



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 development of their reading skills.

The Wooden Horse

Here is the story about how the Greeks defeated the Trojans in a ten year long war by tricking them with a wooden horse. The story is from Homer's immortal epic named The Iliad.

For ten long years the Greeks besieged the city of Troy without any success. The city was surrounded by tall walls and the gates were very strong. The Greeks found it difficult either to scale the walls or to break through the gates. Defeating Troy seemed to be an impossible task for them.

Then one morning, the citizens of Troy woke up to discover that the Greek ships were sailing away. "Could they be tired of the war?" one citizen said. It was a relief for the Trojans to see the Greek fleet of ships sailing away.

Suddenly one of the Trojans noticed something outside the city gate. It was a huge wooden horse mounted on a platform with wheels. The person, who was left behind by the Greeks, told them that it was an offering to the goddess Athena and it would make Troy unconquerable.

The Trojan soldiers examined the wooden horse. They were delighted.

Then the commander of the Trojan forces met the prince and said, "I suggest we drag the horse in."

The Trojans were happy that at last the war had come to an end. They brought the horse to the city and held a grand feast to celebrate their victory.

The feasting being over, the Trojans went to sleep. The whole of Troy lay in deep, peaceful sleep. Slowly a trap-door in the wooden horse slid open. A group of Greek soldiers hiding inside the belly of the wooden horse came out one by one.

They tip-toed to the city gates and opened them. The Greeks, who had only pretended to sail away, returned under cover of darkness. Once the gates were unlocked, the Greek soldiers swept in. They killed the Trojans in large numbers and set the city on fire. Troy was destroyed.

Two Drops of Pulse Polio

It was a market day at Hajadisa, a small village in the district of North Cachar Hills of Assam. Villagers belonging to numerous tribes of the district had assembled in the market place, and they were busy in bargaining, buying and chatting with friends and acquaintances.

The market place was full of buyers and sellers right from the early morning. At 11 a.m., a mobile medical van belonging to the State Dispensary of Maibang stopped near the market place. Two doctors, three nurses and two attendants were sitting in the van. It was quite a big van, which resembled a bus. "Attention please, friends," cried a voice from the van. "We are here to administer polio drops to the children aged five years or below. Hope you have heard of the pulse polio immunization programme. Two drops of pulse polio will save your child from a deadly disease. Please bring your children to us, we will administer the dose free."

Sunil Nunisa and his wife Mala had come to the market with their three year old baby. The cute baby was sleeping on its mother's back. Sunil was a farmer and Mala was a teacher of a primary school in a small village near Hajadisa. Sunil did not like modern medical treatment. He strongly believed that modern medicine was harmful. He always preferred a quack to a doctor. Mala, on the other hand, was in favour of modern medical health care.

"Hey, have you listened to the announcement?" Mala said to Sunil. "Come, let's go to the doctors who have come from Maibang," she said eagerly. "Going to the doctors? What for?" shouted Sunil. Mala looked at her husband and said quietly, "Our baby needs polio drops. You may not like modern medicine, but our daughter needs it. Polio is dangerous, you know."

"Mala, I'm afraid I can't agree with you. Two drops will prevent a disease! How ridiculous!" Sunil said gravely. His remark was full of disbelief and contempt.

"Sorry, I can't agree with you on this point," Mala replied.

"But I do believe in our age-old village medicine. Modern medicines have many side effects," Sunil said emphatically.

Mala knew that her husband did not like doctors and medicines.

“Well, I agree with you partly,” Mala said to her husband. “But Polio drops have no side effects.”

“Well, Mala, there’s no point in quarrelling with you in the market place. Come, let’s go to the doctors and find out how the drops are administered.”

“That’s a very good idea!” Mala said happily. She was very pleased with her husband.

A crowd had already gathered near the mobile medical van. Mala and Sunil met one of their neighbours. “Hello, Dina, have you brought your child for the polio drops?” Mala asked her neighbour. “O yes, I knew that the doctors would come with polio drops,” Dina replied.

“Look,” Mala said to Sunil, “Why can’t our child get polio drops when all these children are getting it?”

Sunil was not ready to accept Mala’s argument, but he did not want to make her angry and said, “Well, I do accept your point to some extent, but I can’t do anything blindly.”

“Who asks you to do anything blindly?” Mala said to Sunil. “Don’t you think that we should think for the safety of our little baby? Don’t you think polio is dangerous?”

“Well, Mala, what you say is quite right, but we should be careful. Many children suffer due to wrong medical treatment, you know,” Sunil remarked forcefully.

“I do accept your remarks to a point, but I’m afraid you are still biased. We should not deprive our baby of the medical facility that has been provided. These doctors have come all the way from Maibang to save our children. Come, let’s ask them to administer pulse polio drops to our little baby.”

Sunil looked around. The doctors were busy in administering the polio drops and there was a heavy rush towards the medical van. Sunil looked at his wife who was already in the queue. “OK! I’m joining you in the queue.” Saying so, he followed her slowly.

The Second Voyage of Sindbad

This is the adventure story of a sailor named Sindbad, who lived in Baghdad during the rule of Caliph Harunal Rashid. Sindbad made seven voyages and every time he was just lucky to come back alive. This story relates to his second voyage as narrated by Sindbad himself.



After my first voyage, I was enjoying a life of peace and luxury. One day it occurred to me that I could as well travel around the world and make money by trading. Soon after, I bought goods and boarded a ship for my voyage. I thought it would be great fun to visit some distant lands.

One day we arrived on a beautiful island. It was covered in lush green vegetation. There were streams of clear water, trees bearing delicious fruit and sweet-smelling flowers of many colours. I walked up to a stream and sat under the shade of a fragrant tree. I ate some fruit, drank some water and soon fell asleep.

When I woke up the ship had already sailed away, leaving me behind all alone in the island. I ran to the shore. I was mad with grief. Desperately, I climbed up a tree and looked around. A little further away, I could see a white dome-like object beside a rock. I wondered what it could be. I went closer and discovered that it was a large

egg. It was the egg of a huge bird. At the next moment I saw a bird gliding down. The bird sat on the egg covering it with her wings and dozed off. It was the bird called roc, about which I had heard before. I moved forward quietly. I tied myself to one of its legs hoping it would take me away to a safer place. Early next morning the roc spread her wings and flew into the blue sky carrying me away. The bird landed in a deep valley that was full of diamonds and precious stones. The valley was full of huge serpents that were longer than palm trees. The roc picked up a serpent in its beak and flew away just a moment after I had untied myself from her leg.

I hid myself in a cave for fear of the deadly looking serpents. I was sure that I would never be able to get out of the valley of diamonds. Coming out of my cave, I suddenly noticed a big chunk of meat fall just near me. Someone was throwing the meat from the top of the mountain. The diamonds and precious stones stuck to the meat. Presently a huge eagle swooped down, clutched the meat in its talon and flew up to the mountain top.

I understood that diamond merchants used this strange device to collect diamonds. They threw pieces of meat down into the valley. The diamonds and precious stones got stuck to the meat which the eagles carried away to the mountains. The merchants collected the diamonds from the mountain. Just then an idea came into my mind: why not I tie myself to a chunk of meat?

I tied myself to a chunk of meat. The next moment I found myself being carried away swiftly along with the chunk of meat by an eagle to the top of the mountain. There I hurriedly untied myself from the chunk and stood up. The merchant whom I met there, was astonished to see me. "Who are you?" he asked. "How did you happen to come here?"

I told my story. He listened to me with wonder and said, "It's very interesting. I suggest you stay as my guest in my house. How about joining me in my business? It would be wonderful to have you for a business partner."

I had no interest in being his partner. Nevertheless, I stayed as his guest for several days. Then I set off for Baghdad and my second voyage came to an end.

Albert Schweitzer

Albert Schweitzer was a German doctor who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952. He was born into a family which was known for their devotion to religion, education and music. His grandfathers played the organ and Schweitzer himself was a great organist. His musical career started with his early piano and organ lessons. He was a great performer too.

Albert Schweitzer was chiefly interested in studies of religion and music. One morning as he looked outside his window at the beautiful summer day, he had a strange feeling. He felt he had no right to be happy when there were so many unhappy people in the world. That day he decided that he would spend his life helping the poor and the needy.

One day Schweitzer read an article on the tribal people of the Congo region in Central Africa. These people were very ill because they did not have enough food to eat, and there was no doctor for hundreds of miles around. That day Schweitzer decided to become a doctor and work for those suffering Africans. He then went to study medicine at the university for five years. After becoming a doctor, he married Helene Bresslau. In 1913, the Schweitzer and his wife took a ship to Africa.

In spite of very hot weather, mosquitoes and other insects Schweitzer with his wife stayed in a village called Lambarene and served the poor Africans all their lives. They lived among the ill and the suffering tribals without complaining about the heat, the discomfort, and the strange food or customs of the Africans. They worked with kindness, love and patience, without expecting anything in return.

The moment Schweitzer and his wife reached Lambarene, they found a crowd of people, who were very ill, waiting for them. Most of these people had travelled for hundreds of miles, hoping that the doctor would do some magic to cure them. But there was a problem. The tribals did not understand German, nor did the doctor and his wife know the African languages spoken by these people.

Luckily, among the tribals there was a man named Joseph who knew French, and could work. Joseph could speak eight languages, and even though he could not read or write French, he never made a mistake in helping Dr. Schweitzer give medicines to the patients.

Doctor Schweitzer did not know any magic but throughout the Congo basin in Central Africa, Schweitzer came to be known as 'Oganda'- the doctor who could do magic- because he cured so many of the sick people. In 1914 the First World War broke out in Europe, and the French government put Schweitzer and his wife under house arrest because they were German.

Well, after four years, the Schweitzers were allowed to travel back to their native village, Gunsbach. Instead of being angry, the doctor waited patiently for six years, and in 1942 he went back to Africa. This time his wife stayed back, but another doctor went with him. But when they reached Lambarene, Schweitzer found that his hospital and all the other buildings had turned into a wild place, being covered by dense African jungle.

Once again Schweitzer lost no time, and began his work slowly clearing out the forest. Every morning he would examine patients, and in the afternoons he would rebuild the hospital buildings.

By 1947 Lambarene had become a large hospital. There were 350 beds and a team of trained doctors and nurses. Schweitzer led them all, but he was especially interested in helping patients suffering from leprosy. At that time leprosy was a feared disease, and lepers were treated badly by other people. Instead of ignoring them, Schweitzer made a special hospital for such patients and served them himself.

Although Schweitzer was busy with his patience in his hospital for the people of Africa he continued his music. In fact, Dr. Schweitzer was famous all over the world as a great organ player. His books on music and religion are known well all over the world.

For his noble spirit, his simple life, and his never-ending eagerness to help the poor and the needy, Dr. Schweitzer won the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1952. You see, he could have lived a happy and comfortable life in Germany, but he chose to work for the ill and the suffering Africans, even though he knew that it would be a hard life.



The Village Child

My home is a house
Near a wood
I'd live in a street
If I could!
I do wish someone
Lived near.

There's no one to play with
At all.

The trees are so high
And so tall:
And I should be lonely
For hours
Were it not for the birds
And the flowers.

The City Child

I live in a city
In a street;
It is crowded with traffic
And feet;
There are buses and motors
And trams.
I wish there were meadows
And lambs.
The houses all wait
In a row
There is smoke everywhere
That I go.
I don't like the noises
I hear
I wish there were woods
very near.

The Three Runners

In the days when white people ruled South Africa and apartheid was the law of the land, two middle-aged blacks met in a section of Johannesburg where only Whites were allowed. One of them had a permit to work in the area, the other did not. This meant he could be put behind bars for trespassing into an exclusive zone.

Suddenly they saw a policeman coming towards them, and froze. "Run!" whispered the man with the permit to his friend. "I'll follow."

They started running and the policeman shouting "Stop, stop," began chasing them. Finally, he caught the second man.

"Did you think you could outrun me!" he snarled. "Show me your permit!"

The man, playing for time, began fumbling in his pocket and finally produced his permit.

The policeman was taken aback. He realized that he had been tricked. The man without the permit was now too far away to be caught.

"When you had a permit why did you run!" he bawled.

"Doctor's orders," said the man. "He has asked me to run a mile every evening."

"Oh, yes?" sneered the policeman. "Then why was your friend running?"

"His doctor too has ordered him to run," said the man.

The policeman became red with anger.

"You think you're very smart, don't you?" he snarled. "But tell me, if you were only running for your health why didn't you stop when you saw me running after you? And don't tell me you didn't see me chasing you... I know you did!"

"Of course I knew you were running after me!" said the man.

"Then why didn't you stop?" asked the policeman, triumphantly.

"It was stupid of me," said the man, "but I thought you too had been ordered to run by your doctor."

The Spider and the Fly

"Will you walk into my parlour?"

said the spider to the fly;

" 'Tis the prettiest little parlour
that ever you did spy.

The way into my parlour

is up a winding stair,

And I have many curious things
to show when you are there."

"Oh no, no," said the little fly;

"To ask me is in vain.

For who goes up your winding stair

Can ne'er come down again."



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