

SPLENDOUR

English Textbook for Class IX (First Language)

The Government of West Bengal has borne the cost of publication of the book for free distribution only to the Students of Government, Government Sponsored and Government aided Schools.



West Bengal Board of Secondary Education
77 / 2, Park Street, Kolkata - 700016

According to New Syllabus

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THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens : JUSTICE, social, economic and political; LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; EQUALITY of status and of opportunity and to promote among them all – FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation; IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

ভারতের সংবিধান

প্রস্তাবনা

আমরা, ভারতের জনগণ, ভারতকে একটি সার্বভৌম সমাজতান্ত্রিক ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ গণতান্ত্রিক সাধারণতন্ত্র রূপে গড়ে তুলতে সত্যনিষ্ঠার সঙ্গে শপথ গ্রহণ করছি এবং তার সকল নাগরিক যাতে : সামাজিক, অর্থনৈতিক ও রাজনৈতিক ন্যায়বিচার; চিন্তা, মতপ্রকাশ, বিশ্বাস, ধর্ম এবং উপাসনার স্বাধীনতা; সামাজিক প্রতিষ্ঠা অর্জন ও সুযোগের সমতা প্রতিষ্ঠা করতে পারে এবং তাদের সকলের মধ্যে ব্যক্তি-সম্মত ও জাতীয় ঐক্য এবং সংহতি সুনিশ্চিত করে সৌভ্রাতৃত্ব গড়ে তুলতে; আমাদের গণপরিষদে, আজ, ১৯৪৯ সালের ২৬ নভেম্বর, এতদ্বারা এই সংবিধান গ্রহণ করছি, বিধিবদ্ধ করছি এবং নিজেদের অর্পণ করছি।

PREFACE

Secondary Education is meant for the students who have entered the arena of education from the Upper-Primary level. At this stage the utmost need is to help the young buds to flower, to extend their knowledge and to explore their aptitudes and potentials towards different streams of learning for their further education. Keeping this concept in mind the new series of textbooks for English (First Language) for Secondary level is named 'SPLENDOUR'. This series of textbooks is based on the new curriculum and syllabus framed and recommended by the 'Expert Committee' comprising of eminent academicians.

English as First Language is expected to foster an aesthetic and cultural sensitivity in the learners. The teaching-learning process of English as First Language seeks to nourish literary sensibility through a systematic and progressive exposure through different literary genres. Apart from Cognitively Advanced Language Proficiency (CALP) in the basic use of the language, the book is meant to stimulate critical and creative thinking of the students. It is hoped that the new series of textbooks would effectively serve to hone the linguistic competency of the learners by exploring diverse paradigms of literature.

In materialising this project Hon'ble Education Minister Dr. Partha Chatterjee, Govt of West Bengal, the School Education Department, Directorate of School Education, Government of West Bengal – all have extended their valued help and their role has been indisputably momentous in all respect.

A group of eminent educationists, teachers and subject experts worked hard to develop the textbook.

All suggestions to improve the series are welcome.

December, 2014
77/2, Park Street,
Kolkata - 700 016



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West Bengal Board
of
Secondary Education

Textbook Development Committee
under
Expert Committee

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Cover and Illustrations : Debabrata Ghosh

FOREWORD

The Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal Smt. Mamata Banerjee constituted an 'Expert Committee' to review the entire aspects of school level curriculum, syllabus and textbooks in 2011. The new curriculum, syllabus, and textbooks are developed according to the recommendations of the Committee. The new textbooks for English (First Language) for the Secondary level fall under a newly named series, 'Splendour'.

We are sure this textbook shall convey a splendid message to the students. The textbook contains works of fine writers of different time-period and from different corners of the world. We have consciously tried to enrich the students with various shades of exposure and experience through the texts. We believe that the students of English (First Language) should savour the delicacy of the best writings of English language, so that their taste of literature can grow to the finest extent.

We extend our heartiest thanks to Mr. Debabrata Ghosh whose illustrations have enhanced the aesthetic appeal of the texts.

We thank the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education and School Education Department, Government of West Bengal for their active support. The West Bengal Board of Secondary Education has obliged us by giving their approval for this textbook. A chosen group of educationists, teachers and subject experts developed this book in a very short period of time. If the book can help learners to apply the language in real-life situations, we will consider our initiative successful.

The Hon'ble Education Minister Dr. Partha Chatterjee has enriched us with his views and comments, We express our gratitude to him.

We invite all people who love education to convey their views for the improvement of the book.

Thank You.

December, 2014
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Aweek Majumder
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Lesson 1

The Coral Island

—R. M. Ballantyne

It was a bright, beautiful, warm day when our ship spread her canvas to the breeze, and sailed for the regions of the south. Oh, how my heart bounded with delight as I listened to the merry chorus of the sailors, while they hauled at the ropes and got in the anchor! The captain shouted—the men ran to obey—the noble ship bent over to the breeze, and the shore gradually faded from my view. I stood looking on with a kind of feeling that the whole was a delightful dream.

There were a number of boys in the ship, but two of them were my special favourites. Jack Martin was a tall, strapping, broad-shouldered youth of eighteen, with a handsome, good-humoured, firm face. My other companion was Peterkin Gay. He was little, quick, funny, decidedly mischievous, and about fourteen years old. But Peterkin's mischief was almost always harmless, else he could not have been so much beloved as he was.

"Hello! Youngster," cried Jack Martin, giving me a slap on the shoulder, the day I joined the ship, "come below and I'll show you your berth. You and I are to be mess-mates, and I think we shall be good friends, for I like the look o' you."

Jack was right. He and I and Peterkin afterwards became the best and **staunchest** friends that ever tossed together on the stormy waves.

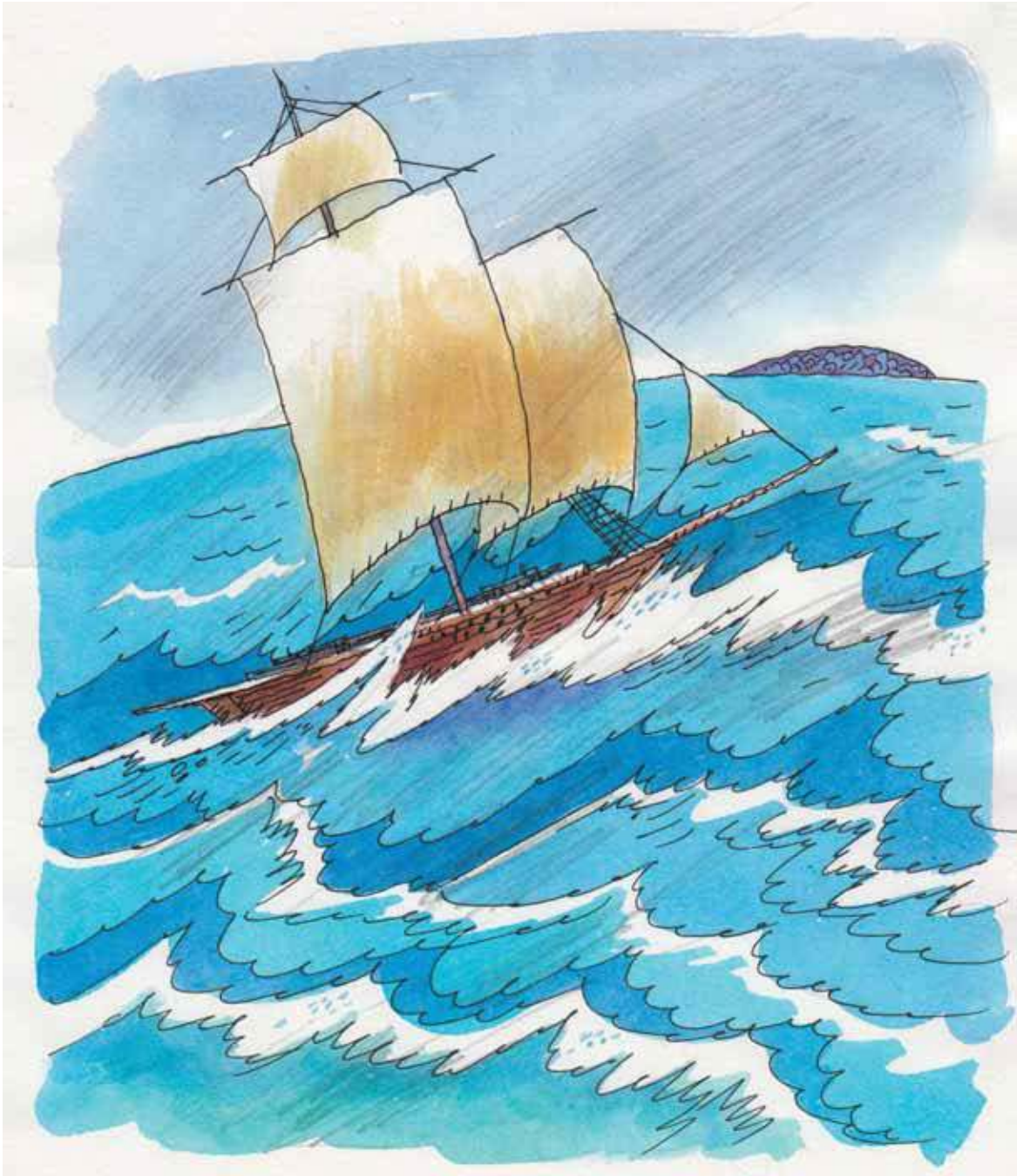


I shall say little about the first part of our voyage. We had the usual amount of rough weather and calm. When we approached Cape Horn, at the southern extremity of America, the weather became very cold and stormy, and the sailors began to tell stories about the furious gales and the dangers of that terrible cape. Nevertheless, we passed the dreaded cape without much rough weather, and, in the course of a few weeks afterwards, were sailing gently, before a warm tropical breeze, over the Pacific Ocean. At last we came among the Coral Islands of the Pacific, and I shall never forget the delight with which I gazed at the pure, white, dazzling shores, and the **verdant** palm-trees, which looked bright and beautiful in the sunshine.

One night, soon after we entered the tropics, an awful storm burst upon our ship. The first squall of wind carried away two of our masts; and left only the **foremast** standing. For five days the tempest raged in all its fury. The captain said that he had no idea where we were, as we had been blown far out of our course; and we feared much that we might get among the dangerous coral reefs which are so numerous in the Pacific. At day-break on the sixth morning of the gale we saw land ahead. It was an island encircled by a reef of coral on which the waves broke in fury. There was calm water within this reef, but we could only see one narrow opening into it. For this opening we steered, but, ere we reached it, a tremendous wave broke on our stern, tore the **rudder** completely off, and left us at the mercy of the winds and waves. "It's all over with us now, lads," said the captain to the men; "get the boat ready to launch; we shall be on the rocks in less than half an hour."

The men obeyed in gloomy silence, for they felt that there was little hope of so small a boat living in such a sea.

"Come boys," said Jack Martin, in a grave tone, to me and Peterkin, as we stood on the quarterdeck awaiting our fate— "I see through the telescope that the ship will strike at the tail of the reef, where the waves break into the quiet water inside; so, if we manage to cling to the oar till it is driven over the breakers, we may perhaps gain the shore. What say you; will you join me?"



We gladly agreed to follow Jack, for he inspired us with confidence, although I could perceive, by the sad tone of his voice, that he had little hope; and, indeed, when I looked at the white waves that lashed the reef and boiled against the rocks as if in fury, I felt that there was but a step between us and death. My heart sank within me. The ship was now very near the rocks. The men were ready with the

boat, and the captain beside them giving orders, when a tremendous wave came towards us. We three ran towards the bow to lay hold of our oar, and had barely reached it when the wave fell on the deck with a crash like thunder. At the same moment the ship struck, the foremast broke off close to the deck and went over the side, carrying the boat and men along with it. Our oar got entangled with the wreck, and Jack seized an axe to cut it free. Another wave washed it clear of the wreck. We all seized hold of it, and the next instant we were struggling in the wild sea. The last thing I saw was the boat whirling in the surf, and all the sailors tossed into the foaming waves. Then I became insensible.

On recovering from my swoon, I found myself lying on a bank of soft grass, under the shelter of an overhanging rock, with Peterkin on his knees by my side, tenderly bathing my temples with water, and endeavouring to stop the blood that flowed from a wound in my forehead.

Word Nest :

staunchest	— strongest of opinion
verdant	— fresh and green
foremast	— a mast on the front part of a ship
rudder	— an instrument for controlling the boat's direction

About the author :

Robert Michael Ballantyne (1825—1894) was a Scottish fiction writer famous for his adventure story *The Coral Island*. Most of his stories were written from personal experience. The heroes of his books are models of self-reliance and moral uprightness. His most popular stories include *The Young Fur-Traders*, *The World of Ice*, *Ungava: a Tale of Eskimo Land* etc. Ballantyne was also an accomplished artist and exhibited some of his water-colours at the Royal Scottish Academy. The above text is an extract from Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*.

Lesson 2

How it Happened

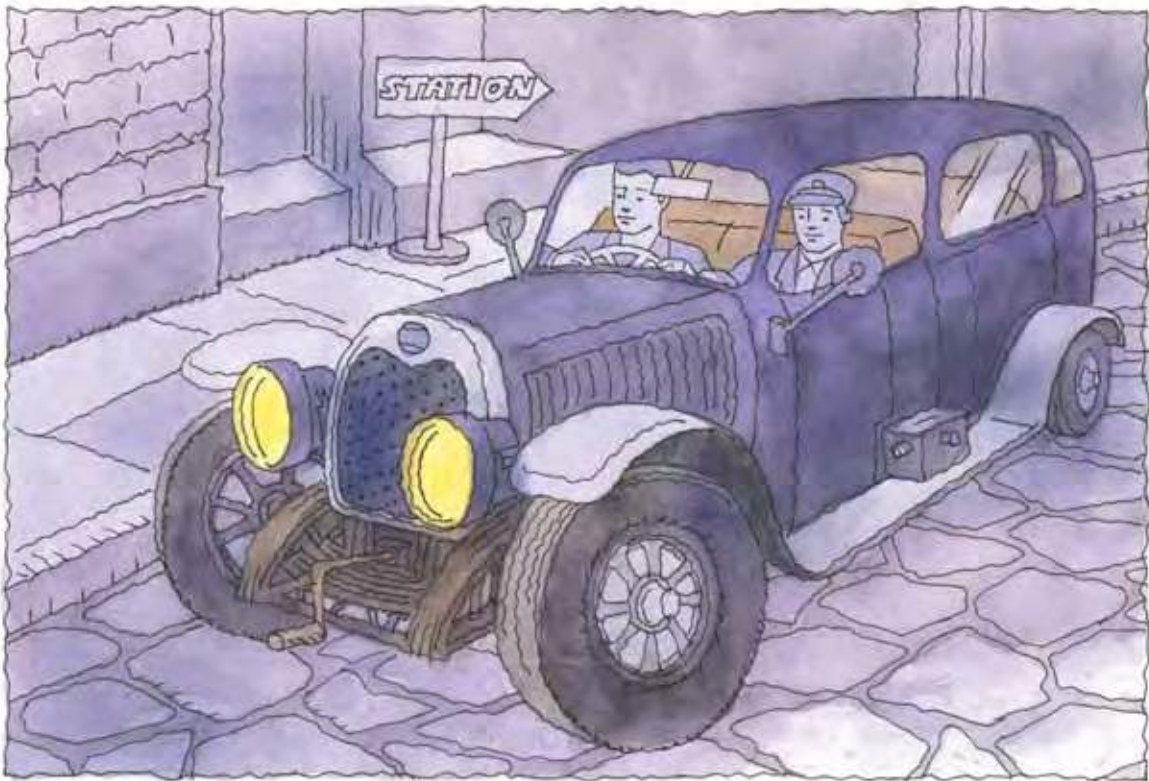
—Arthur Conan Doyle

The clock in the little country station read eleven. I had come back late from London. Outside the country station waited my big motor car. It had glaring headlights and a glitter of polished brass. It was my new thirty horse power Robur. The car had only been delivered that day. Perkins, my chauffeur, said that he thought the car was excellent.

"I'll drive the car myself," I said and climbed into the driver's seat.

Perkins said, "Perhaps, Sir, I had better drive."

"No; I should like to try myself," said I.



So we started on the five-mile drive for home. I got along very well until I came to Claystall Hill. It is one of the worst hills in England. It is a mile and half long with three fairly sharp curves. My park gate stood at the very foot of the hill.

We were just over the brow of this hill, where the grade is steepest, when trouble began. I was driving at top speed, but suddenly the gears stuck. The car was going at great rate, so I clapped on both brakes. One after other they gave way. I didn't mind so much when I felt my footbrake snap. I put all my weight on the emergency brake. It did not work. The situation brought cold sweat out of me.

By this time we were fairly tearing down the slope. The lights were brilliant and I brought round the first curve all right. Then we did the second one. There was a mile of straight road, then came the third curve. After that came the gate of the park.

We were still running at a fearful pace. Perkins was perfectly cool and alert. He laid his hand on the wheel.

"We can never get round that curve. Better jump, Sir."

"No," said I, "I'll stick it out. You can jump if you like."

"I'll stick it with you, Sir," said he.

The wheels were **whirring** like a high wind and the big body was groaning. It was a narrow road and we were a great, roaring, golden death to anyone who came in our path. There was only the park gate left to clear now. It was about twenty yards to the left of the road we ran on. I turned the wheel with all the strength of my wrists. My right wheel struck full on the right hand pillar of my own gate. I heard the crash. I was conscious of flying through the air and then— and then—!

When I became aware of my own existence once more, I was among the shadow of oak trees. A man was standing beside me. I saw it was Stanley, a man whom I had known at college. I had a genuine affection for him. At the present moment I was quite surprised to see him, but I felt giddy and shaken.



"What a smash!" I said. "Good Lord, what a smash!"

Stanley nodded with his familiar gentle, **wistful** smile.

I was quite unable to move. But my senses were exceedingly alert. I saw the wrecked car lit up by moving lanterns. I saw the little group of people and heard the hushed voices around the car. No one took any notice of me.

Then suddenly I heard a cry of pain.

"The weight is on him. Lift it easy," cried a voice.

"It's only my leg!" said another, which I recognized as Perkins's.

"Where's master?" he cried.

“Here I am, “ I answered, but they did not seem to hear me.

They were all bending over something which lay in front of the car.

Stanley laid his hand upon my shoulder. His touch was strangely soothing. I felt light and happy, in spite of all.

“No pain, of course?” said he.

“None,” said I.

“There never is,” said he.

And then suddenly a wave of amazement passed over me.

Stanley! Stanley! Why, Stanley had surely died at Bloomfontein in the Boer War!

“Stanley!” I cried. The words seemed to choke my throat, “Stanley, you are dead”.

He looked at me with the same old gentle, wistful smile.

“So are you,” he answered.

Word Nest :

whirring – revolving rapidly

wistful – pensive

About the author :

Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle (1859-1930) was a Scottish physician and writer who is most noted for his crime-fictions. His creation, detective Sherlock Holmes and his assistant Dr.Watson, had won the hearts of millions of readers. Some of his most famous crime stories of Holmes and Watson are *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Sign of Four* etc. He is also known for the fictional adventures of another character he invented, the irascible scientist Professor Challenger, and for popularizing the mystery of *Mary Celeste*. He was a prolific writer whose other works include fantasy and science fiction stories, plays, romances, poetry, non-fiction, and historical novels. The above text is adapted from his short story *How it happened*.

Lesson 3

I Want to Write

—Margaret Walker

I want to write

I want to write the songs of my people.

I want to hear them singing melodies in the dark.

I want to catch the last floating strains from their sob-torn throats.

I want to frame their dreams into words; their souls into notes.

I want to catch their sunshine laughter in a bowl;

fling dark hands to a darker sky

and fill them full of stars

then crush and mix such lights till they become

a mirrored pool of brilliance in the dawn.



About the poet :

Margaret Walker (1915-1998) was an American poet and writer. She was part of the African-American literary movement in Chicago. Her notable works include the award-winning poem *For My People* and the novel *Jubilee*, set in the South during the American Civil War. This book is considered notable in African-American literature and Walker is an influential figure for younger authors. Walker became a literature professor at what is today Jackson State University, a historically 'Black' college, where she taught from 1949 to 1979. In 1968, Walker founded the Institute for the Study of History, Life, and Culture of Black People (now the Margaret Walker Center).

Lesson 4

Seasons and Time

—William Barnes

A while in the dead of the winter,
The wind hurries keen through the sunshine,
But finds no more leaves that may linger
On tree-boughs to strew on the ground.
Long streaks of bright snow-drift, bank shaded,
Yet lie on the slopes, under hedges;
But still on the road out to Thorndon
Would not wet a shoe on the ground.
The days, through the cold seems to strengthen,
Outlengthen their span, and the evening
Seeks later its westing,
To cast its dim hue on the ground.
Till tree-heads shall thicken their shadow
With leaves of a glittering greenness,
And daisies shall fold up their blossoms
At evening, in due on the ground.
And then, in the plum-warding garden,
Or shadowy orchard, the house-man
Shall smile at his fruit, really blushing,
Where sunheat shoots through on the ground.

What season do you feel the fairest
The season of sowing or growing,
Or season of mowing and ripeness,
When hay may lie new on the ground?

And like you the glittering morning,
And short-shaded noon, or the coming
Of slant-lighted evening, or moon,
When footsteps are few on the ground?



About the poet :

William Barnes (1801 – 1886) was an English poet, writer and philologist. Amongst his most noted books of poetry are *Poems of Rural Life in the Dorset Dialect* and *Homely Rhymes*. His poems are characterized by a singular sweetness and tenderness of feeling, deep insight into humble country life and character, and an exquisite feeling for local scenery.

Lesson 5

On the Way to Pretoria

—M. K. Gandhi

On the seventh or eighth day after my arrival, I left Durban. A first class seat was booked for me. It was usual there to pay five shillings extra, if one needed a bedding. Abdulla Sheth insisted that I should book one bedding but, out of obstinacy and pride and with a view to saving five shillings, I declined. Abdulla Sheth warned me. "Look, now," said he, "this is a different country from India. Thank God, we have enough and to spare. Please do not stint yourself in anything that you may need." I thanked him and asked him not to be anxious.

The train reached Maritzburg, the capital of Natal, at about 9 p.m. Beddings used to be provided at this station. A railway servant came and asked me if I wanted one. "No," said I, "I have one with me." He went away. But a passenger came next, and looked me up and down. He saw that I was a 'coloured' man. This disturbed him. Out he went and came in again with one or two officials. They all kept quiet, when another official came to me and said, "Come along, you must go to the van compartment."



"But I have a first class ticket," said I.

"That doesn't matter," rejoined the other. "I tell you, you must go to the van compartment."

"I tell you, I was permitted to travel in this compartment at Durban, and I insist on going on in it."

"No, you won't," said the official. "You must leave this compartment, or else I shall have to call a police constable to push you out."

"Yes, you may. I refuse to get out voluntarily."

The constable came. He took me by the hand and pushed me out. My luggage was also taken out. I refused to go to the other compartment and the train steamed away. I went and sat in the waiting room, keeping my hand-bag with me, leaving the other luggage where it was. The railway authorities had taken charge of it.

It was winter, and winter in the higher regions of South Africa is severely cold. Maritzburg being at a high altitude, the cold was extremely bitter. My over-coat



was in my luggage, but I did not dare to ask for it lest I should be insulted again, so I sat and shivered. There was no light in the room. A passenger came in at about midnight and possibly wanted to talk to me. But I was in no mood to talk. I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights, or go back to India, or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults and return to India after finishing the case? It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial, only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process. Redress for wrongs I should seek only to the extent that would be necessary for the removal of the colour prejudice. So I decided to take the next available train to Pretoria.

The following morning I sent a long telegram to the General Manager of the Railway and also informed Abdulla Sheth, who immediately met the General Manager. The Manager justified the conduct of the railway authorities, but informed him that he had already instructed the Station Master to see that I reached my destination safely. Abdulla Sheth wired to the Indian merchants in Maritzburg and to friends in other places to meet me and look after me. The merchants came to see me at the station and tried to comfort me by narrating their own hardships and explaining that what had happened to me was nothing unusual. They also said that Indians travelling first or second class had to expect trouble from railway officials and white passengers. The day was thus spent in listening to these tales of woe. The evening train arrived. There was a reserved berth for me. I now purchased at Maritzburg the bedding ticket I had refused to book at Durban.

The train took me to Charlestown.

About the author :

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948) was one of the foremost leaders of Indian nationalist movement in British ruled India. He had great belief in non-violent freedom movement. In South Africa he led the resident Indian community's struggle against oppression and social exploitation. He was called 'Mahatma' worldwide for his selfless sacrifices and devotion to the nation. Gandhi was a prolific writer. He edited several newspapers including *Indian Opinion* while staying in South Africa. He also wrote several pamphlets and books like *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, *Satyagraha in South Africa* etc. The above text is an extract from M.K.Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Chapter 8, translated by Mahadev Desai.

Lesson 6

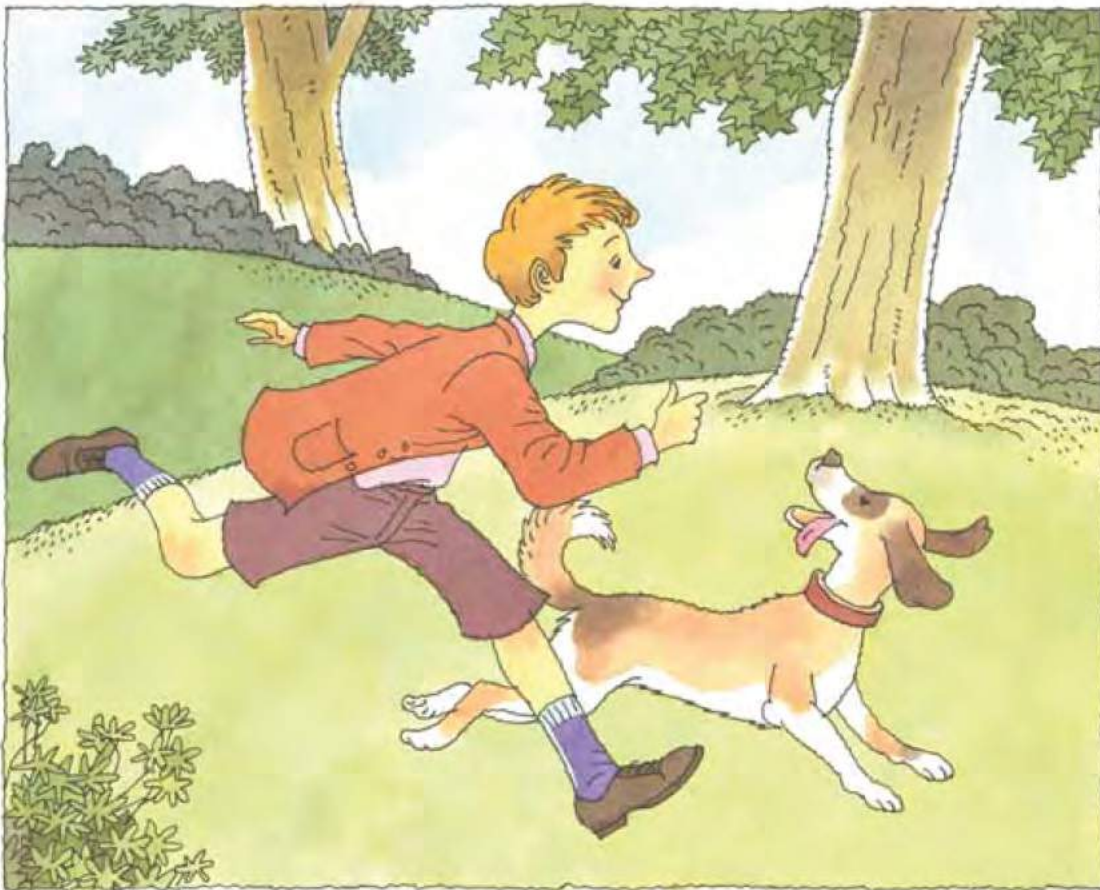
The Boy, the Dog and the Spaceship

—Nicholas Fisk

There was a spaceship hurtling through nothingness. It was making a desperate attempt to land on a strange planet.

There was a boy and his dog, running and rolling and chasing in a field. The boy's name was Billy. He was nine. His dog was called Scamp. They understood each other perfectly. Billy shouted at Scamp. He chased Scamp. The dog rolled his eyes, **yelped** with delight and ran.

In the spaceship, the Captain contacted the robot engineer. The Captain barked, "Make your report"



The engineer spoke, "Captain, we're going to be smashed."

The Captain pressed a button and immediately padded arms enfolded him. Soon he was completely encased in a puffy softness.

The ship hurtled on. In the control centre, the screens showed a green and blue planet with seas, clouds and land masses. The ship entered the earth's atmosphere. Its metal skin drove against the air and glowed dull red with heat.

The boy whistled for his dog. "Come on, Scamp." He was proud of having such a well-trained dog. A minute later, they were wrestling in the grass. They stopped their wrestling-match and looked about them. "You heard it! It went sort of wheeeeeoosh!" Billy said to Scamp. Scamp had located the noise; over there, by the dark trees.

The Captain had never before experienced a smash landing. "So that's what it's like," he thought. "I am alone, but I'm here as a conqueror. I will conquer this planet. If there is a ruling species on this planet, I'll invade a creature of that species and thus become a ruler of all," the Captain said to himself. The spaceship opened up and the new conqueror of planet earth looked out.

Billy's mother was calling him back home. Billy called at Scamp. The dog's ears were pricked; his tail was high, his body alert.

The Captain found the planet's air breathable. He was wearing a special suit. When the Captain said, "run", the suit would run endlessly; if the Captain said, "climb", the suit would keep climbing for him.

The Captain had seen many worlds, explored many planets. He had never seen one like this. This world was bursting with life. The Captain saw something move, very fast, on several legs. Where he stood, the Captain was surrounded by vegetable richness. A vast green trunk sprang from the very soil near him. The Captain began to climb the trunk.

Scamp gave a yelp of ecstasy as he caught on to a smell. Scamp's black nostrils widened. He bounded towards the source of the smell. Billy's mother called, "Come on, now! Billy, come home and eat your supper." Billy yelled at Scamp. But Scamp did not hear.

The Captain was in a dense forest of green columns, all very much the same. He adjusted his helmet to take in air from outside. The air was perfumed and moist. On his own planet he had tasted such air and water only in laboratories. The



Captain was struck by the inexhaustible richness of the planet. The Captain was pleased to think he was to be the conqueror of it.

Scamp had run over to where the Flying Object landed. There was a bad stench. Scamp licked the source of the smell. It was cold and hard. He picked up the object between his jaws.

Inside the spaceship, the Captain was terrified. He saw a huge monster, white, brown and black with legs, bite into the spaceship. The monster's face opened. It was pink inside and had pointed white mountains above and below.

The Captain instantly decided that the body of the monster must be entered. The Captain could then take over the control of its brain. After that, the invasion would follow its normal course. All species would eventually follow the Captain. Then the Captain would contact his home planet. Many more spaceships would come. The Captain's race would have found a safe and permanent home.

The Captain slipped out of the spaceship and began climbing the neck of the monster. The brain of the monster was above its face. He came to a tunnel leading into the monster's head. He made himself comfortable at the entrance of the tunnel. He was beginning to control the monster's brain signals. "You will obey me," the Captain said. "You will obey me always."

Billy was puzzled, looking at Scamp. Scamp kept shaking his head and he was running. "He's got an insect in his ear," thought Billy, "or an itch." Scamp ran left and right and straight. He looked weird in the moonlight. Billy began to be frightened.

The Captain instructed the white, brown and black monster to halt. The Captain was surprised. "This upright monster just now arrived seems a superior creature, though they are almost the same size," thought the Captain. "The upright creature is making audio signals and expects to be obeyed."

Billy shouted, "Scamp! Come here when I call you." Scamp sat at a distance in the moonlight, motionless. His eyes looked strange.

"Which monster is the master?" the Captain asked himself. "I must get them to fight to see who wins." The Captain spoke to the dog's brain, "Attack! Attack the other creature there."

Scamp ran towards Billy. “Scamp!” Billy yelled, “Scamp!”

Scamp charged him snarling. Billy was hurled to the ground. The dog stood over him, jaws open, teeth bared. Billy was terrified. “Scamp!” he cried out. Inside the dog’s head two voices boomed. One said, “Attack”; the other was an old, loved familiar voice, asking for help.

The dog paused. Billy had struck out his arms in fear. His fist hit the dog’s ear. Something small fell to the ground unseen. Scamp said, “Whoof!” and licked the boy’s face. He wagged his tail and got off Billy’s chest.

The boy and the dog ran off together across the moonlit field. Billy’s mother was calling, “Billy! Come home for supper!”

The Captain lay beside his spaceship at the edge of the trees. The spaceship was little, but marvelously made. Soon it would rust in the dew. The Captain lay vanquished with his dream of conquering the planet Earth.

Word Nest :

yelped — gave a sudden, short cry

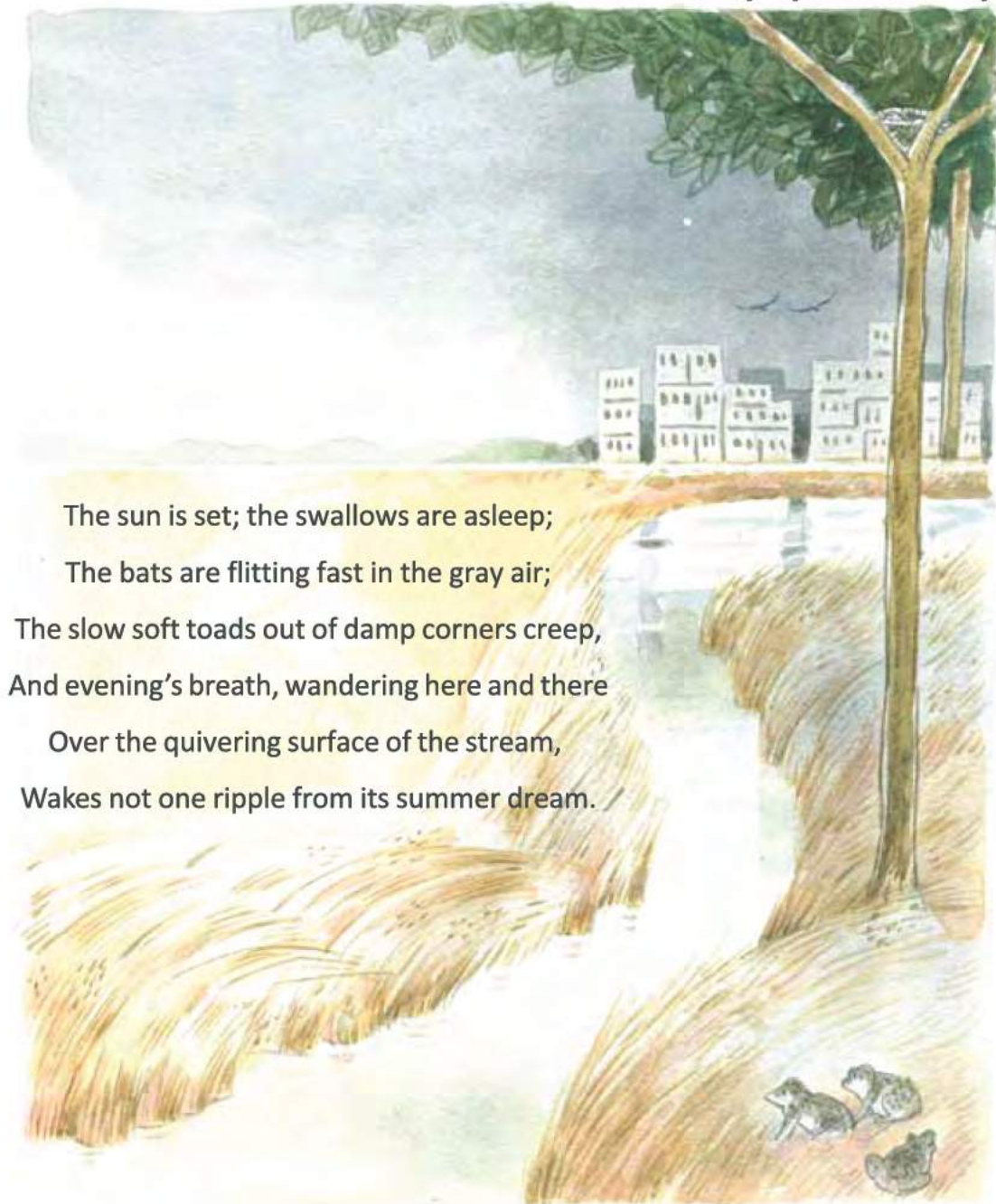
About the author :

Nicholas Fisk, the pseudonym of **David Higginbottom** (1923-), is a British writer of science fiction, who wrote mainly for children. His works include *Grinny*, *You Remember Me*, *Space Hostages* and *Trillions*. His autobiography, *Pig Ignorant* covers the years of World War when he served in the Royal Air Force. After the World War, Fisk worked as a musician, journalist, and publisher. His most impressive work, *A Rag, a Bone, and a Hank of Hair* is a thrilling futuristic novel set at the end of the 22nd century. The above text is adapted from his short story *The boy, the dog and the spaceship*.

Lesson 7

Evening : Ponte Al Mare, Pisa

—Percy Bysshe Shelley



The sun is set; the swallows are asleep;
The bats are flitting fast in the gray air;
The slow soft toads out of damp corners creep,
And evening's breath, wandering here and there
Over the quivering surface of the stream,
Wakes not one ripple from its summer dream.

There is no dew on the dry grass to-night,
Nor damp within the shadow of the trees;
The wind is intermitting, dry, and light;
And in the inconstant motion of the breeze
The dust and straws are driven up and down,
And whirled about the pavement of the town.
Within the surface of the fleeting river
The wrinkled image of the city lay,
Immovably unquiet, and forever
It trembles, but it never fades away.

About the poet :

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792 –1822) was one of the major English Romantic poets, famous for his immortal lyrics. A radical in his poetry as well as his political and social views, Shelley did not achieve fame during his lifetime, but recognition for his poetry grew steadily following his death. Shelley is perhaps best known for such poems as *Ozymandias*, *Ode to the West Wind*, *To a Skylark*, *The Cloud* and *The Masque of Anarchy*. His other major works include long, visionary poems such as *Queen Mab*, *Alastor*, *The Revolt of Islam*, *Adonais* and the visionary verse dramas *The Cenci* and *Prometheus Unbound*. The text is a part of a poem published posthumously by Mrs. Shelley (1824).

Lesson 8

Night Journey

—Theodore Roethke

Now as the train bears west,
Its rhythm rocks the earth,
And from my Pullman berth
I stare into the night
While others take their rest.

Bridges of iron lace,
A suddenness of trees,
A lap of mountain mist
All cross my line of sight,
Then a bleak wasted place,
And a lake below my knees.

Full on my neck I feel
The straining at a curve;
My muscles move with steel,
I wake in every nerve.

I watch a **beacon** swing
From dark to blazing bright;
We thunder through ravines
And **gullies** washed with light.

Beyond the mountain pass
Mist deepens on the pane;
We rush into a rain
That rattles double glass.
Wheels shake the roadbed stone,
The **pistons** jerk and shove,
I stay up half the night
To see the land I love.

Word Nest :

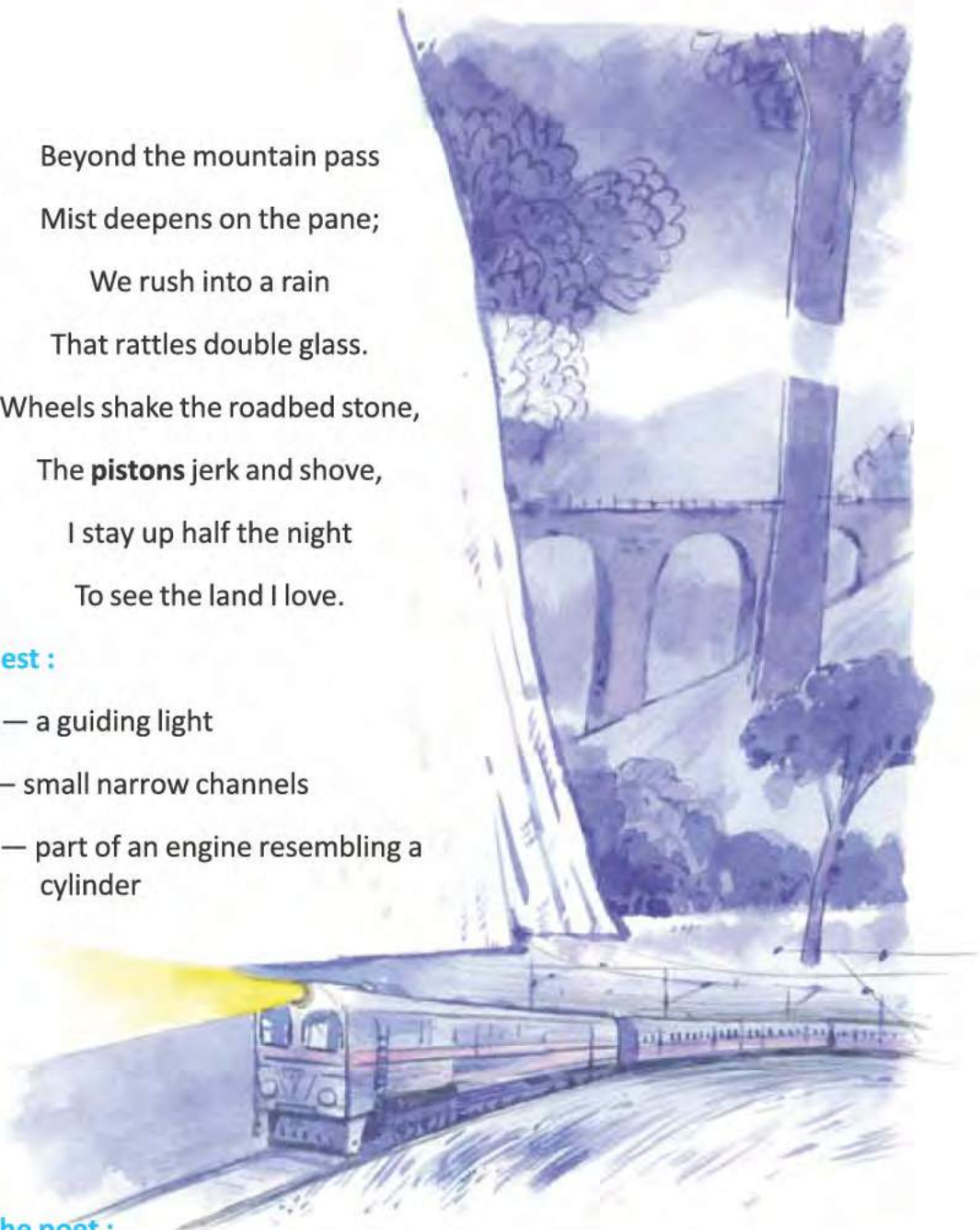
beacon — a guiding light

gullies — small narrow channels

pistons — part of an engine resembling a cylinder

About the poet :

Theodore Huebner Roethke (1908 – 1963) was an American poet who published several volumes of critically acclaimed verse. He is widely regarded as among the most accomplished and influential poets of his generation. Roethke's work is characterized by its introspection, rhythm and natural imagery. He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1954 for his book *The Waking*. His other important works include *Words for the Wind*, *The Far Field* etc.



Lesson 9

The Taste of Watermelon

—Borden Deal

When I think of the summer I was 16, a lot of things come crowding in to be thought about.

We were all afraid of Mr. Wills. He had bright, fierce eyes under heavy brows. Mr. Wills was the best farmer in the community. Mr. Wills always planted the little field directly behind his barn with watermelons. But they were Mr. Wills' melons; he didn't have any idea of sharing them with the boys of the neighborhood. He was fiercer about his melons than anything else. That summer I was 16. Mr. Wills raised the greatest watermelon ever seen in that country. Men came from miles around to look at it. Mr. Wills wouldn't let them go into the melon patch. They had to stand around the edge.

Just like all other daredevil boys in that country, I guess, my friends Freddy Gray and J.D. and I had talked idly about stealing that giant watermelon. But we all knew that it was just talk. It was his seed melon. He meant to plant next year's crop out of that great one. Wills was in a frenzy of fear that somebody would steal it.

About the time the great watermelon was due to come ripe, there was a night of a full moon. J.D. and Freddy Gray and I had decided we'd go swimming in the creek, so I left the house when the moon rose and went to meet them. We reached the swimming hole in the creek. The water was cold, and the shock of it struck a chill into us.

We climbed out finally to rest and sat on the bank.

"Old Man Wills won't have to worry about anybody stealing his melon tonight, anyway," Freddy Gray said. "Wouldn't anybody dare try it, bright as day like it is."

Suddenly there came into my mouth the taste of watermelon. I could taste the sweet, red juices oozing over my tongue. I stood up. "As a matter of fact," I said, "I'm going after it right now."



We came opposite the watermelon patch and ducked down the bank. We could see Mr. Wills very plainly. It seemed to take forever to reach the great melon in the middle of the field. With every move, I expected Mr. Wills to see me. Fortunately the grass was high enough to cover me. At last the melon loomed up before me, deep green in the moonlight, and I gasped at the size of it. I lay still for a moment, panting. I didn't have the faintest idea how to get it out of the field. It was not a long melon, but a fat, round one. Besides, I didn't dare stand up. It took about a hundred years to push that melon out of the field.

When my little knife penetrated the thick, green rind, the melon split perfectly down the middle. It was still warm from the day's sun. Just as in my anticipation, I felt the sweet juice trickle into my throat. I had never tasted watermelon so delicious. The two boys were watching me savour the first bite. I opened my eyes. "Dive in," I said graciously. "Help yourselves." We gorged ourselves until we were heavy.

We gazed with **sated** eyes at the left-over melon. We were depressed suddenly. It was such a waste, after all the struggle and the danger, that we could not eat every bite. The depression went with us toward home, and I did not feel triumph or victory, as I had expected.

"Where have you been?" my father asked as I stepped up on the porch.

"Swimming," I said.

I looked toward Mr. Wills' barn. My breath caught in my throat when I saw him in the field. He reached the place where the melon should have been. I saw him hesitate, looking around; then he bent, and I knew he was looking at the depression in the earth where the melon had lain. He straightened, a great, strangled cry tearing out of his throat.

"What's come over you?" My father said. "What's the matter, man?"

"They've stolen my seed melon," he yelled. "They took it right out from under me." I saw that tears stood on his cheeks, and I couldn't look at him anymore.

I didn't sleep that night. I don't know all the things I thought. Mostly it was about the terrible thing I had committed so lightly. I knew that it was up to me, at whatever risk, to repair as well as I could the damage I had done.

When it was daylight I rose from my bed and went out into the fresh world. I had found a paper sack in the kitchen, and I carried it in my hand as I walked toward the swimming hole. I stopped there and looked down at the **wanton** waste we had made of the part of the melon we had not been able to eat. I knelt down on the ground, opened the paper sack and began picking up the black seeds. They nearly filled the paper sack. I went back to the house. Father was standing on the porch.

"Father," I said, "I've got to go talk to Mr. Wills. Right now. I wish you would come with me."

He stopped, watching me. "What's the matter?" he said. "Did you steal that seed melon of his?"

"Will you come with me?" I said. My father watched me for a moment. "Yes," he



said quietly. We walked the short distance between our house and his. I knocked on the porch door. In a moment Mr. Wills appeared in the doorway.

"What do you want, boy?" he said.

I held out the paper bag. "Mr. Wills," I said, "here are the seeds from your seed melon. That's all I could bring back."

"Did you steal it?" he said.

"Yes, sir," I said.

"Why did you steal it?" he said.

"I don't know," I said.

"Didn't you know it was my seed melon?"

“Yes, sir,” I said. “I knew it.” I hung my head. “I’m sorry,” I said.

He stopped still then, watching me. “So you brought me the seeds,” he said softly. “That’s not much, boy.” I lifted my head. “It was all I could think to do,” I said. “The melon is gone. But the seeds are for next year. That’s why I brought them to you.”

“But you ruined this year,” he said.

“Yes, sir,” I said. “I ruined it.” I looked at him humbly. “I’ll help you plant them, Mr. Wills. I’ll work hard.”

Mr. Wills looked at my father for the first time. There was a small, hard smile on his face; his eyes didn’t look as fierce as before.

“A man with a big farm like mine needs a son,” he said. I do wish I had me a boy like that.”

He came close to me then, put his hand on my shoulder. “We can’t do anything about this year,” he said. “But we’ll grow next year, won’t we? We’ll grow it together.”

“Yes, sir,” I said.

Word Nest :

sated — having had maximum food

wanton — carelessly cruel

About the author :

Borden Deal (1922–1985) was a famous American novelist and short story writer. A prolific writer, Deal wrote twenty-one novels and more than one hundred short stories. A major theme in his canon is man’s mystical attachment to the earth and his quest for land, inspired by his family’s loss of their property during the period of the Great Depression. The majority of his work is set in the small hamlets of the South. His most important stories are *The Insolent Breed*, *Dunbar’s Cove*, *Blue grass* etc. The above text is an adaptation from his famous short story *The Taste of Watermelons*.

Lesson 10

After Twenty Years

—O. Henry

The policeman on the beat moved up the avenue impressively. The impressiveness was habitual and not for show, for spectators were few. The time was barely 10 o'clock at night, but chilly gusts of wind with a taste of rain in them had well **nigh** de-peopled the streets.

Trying doors as he went, twirling his club with many intricate and artful movements, turning now and then to cast his watchful eye down the pacific thoroughfare, the officer, with his **stalwart** form and slight **swagger**, made a fine picture of a guardian of the peace. The vicinity was one that kept early hours. Now and then you might see the lights of a cigar store or of an all-night lunch counter; but the majority of the doors belonged to business places that had long since been closed.

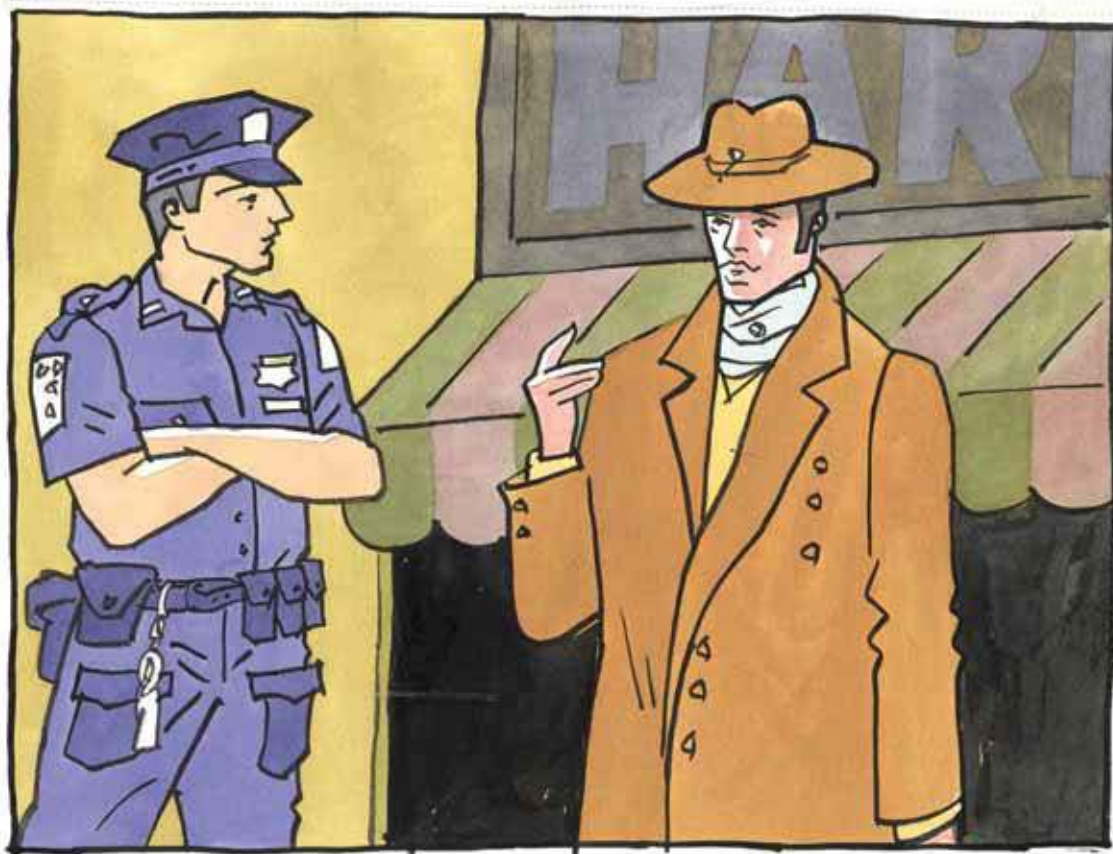
When about midway of a certain block, the policeman suddenly slowed his walk. In the doorway of a darkened hardware store, a man leaned. As the policeman walked up to him, the man spoke up quickly:

"It's all right, officer," he said, reassuringly. "I'm just waiting for a friend. It's an appointment made twenty years ago. Sounds a little funny to you, doesn't it? Well, I'll explain if you'd like to make certain it's all straight. About that long ago there used to be a restaurant where this store stands—'Big Joe' Brady's restaurant.

"Until five years ago," said the policeman. "It was torn down then."

The man in the doorway struck match and lit his cigar. The light showed a pale, square-jawed face with keen eyes, and a little white scar near his right eyebrow. His scarf pin was a large diamond, oddly set.

"Twenty years ago tonight," said the man. "I dined here at 'Big Joe' Brady's with Jimmy Wells, my best **chum**, and the finest chap in the world. He and I were raised



here in New York, just like two brothers, together. I was eighteen and Jimmy was twenty. The next morning I was to start for the West to make my fortune. You couldn't have dragged Jimmy out of New York; he thought it was the only place on earth. Well, we agreed that night that we would meet here again exactly twenty years from that date and time, no matter what our conditions might be or from what distance we might have to come. We figured that in twenty years each of us ought to have our destiny worked out and our fortunes made, whatever they were going to be."

"It sounds pretty interesting," said the policeman. "Rather a long time between meets, though, it seems to me. Haven't you heard from your friend since you left?"

"Well, yes, for a time we corresponded," said the other. "But after a year or two we lost track of each other. You see, the West is a pretty big proposition, and I kept hustling around over it pretty lively. But I know Jimmy will meet me here if

he's alive, for always was the truest, staunchest old chap in the world. He'll never forget. I came a thousand miles to stand in this door tonight, and it's worth it if my old partner turns up."

The waiting man pulled out a handsome watch, the lids of it set with small diamonds.

"Three minutes to ten," he announced. "It was exactly ten o' clock when we parted here at the restaurant door."

"Did pretty well out West, didn't you?" asked the policeman.

"You bet! I hope Jimmy has done half as well. He was a kind of plodder, though, good fellow as he was. I've had to compete with some of the sharpest wits going to get my pile. A man gets in a groove in New York. It takes the West to put a razor-edge on him."

The policeman twirled his club and took a step or two. "I'll be on my way. Hope your friend comes around all right. Going to call time on him sharp?"

"I should say not!" said the other. "I'll give him half an hour at least. If Jimmy is alive on earth he'll be here by that time. So long, officer."

"Goodnight, sir," said the policeman, passing on along his beat, trying doors as he went.

There was now a fine, cold drizzle falling, and the wind had risen from its uncertain puffs into a steady blow. The few foot passengers astir in that quarter, hurried dismally and silently along with coat collars turned high and pocketed hands. In the door of the hardware store the man who had come a thousand miles to fill an appointment, uncertain almost to absurdity, with the friend of his youth, waited.

About twenty minutes he waited, and then a tall man in a long overcoat, with collar turned up to his ears, hurried across from the opposite side of the street. He went directly to the waiting man.

"Is that you, Bob?" he asked, doubtfully.

"Is that you, Jimmy Wells?" cried the man in the door.

"Bless my heart!" exclaimed the new arrival, grasping both the other's hands with his own. "It's Bob, sure as fate. I was certain I'd find you here if you were still in existence. Well, well, well! – twenty years is a long time. The old restaurant's gone, Bob; I wish it had lasted, so we could have had another dinner there. How has the West treated you, old man?"

"Bully; it has given me everything I asked it for. You've changed lots, Jimmy. I never thought you were so tall by two or three inches."

"Oh, I grew a bit after I was twenty."

"Doing well in New York, Jimmy?"

"Moderately. I have a position in one of the city departments. Come on, Bob; we'll go round to a place I know of, and have a good long talk about old times."

The two men started up the street, arm in arm. The man from the West, his **egotism** enlarged by success, was beginning to outline the history of his career. The other, submerged in his overcoat, listened with interest.

At the corner stood a drug store, brilliant with electric lights. When they came into this glare each of them simultaneously gazed upon the other's face.

The man from the West stopped suddenly and released his arm. "You're not Jimmy Wells," he snapped. "Twenty years is a long time but not long enough to change a man's nose from a Roman to a pug."

"It sometimes changes a good man into a bad man," said the tall man. "You've been under arrest for ten minutes, 'Silky' Bob. Chicago thinks you may have dropped over our way and wires us that they want to have a chat with you. Going quietly, are you? That's sensible. Now, before we go on to the station here's the note I was asked to hand you. You may read it here at the window. It's from Patrolman Wells."



The man from the West unfolded the little piece of paper handed to him. His hand was steady when he began to read, but it trembled a little by the time he had finished. The note was rather short:

“Bob,

I was at the appointed place on time. When you struck the match, I saw it was the face of the man wanted in Chicago. Somehow I couldn’t do it myself so I went around and got a plain clothes man to do the job.

JIMMY”.

Word Nest :

stalwart — an accomplished and dependable person

swagger— to walk in an extremely proud way

egotism — a self-conceited attitude

About the author :

O. Henry (1862-1910), the pseudonym of William Sidney Porter, was a prolific American short story writer, well known for his wit, wordplay, warm characterization, and twist endings. Most of his stories are set in his own time, the early 20th century. Many take place in New York City and deal for the most part with ordinary people. O. Henry had an inimitable hand for isolating some element of society and describing it with an incredible economy and grace of language. Some of his well known stories are *The Gift of the Magi*, *The Last Leaf*, *The Cop and the Anthem*, *Jimmy Valentine* etc. The above text is adapted from O. Henry's short story *After Twenty Years*.

Lesson 11

At The Railway Station, Upways

—Thomas Hardy

‘There is not much that I can do,
For I’ve no money that’s quite my own!’
Spoke up the pitying child—
A little boy with a violin
At the station before the train came in,—
‘But I can play my **fiddle** to you,
And a nice one ’tis, and good in tone!’
The man in the handcuffs smiled;
The constable looked, and he smiled too,
As the fiddle began to twang;
And the man in the handcuffs suddenly sang
With grimful glee:
‘This life so free
Is the thing for me!’
And the constable smiled, and said no word,
As if unconscious of what he heard;
And so they went on till the train came in—
The convict, and boy with the violin.