

4. The Man Who Swallowed a Snake

There are many sagacious people in and around us like doctors, teachers, engineers and other professionals who work for the betterment of the people. They use their wisdom to help us come out of adverse situation. In this story, a wise man treated the victim without frightening him about the poisonous snake in his stomach through his wisdom. Read the story and find out how the wise man acted in a difficult situation without losing his presence of mind.

One day a wise man was riding along a road when he came across a man who was fast asleep. As he passed by, he saw a snake sliding into the sleeping man's mouth.

The wise man dismounted quickly and tried to scare the snake away, but to no avail. Taking up his club, he struck the sleeping man with several powerful blows. Awakened abruptly from his sleep, the man fled for safety to a nearby tree. It was an apple tree, and the ground around it was covered with rotten fruit. 'Eat them!' ordered the wise man, stuffing the mouth of the terrified man with apples until no more would go in.

'Why are you doing this to me?' asked the man. 'What have I done to offend you? If you have a quarrel with me, settle it with your sword! Oh, cursed was the hour that you first saw me, and blessed is the man who never sets eyes on you! Look! My mouth is pouring with blood and words! O God, I beg Thee, repay him in like manner!' Yet, however much the man cursed, the wise man continued to shower him with blows.

'Keep running!' shouted the wise man, and the man kept running from his pursuer, picking himself up off the ground whenever he fell flat on his face. Stuffed with apples, his body covered in cuts and bruises, he was chased backwards and forwards by the wise man until nightfall when he was seized by a violent bout of vomiting. Everything came up, including the snake.

When the man saw the ugly black reptile, he forgot all about the beating he had received and fell on his knees. 'Truly,' he said, 'you are an angel for me! Oh, blessed is the hour that you first saw me, for I was dead and you have given me new life. Had I known, how could I have



said such foolish things? I would have praised you, had you given me the slightest hint as to what you were really doing. Instead, you kept quiet, and carried on beating me in silence.’

‘Had I told you about the snake,’ replied the wise man, ‘you might have died of fright. You would have been so terrified that you would not have been able to eat, nor to vomit. I heard you abuse me but carried on with what I had to do, repeating to myself, “O Lord, make it easy!”’

(Adapted from Rumi)

New Words

slide, dismount, club, blow, abruptly, fled, rotten, stuff, offend, pursuer, bruise, nightfall, fright

Glossary

slide:	move smoothly
dismount:	get off a horse, bicycle or motorcycle
club:	a heavy stick
blow:	a hard hit with a heavy object
abruptly:	suddenly
fled:	ran away
rotten:	decayed; something that can no longer be used
stuff (v):	completely fill with something
offend:	make someone upset or angry
pursuer:	someone who chases
bruise:	a dark area on the skin where one has been hurt
nightfall:	the time in the evening when it is dark
fright:	shock and fear

Thinking about the Text

1) What did the wise man see while riding?

2) What did the wise man do when he could not scare the snake away?

3) Why did the wise man chase the man?

4) Why did the man fall on the wise man's feet?

5) Do you think that the wise man proved to be intelligent enough to save the man's life?

Language Work

A) Find from the text words/phrases which mean the following:

- a) To make a person or an animal frightened
- b) To flow quickly and in large amounts
- c) Completely filled
- d) A short period of time
- e) To empty the contents of the stomach through the mouth

B) Find the opposites of the following words from the text:

foolish	awake	mount	slowly	powerless	danger
blessed	virtue	stop	backward	old	remember
difficult	beautiful	white	alive		

Grammar Work

(A) Look at the following sentence from the text:

The wise man dismounted quickly and tried to scare the snake away, but to no avail.

The underlined words in the above sentence are verbs. These verbs are regular verbs. A regular verb is a verb which has –ed or –d in past and past participle forms. e.g.

talk	talked	talked
dance	danced	danced
say	said	said

Whereas other verbs which do not need –ed or ‘d for forming past tense and past participle are called irregular verbs e.g.

cut	cut	cut
go	went	gone
tell	told	told
feed	fed	fed

Some verbs are both regular and irregular, e.g.,

learn	learnt	learnt	learned	learned
spoil	spoiled	spoiled	spoilt	spoilt
light	lit	lit	lighted	lighted

Now complete the table given below. Consult a dictionary if necessary.

Present	Past	Past participle
Be	was/were	been
Beat		
	bet	
		bought
Lean		
	spilled or spilt	
Choose		
		dug
Find		
		forgiven
	laid	
See		
Sink		

	sprang	
	stung	
		taken

(B) Pick out five action words from the story and write them in the spaces below:

(C) Look at the following Sentences.

Direct: He said to me, "Are you going to Jammu tomorrow?"

Indirect: He asked me whether / if I was going to Jammu the next day.

Direct: I said to the child, "What are you doing?"

Indirect: I asked the child what he was doing.

The above sentences in direct speech are interrogative sentences (Questions)

In changing an interrogative sentence from direct into indirect speech, the following changes are made:

- The reporting verb is changed to ask, enquire, demand, want to know, etc.
- If or whether is used after the reporting verb when the question begins with a helping verb.
- If the question begins with a question word (who, what, which, why, how, etc.) no conjunction is used to connect the reporting speech with the principal clause.
- The question form is changed into the assertive form and the question mark is removed.

Now change the following sentences from direct into indirect speech:

- My friend said to me, "Will you help me in this matter?"
- He said to me, "What can I do for you?"
- I said to her, "Why is the child weeping?"
- The wolf said to the lamb, "Why are you making the water muddy?"
- She said to me, "How often do you take tea?"
- I said to her, "Is it snowing?"
- I said to Mubashir, "Will you lend me your book?"
- The teacher said to the student, "Have you solved the question?"
- They said to me, "Did you watch TV last night?"
- I said to her, "Do you really belong to Kashmir?"

Now Change the following into direct speech:

1. The teacher asked the newcomer what his name was.
2. My friend asked me if I was feeling well.
3. I asked her when she would go to Mumbai.
4. He asked me if he could use my computer.
5. I enquired of him what the house had cost him.
6. The teacher asked the students if they had revised the lesson.
7. He asked his brother if he wanted to become a doctor.
8. I asked my friend if he would accompany me to the market.

Let's Talk

Did you enjoy reading the story? Share your views with your classmates.

Let's Write

The wise man saved a life with his wisdom. Recall any such story and write it briefly in your own words.

Teacher's Page (The Man Who Swallowed a Snake)

1. Ask the learners about any Sufi's or wise man's miracle they remember or know of.
2. Tell them about sagacious people – doctors, teachers, saints and other professionals – who work for the betterment of the people.
3. Tell the children how the wise man treated the victim without frightening him about the poisonous snake in his stomach. Let the children work in pairs/ groups and think of some adverse situation/s they or their friend may get in and the way to come out of such situation/s to test their presence of mind.
4. Recapitulate the rules about the change of narration they studied in the previous lesson.

You Are Old, Father William

"You are old, Father William," the young man said,

"And your hair has become very white;

And yet you incessantly stand on your head –

Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

"In my youth," Father William replied to his son,

"I feared it might injure the brain;

But, now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,

Why, I do it again and again."

"You are old," said the youth, "as I mentioned before,

And have grown most uncommonly fat;

Yet you turned a back-somersault in at the door –

Pray, what is the reason of that?"



Illustration by John Tenniel

"In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his grey locks,

"I kept all my limbs very supple

By the use of this ointment – one shilling the box –

Allow me to sell you a couple?"

"You are old," said the youth, "and your jaws are too weak
For anything tougher than suet;

Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak –
Pray, how did you manage to do it?"



John Tenniel

"In my youth," said his father, "I took to the law,
And argued each case with my wife;
And the muscular strength, which it gave to my jaw,
Has lasted the rest of my life."

"You are old," said the youth, "one would hardly suppose
That your eye was steady as ever;
Yet, you balanced an eel on the end of your nose –
What made you so awfully clever?"

"I have answered three questions, and that is enough,"
Said his father. "Don't give yourself airs!
Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
Be off, or I'll kick you downstairs!"

(From *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll)

New Words

incessantly, sage, locks, supple, suet, to give oneself airs, such stuff

Glossary

incessantly:	without interruption; constantly
Why I do it:	“Why” is not a question word here. It is an expression like “well” or “now then”
sage:	a wise person; the word is used humourously about the old man, i.e., Father William
lock:	hair
supple:	flexible; easy to bend
suet:	a kind of fat which old men with weak jaws can eat without much difficulty
to give oneself airs:	to think high of oneself; to be too proud
such stuff:	matter of this kind, i.e., such nonsense

Reading Is Fun

1. What did the young man say to Father William?

2. What was Father William’s reply?

3. What was the funny thing Father William did in his old age?

4. How did Father William keep his limbs flexible in his youth?

5. What advice did the young man give to Father William?

6. The poem is full of humorous expressions like – ‘And yet you incessantly stand on your head.’ Write down the other humorous expressions/lines from the poem.

Language Work

1. ‘Downstairs’ is a compound word used in the last line of the poem which is made up of ‘down’ + ‘stairs’ = ‘downstairs’. Now consult a dictionary and find at least ten more words which end or start with ‘stair’ or ‘stairs’. Before consulting the dictionary, you may do this exercise in the class with your friends.
2. In the first four lines of the poem, the last four words, i.e., ‘said’ and ‘head’ and ‘white’ and ‘right’ rhyme with each other alternately (that is they end in similar sounds). Now find the other rhyming words used in the poem.

Let’s Talk

In the poem, we find that Father William’s son seemed to be inquisitive and caring. Do you think we should also be inquisitive and caring towards our elders in our families? Discuss this in your class.

Let’s Write

Write a short paragraph on Father William.

Teacher's Page (You Are Old, Father William)

1. Remind the children about the chapter they studied in Class IV, i.e., a story from *Alice in Wonderland*.
2. Give a brief idea to children about the conversation between Father William and the young man.
3. Focus on the rhyme scheme of the poem. Ask the children to coin some more rhyming words.
4. The teacher would start the poem by asking children if they have any old person/s in their families.
5. Ask them about their behaviour. Let them speak out their heart, whether they enjoy their company or get irritated.
6. The line "Father William, You are old, said the youth" is repeated again and again. The line is a "refrain" or a "burden". The teacher may cite this poetic device from a few more poems.
7. Ask the children if they agree whether the young man's advice to Father William is worth considering.
8. Ask the children if they think that Father William is eccentric or energetic.
9. Let the children discuss the difference between youth and old age.