>tall</u> | <u>fall</u> |
| 2. found | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. shine | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. slow | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. see | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. way | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Let's Talk

Did you see something funny happening in the recent past? Share it with your classmates.

Let's Write

Write a few sentences on your shadow.

Teacher's Page (The Shadow)

1. Recite the poem aloud in the class.
2. Ask children whether they have observed their own shadow at different times of the day and in the evening when there is no bright light. How do they feel? Have they ever got scared of their own shadow? The children can be encouraged to make different masks on the wall with the help of their hands like birds, animal-head, etc. to enjoy the lesson.
3. Ask the children to find at what time of the day is the shadow tallest.
4. Ask the children to shine a torch behind their hand and see its shadow on the wall. Ask them to move the torch a little away from their hand and then again see the shadow.
5. You can also recite a small poem by Louise Bender Scott:

*When the sun shines, I can see
My shadow right in front of me
When I walk, my shadow walks,
When I hop, my shadow hops,
When I jump, my shadow jumps
And when I stop, my shadow stops.*