

## READ FOR PLEASURE

This section in the textbook titled **Read for Pleasure** aims at providing students with stories, poems, biographies, etc. which they will read for information and pleasure. It is hoped that such efforts towards reading for pleasure will encourage students to read similar passages on their own which will contribute towards the development of their reading skills.



## Lord Rama and the Little Squirrel

The fourteen year *Banawas* – exile in the forest – had ended, and Queen Sita had been kidnapped by the powerful *Asura* King Ravana. Lord Rama and his army of *Vanar* – monkeys – had reached the southern tip of *Bharat*, and were building a bridge to Lanka to rescue Queen Sita. The army had camped on the sea shore, and every member of the *Vanar Sena* – the monkey army – was busy transporting large boulders from the mountains and laying them on the ocean floor. They worked day and night, digging out heavy rocks from the mountains, and passing them down by hand to the soldiers who were on the sea shore. Some of the huge rocks had to be cut into shape, so that a strong bridge could be built. The bridge would transport the entire army across the ocean – foot soldiers, horses, chariots, food carts, elephants and all.



In the middle of all that frenzied activity, a tiny brown squirrel ran up and down the mountain and the shore, carrying small pebbles in its mouth and dropping them between the rocks. He managed to carry only one pebble at a time, but that did not stop him. He was as busy as the monkeys, hurrying to help build the bridge with his pebbles.

On one of his trips, the little squirrel came in a big monkey's way. "Hey, you!" shouted the monkey, "Get out of my way or you'll be squashed!" "I'm sorry, friend," the squirrel replied. "I'm just trying to help Lord Rama build the bridge!"

The tiny creature's words made the monkeys burst out in laughter. "Build a bridge of pebbles? Are you really foolish enough to believe this?" The squirrel did not reply, and carried on transporting his pebbles. One of the big monkeys felt offended, and holding the squirrel up by his tail, flung the poor creature into the distance.

In panic, the squirrel screamed out Lord Rama's name, and lo and behold! He fell right into Lord Rama's palm! With utmost gentleness, Lord Rama stroked the squirrel's back, and spoke to his monkey army. "Never make fun of someone because they are not as big or powerful as you. When we work with love, our smallest contribution makes our work successful. You are building the bridge out of big boulders; but have you considered how to plug the spaces between them? It's the squirrel's pebbles that will strengthen the bridge and plug every gap." Hearing this, the *Vanar Sena* bowed their heads in shame. Lord Rama gently laid the squirrel on the ground, and said, "Thank you for your invaluable work, my friend. Together, we will build the bridge that will help us rescue our Queen Sita."





## The Duck and the Kangaroo



Said the Duck to the Kangaroo,  
'Good gracious! how you hop!  
Over the fields and the water too,  
As if you never would stop!  
My life is a bore in this nasty pond,  
And I long to go out in the world beyond!  
I wish I could hop like you!'  
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.

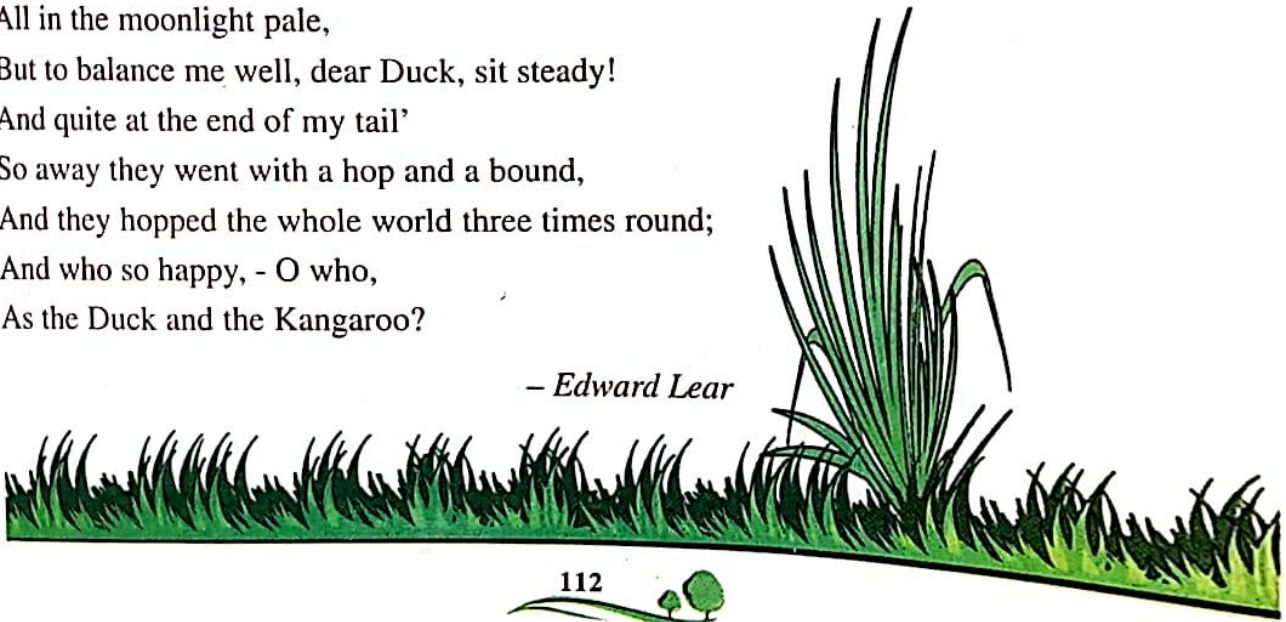
'Please give me a ride on your back!'  
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.  
'I would sit quite still, and say nothing but "Quack,"  
The whole of the long day through!  
And we'd go to the Dee, and the Jelly Bo Lee,  
Over the land, and over the sea;-  
Please take me on a ride! O do!'  
Said the Duck to the Kangaroo.

Said the Kangaroo to the Duck,  
'This requires a little reflection;  
Perhaps on the whole it might bring me luck,  
And there seems but one objection,  
Which is, if you'll let me speak so bold,  
Your feet are unpleasantly wet and cold,  
And would probably give me the roo-  
Matiz!' said the Kangaroo.

Said the Duck, 'As I sat on the rocks,  
I have thought over that completely,  
And I bought four pairs of worsted socks  
Which fit my web-feet neatly.  
And to keep out the cold I've bought a cloak,  
And every day a cigar I'll smoke,  
All to follow my own dear true  
Love of a Kangaroo!'

Said the Kangaroo, 'I'm ready!  
All in the moonlight pale,  
But to balance me well, dear Duck, sit steady!  
And quite at the end of my tail'  
So away they went with a hop and a bound,  
And they hopped the whole world three times round;  
And who so happy, - O who,  
As the Duck and the Kangaroo?

— *Edward Lear*



## Letter To A Pen Pal From Kerela

Na-Ali, Jorhat  
25<sup>th</sup> March 2019

*Dear Raghav,*

I received your letter yesterday. It was so informative! I learnt many things about your state from what you wrote. I was delighted to discover that Kerala, a state tucked away in the southern – most tip of our country, shares so many socio-cultural similarities with Assam, a state in the distant north-east. Do you know that we have similar food habits? The Assamese too take rice as their staple food and non-vegetarian food is quite popular. So, when you come to visit us during your summer vacations, you will feel quite at home regarding the food. Like in Kerela, traditionally we too serve food in plantain leaves. I really enjoy this traditional manner of serving food and would love to serve you in that way when you visit us.

Thank you for sending a photograph of your family. Interestingly, the traditional dress worn by your mother and sister is quite similar to the two-piece dress called ‘mekhela-chador’ worn by the Assamese ladies here. It was also interesting to read about the different dance forms of Kerala that you wrote about. I did not know that the traditional dance forms – Kathakali and Mohiniattam originated in the temple theatres. Our classical dance form, the ‘Sattriya’ dance also originated in the Vaishnavite ‘Satras’ (monasteries) of Assam.

We too celebrate a harvest festival in our state. It is called *Bhogali Bihu*. However, it is celebrated in January unlike your harvest festival, Onam, in Kerela, which is celebrated in August-September for a period of ten days. I did not know that Onam also commemorates the homecoming of King Mahabali. The information about our ancient heritage is most welcome. I guess the difference in the timing of the harvest festivals in our states is due to the diversity of climate in different parts of India.

What I find most interesting about Kerela is ‘Vallam Kali’ – the annual boat race held during Onam. I watched its live telecast last year. How fast the several teams of paddlers in each boat row their boats! I was amazed at their speed!

I am really looking forward to your trip to Assam in May this year. It will be great to meet you in person for the first time! We will exchange notes on our lives and our respective states and get to know each other much better. My parents have already planned a trip around our beautiful state with you. What fun we will have!

I will wind up this letter now. I need to complete my home assignments for tomorrow. Please convey my regards to your parents and best wishes to your sister.

*Yours affectionately,*  
*Rishika.*



## The King of Kalipur

The King of Kalipur was a proud and stern man, feared by all his subjects.

One day while sitting in his palace, surrounded by flattering courtiers and watched by a multitude of people who had come to see him, he was suddenly overcome by a sense of grandeur and loudly declared that he was master of the world and that all men were his servants.

"You are mistaken," said a frail voice. "All men are servants of one another."

A deathly silence followed the remark. The blood froze in the veins of the people assembled there. Then the king exploded in anger.

"Who said that!" he demanded, rising from the royal throne. "Who dares suggest that I am a servant!!"

"I do," said a voice in the crowd, and the people parted to reveal a white-haired old man, leaning heavily on a stout stick.

"Who are you?" asked the king.

"I am Baneswar from Bokila village," said the man. "We have no water in our village. I have come to ask for a well to be dug there."

"So you are a beggar!" roared the king, striding down to where the man stood. "Yet you have the audacity to call me a servant!"

"We all serve one another," said Baneswar, showing no fear, "and I will prove it to you before nightfall."

"Do that," said the monarch. "Force me to wait on you. If you can do that, I will have not one but three wells dug in your village. But if you fail, you'll lose your head!"

"In our village," said the old man, "when we accept a challenge, we touch the person's feet. Let me touch your feet. Hold my stick."

The king took the stick and the old man bent down and touched the monarch's feet.

"Now you may give it back to me," he said, straightening up. The king gave him back his stick.

"Do you want any more proof?" asked Baneswar.

"Proof?" asked the king, bewildered.

"You held my stick when I asked you to and gave it back to me when I asked you for it," said the old man. "As I said, all good men are servants of one another."

The king was so pleased with old Baneswar's wit and fearlessness that he not only had wells dug in his village but also retained him as an adviser.



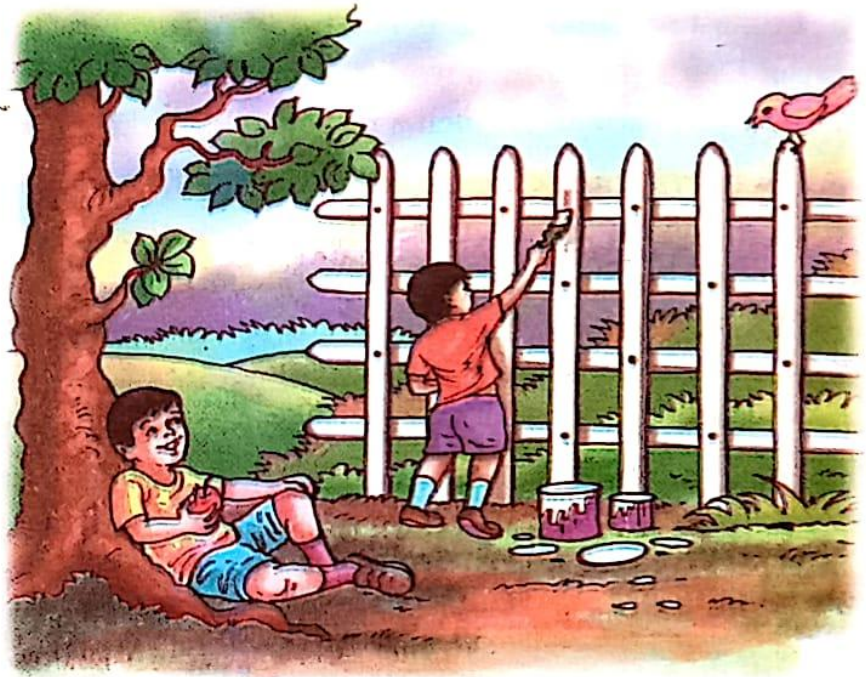


## How Tom Whitewashes A Fence

*Here is a story by Mark Twain. It is about Tom Sawyer, a boy who lived with his aunt. Read this story to find out how clever Tom was.*

This is the story of a naughty boy named Tom Sawyer, who lived with Aunt Polly, loved Tom very much. One day she caught Tom stealing jam. She was very angry with him and said, "Once again you are making mischief." Tom said, "I'm very sorry, aunt, but I didn't mean to steal anything. I promise, I'll try never to do anything like this in future." Next day was Saturday and it was a holiday. Aunt Polly decided to teach Tom a lesson by making him whitewash a long fence on that day.

It was a beautiful Saturday morning of a summer day. Tom jumped out of his bed happily. The sun was shining. Birds were singing, perched on twigs and branches of trees. Flowers were blooming everywhere. The air was so fresh and vibrant. Tom's friends had come out of their homes merrily even before Tom was out of bed. Tom was not aware that his aunt had work for him. He was very sad as he had to whitewash the nine feet high and ninety feet long fence. It was hard task indeed. He was at a loss where to begin. He dipped his brush



in the whitewash and painted three long vertical strokes. But it was nothing. He felt miserable and wanted to run away. He thought that Aunt Polly was rude and didn't love him. But he had no way out as Aunt Polly would not spare him if he didn't do the work. He thought of plan. He took out the things he had in his pocket. He had some marbles,





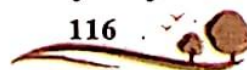
some pieces of strings, and two or three broken toys. But nobody would like to work for him for these things.

Just then Jim came skipping out of the gate with a pail for fetching water. Tom thought Jim's work was more enjoyable. He would meet lots of friends at the place where the tube well was located. "I'm sorry to say, but you are disturbing me skipping to and fro, Jim," Tom said. Tom actually wanted to exchange his work. He tempted Jim with a white marble. But Jim refused to accept Tom's offer, for he too was afraid of Aunt Polly.

Tom took up his brush again and began his work with a heavy heart. Then he saw Ben Rogers, his friend, walking down the street, singing merrily. He was eating an apple. He came to Tom and said, "Hi! Tom, are you working?" Tom pretended not to see him and didn't answer. Ben asked once again, "Hello, Tom. I'm just going for a swim. Won't you join me? Will you spoil this beautiful holiday doing this dull work?" "Oh! I didn't see you. But it is not a work," said Tom and went on painting, "What a surprise! Don't you call it a work?" Ben asked, "Not at all. I like it. It is so interesting. Not many boys are given such a responsible work," Tom answered.

Now everything seemed to be different. Tom seemed deeply absorbed in his work. Ben requested him to let him whitewash a little. But Tom said, "I'm sorry, I refuse. Aunt Polly is very particular about this work. It should be done in the best way." Ben said again, "Let me try. I'll be very careful. I'll do it nicely, and give you my apple." Tom pretended to be unwilling. He said, "I'm sorry to have to say this, but aren't you forcing me to do what you like?" But slowly he gave the brush to Ben and sat down under the shade of a tree. While Ben was whitewashing the fence under the hot sun, Tom relished eating the apple. One after another most of his friends came there and offered to share the work, but Tom was cleverer than his friends. He refused to let his friends take part in whitewashing without taking some gifts. Soon he became rich with dozens of marbles, six firecrackers, a tin soldier, a one-eyed toy kitten, a collar for a dog and many other things.

Tom managed to have a nice day with his friends. The fence had three coats of whitewash and Aunt Polly was very happy with his work. But how Tom managed to complete the whitewashing remained a mystery to her.





## My Great Grandmother

My great grandmother is a grand old dame  
 With snowy white hair, twinkling eyes all aflame  
 With the light of love and the wisdom of age.  
 For her, all her family agree, 'old is gold' is the fit adage.

All our cousins of various degrees  
 Crowd around the yard for oranges and cookies  
 That our aunts bring out at the breaktime of play  
 Under grandma's hawk's eye from her verandah chair.

The neighbouring children peep around the hedge  
 Longing for a share in the sweet, savoury largesse.  
 They are warmly called in by the grand matriarch  
 And lovingly plied with teatime snacks.

Our great grandmother-the grand old lady  
 The head of several generations of our family-  
 We adore, respect and always expect  
 To advise, arbitrate and our worries negate.

She offers the shade of a huge banyan tree  
 With wisdom, nurture, enlightenment and humour.  
 An imposing figure in *riha-mekhela*,  
 In emotional storms she provides the umbrella.

What fun we have in our home of ancestry  
 Where grandma weaves into a silken tapestry  
 The colourful strands of love, sharing and kinship  
 Of several generations of friends and family.





## Sir Ronald Ross

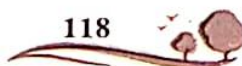
We observe the 28th February as the National Science Day. On this day, more than any other day, we like to recall the life and achievements of eminent scientists who had improved the quality of our lives by their outstanding discoveries and inventions. One such eminent scientist is Sir Ronald Ross whose name is associated with the cure for malaria, the dreaded tropical disease caused by the bite of a certain type of mosquito. The bite of the mosquito releases the malaria germ into the body of the victim which proves to be fatal to the victim. Yet, prior to the works of Ross, people thought that malaria was caused by bad air. The word malaria, literally means bad air. There was no known prevention of the disease and the cause seemed doubtful. It was Sir Ronald Ross who could find out the cause of the disease and suggested ways for its prevention.



Born on the 13th May, 1857, at Almora, Ronald was the eldest of six brothers and three sisters. When he was nine years old, he was sent to England to his uncle and aunt for his schooling. They lived in the Isle of Wight, a small island near the south coast of England. He had a happy childhood, showing a great deal of interest in natural history – the study of plants and animals – and he was particularly interested in tropical animals. In 1869, he went to a boarding school named Springhill, near the town of Southampton. He was happy there, and spent his holidays in his uncle's house.

After his school education, in October, 1874, the young Ross was admitted to the St Bartholomew's Hospital in London to study as a medical student. When he had been in the hospital for two years, he had his first experience with a malaria patient. Ross was deeply interested in his patient and he asked her so many questions and examined her so carefully that she was thoroughly frightened. She began to think that she was suffering from some dreaded disease which the young doctor was unable to cure and she hastily left the hospital. He passed the examination at St Bartholomew's and a year later, he qualified the entrance examination for the Indian Medical Service as hoped by his father. He sailed for India on 22nd September, 1881 and arrived in Bombay, the present-day Mumbai.

He was sent to Madras, the present-day Chennai and was attached to the Station Hospital which was situated just outside Fort St George. After passing his obligatory Hindi examination, he was sent as an army doctor shuttling between Mysore and Bangalore, both places being highly malaria prone in those days. He even visited Vizianagaram and later Quetta and Karachi in present-day Pakistan and also Burma and Moulmein and the Andamans. Altogether, He spent six years in this region, often wondering whether the work he was doing was of any use to the world. Finally, he applied for home leave and left for England for two years, to study two subjects in which he was beginning to feel deeply interested. The first was the study of sanitation and the other was tracing of illness through the study of germs, or bacteria. While he was in England, he also found time to get married, and returned to India in 1890 with his young wife.





During the next four years, he began to develop his interest in malaria and its causes. He spent three years as a Staff Surgeon in Bangalore, where he had much experience of fevers, particularly dysentery and typhoid. In 1891, he went with a friend to the Nilgiri for a fishing trip. That night he slept under a mosquito net though his friend didn't. His friend later developed malaria. This had led Ross to suspect that mosquito bite could be the cause of malaria. Later, in France, Ross was to meet a famous scientist named Sir Patrick Manson, who was greatly interested in malaria and they had many useful discussions together. In fact, it was Manson who first suggested to Ross that mosquitoes might be the carriers of the malaria germs and Ross determined to test this idea when he returned to India. He was now a recognized authority on the subject.

Back in India, his plan was firstly, to discover which type of mosquito carried the malaria parasite. Secondly, he wanted to find out how the parasite developed in the insect and whether a mosquito was always dangerous or whether it was infected only at a certain time. He had many difficulties to face. His malaria research had to be carried on entirely at his own expense and during his spare time when he was not on duty as a regimental doctor. He usually spent about eight hours a day at his microscope working early in the morning, in the heat of the afternoon and late at night. He found that there were two kinds of mosquito which were common in Secunderabad where he worked. One was grey in colour and the other was striped. He used to keep a supply of these mosquitoes in glass bottles and allowed them to feed on the blood of a malaria infected person and dissect them at intervals and examine them under a microscope.

Ross discovered that mosquitoes that bit a malaria patient developed the malaria parasite in their stomach. But even at that stage, he was not sure which type of mosquito actually carried the malaria germ. Then one morning at Secunderabad, he saw a mosquito on the wall with its tail sticking outwards. With great care he caught it in a glass. Meanwhile, he obtained the larvae of this type of mosquito and started his experiments on the new mosquitoes that were hatched from these larvae. From his experiments, he could prove that the dappled mosquitoes named the anopheles, was the type that carried the deadly germ of malaria. He was also certain that the malaria infection in a person was caused, neither by bad air or dirty water but by the mosquito's bite. He had achieved a most wonderful discovery which was of the greatest use and help to mankind.

Next, Ross aimed to develop a scheme for the killing and prevention of mosquitoes. He proposed that the first step in this process would be to destroy the larvae which were laid in water and developed there. One possible solution was to rear fish in ponds; the fish would eat up the larvae. Secondly, the frequent cleaning of tanks and water pots would help in destroying the larvae before they had time to develop into mosquitoes. Thirdly, the use of mosquito-net was another possible solution. Fourthly, there was the need to disinfect wells.

Sir Ronald Ross left India for good in the year 1899. India and other tropical countries, too owe him a great deal of gratitude, and will never forget him. The National Malaria Eradication Programme is indeed the result of the researches and the recommendations of Ross towards the war against malaria. Proper implementation of the recommendation will certainly help to free the world from the fatal anopheles mosquito.



## Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

— Robert Frost

