

Madam Rides the Bus

Introduction

This story has been written by Vallikkannan. This is a sensitive story about an eight-year old girl's first bus journey alone into the world outside her village. It also depicts her induction into the mystery of life and death.

Summary

Valli or Valliammai was a girl of eight years who lived in a village. She had no playmates. So, standing on the doorway of her house, watching what was happening in the street outside, had become her favourite pastime. She was the most fascinated by the bus that travelled between her village and the nearest town. It passed through her street every hour and the sight of the bus, filled each time with a new set of passengers, was a source of unending joy for Valli. Valli also wanted to ride on that bus. So, over many days and months, she listened carefully to the conversations between her neighbours and people who regularly used the bus and collected some details about the bus journey. She came to know that the last destination of the bus was a town. It was about six miles from her village. The fare was thirty paise for one way. The trip to the town took forty-five minutes. So, she planned to take the one o'clock afternoon bus so that she could return by about two forty-five. She decided upon this time because she knew that her mother used to take a nap every day after lunch from about one o'clock to four o'clock. So, during this time Valli was free. She then started to thriftily save whatever coins came her way, resisting every temptation to buy peppermints, toys, balloons, etc. and even a ride on the merry-go-round in the village fair. Soon she had collected enough money for the trip.

So, on one fine spring day, the afternoon bus was on the point of leaving the village. Valli called the bus to stop. The bus slowed down and the conductor peeped outside. Standing outside the bus, Valli told the conductor that she had to go to the town. She showed some coins and got into the bus. The conductor was a jolly fellow. He called her a 'fine

madam' and pointed towards a seat. It was the slack time of the day so very few passengers were travelling in the bus. On the way, Valli enjoyed watching the beauty of the nature. The road was narrow. On one side there was a canal. Beyond it there were palm trees, grasslands, mountains, sky and green fields. To get the full view, she stood on the seat. Everything looked wonderful to Valli.

An elderly man shouted and called Valli a 'child'. He asked her to sit down. Valli was surprised for being called a child. The conductor informed the old man that she was a very grown-up madam, as a mere girl could not travel all alone. In an angry way, she looked towards the conductor and demanded the ticket. The conductor punched a ticket and gave it to her. He asked her not to stand on her seat as she could fall. The bus stopped and some more passengers got on.

At that time, an elderly woman got into the bus and sat beside Valli. She questioned Valli if she was all alone. Valli did not like her. There were big holes in her ears. Her earrings were very ugly. She was chewing betel nut. Valli was fearing that its juice should fall at any moment. She again interrogated Valli. In turn, Valli gave a curt reply and asked her to mind her own business.

The bus was rolling across a landscape. Valli was happy. She clapped her hands with glee. Suddenly, there came a young cow, running fast, in front of the bus. The driver sounded his horn loudly. But the animal became more and more frightened and always galloped in front of the bus. It was funny for Valli. At last, the cow moved off the road. The bus came to a railroad crossing. The train passed with utmost roar and rattle. Then, the bus passed through a busy shopping street and came on a wide thoroughfare. Valli was fascinated and happy to see the displays of clothes and the big crowd. It was the last destination of the bus.

Now, all the passengers got off the bus. Valli remained there in the bus. The conductor asked if she was not ready to get off the bus. Valli replied that she would return on this same bus and gave thirty paise to the conductor. He felt surprised, and questioned what the matter was. Valli replied that she only felt to have a ride in the bus and nothing else. The conductor offered to buy her a drink, but Valli refused. She kept on sitting till the bus resumed its return journey. The same wonderful sights were before her eyes, once again.

Then, she suddenly saw a young cow dead by the roadside. She enquired the conductor if it was the same cow. The conductor nodded his head. Now, she was overcome with sadness. The memory of the dead cow haunted her. She thought that the cow had been a lovely animal a little while ago, but all her charm was lost now.

It was three-forty when the bus reached her village. She stood up and told the conductor that she hoped to see him again. The conductor smiled and answered, 'Madam, whenever you feel like a bus ride, come and join us. And don't forget to bring your fare.' Valli laughed and went running straight for her home.

When Valli entered her house, she saw her mother talking with one of her aunts. She was from South Street. She was a chatterbox. She asked Valli where she had been. Valli only smiled. Her mother remained busy with her. Valli's mother was saying that many things happen in this world that we know nothing about and even if we know then we are not able to understand it. Valli said that this was definitely true. Her aunt was surprised and said that Valli was talking like a grown-up lady. Valli smiled to herself.

Message

This story conveys the message that children can be quite resourceful. We undermine their capabilities. If left on their own they are capable of achieving what we think is impossible for them to do.



Extract Based Questions

1. Read the following extract carefully and answer the questions that follow:

Day after day she watched the bus and gradually a tiny wish crept into her head and grew there: she wanted to ride on that bus, even if just once. This wish became stronger and stronger, until it was an overwhelming desire. Valli would stare wistfully at the people who got on or off the bus when it stopped at the street corner. Their faces would kindle in her longings, dreams and hopes. If one of her friends happened to ride the bus and tried to describe the sights of the town to her, Valli would be too jealous to listen and would shout, in English: 'Proud! proud!'.

- (a) For what she developed a longing?
- (b) State whether the given statement is True or False.
Valli looked at the passengers of the bus wistfully.
- (c) 'Their faces would kindle ' Here, 'their' refers to
- (d) Complete the analogy with a word from the text:
stronger : weaker :: huge :

Answers

- (a) She developed a longing for the bus ride.
 - (b) True
 - (c) people travelling in bus
 - (d) tiny
2. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:
Her first journey—what careful, painstaking, elaborate plans she had had to make for it! She had thriftily saved whatever stray coins came her way, resisting every temptation to buy peppermints, toys, balloons and the like and finally she had saved a total of sixty paise. How difficult it had been, particularly that day at the village fair, but she had resolutely stifled a strong desire to ride the merry-go-round, even though she had the money.
- (a) She had planned:
 - (i) carefully
 - (ii) painstakingly
 - (iii) in detail
 - (iv) All of the above

- (b) How did she save the money?
- (c) What was particularly difficult to resist for Valli?
- (i) Toys (ii) Peppermints
(iii) Merry-go-round (iv) Balloons
- (d) What does 'resolutely' mean?

Answers

- (a) (iv) All of the above
- (b) She saved the money by resisting every temptation to buy peppermints, toys, balloons and the like.
- (c) (iii) Merry-go-round
- (d) 'Resolutely' means in a strong and determined way.
3. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:
- Suddenly Valli clapped her hands with glee. A young cow, tail high in the air, was running very fast, right in the middle of the road, right in front of the bus. The bus slowed to a crawl and the driver sounded his horn loudly again and again. But the more he honked, the more frightened the animal became and the faster it galloped—always right in front of the bus.
- Somehow this was very funny to Valli. She laughed and laughed until there were tears in her eyes.
- (a) On seeing the cow, Valli felt
- (b) Where was the cow running?
- (c) State whether the given statement is True or False.
The driver sounded the horn rather slowly.
- (d) Complete the analogy with a word from the text:
high : low :: rush :

Answers

- (a) happy
- (b) The cow was running fast, right in the middle of the road, right in front of the bus.
- (c) False
- (d) crawl
4. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:
- "Don't you want to have a look at the sights, now that you're here?"
- "All by myself? Oh, I'd be much too afraid."
- Greatly amused by the girl's way of speaking, the conductor said, "But you weren't afraid to come in the bus."
- "Nothing to be afraid of about that," she answered.
- (a) Who is the 'girl' in the passage?
- (i) Anne (ii) Bholi (iii) Valli (iv) Wanda
- (b) She didn't want to
- (c) The word 'amused' means the same as:
- (i) pleasantly entertained (ii) terribly shocked
(iii) mourned (iv) scared
- (d) What does the last line show about the girl?

Answers

- (a) (iii) Valli (b) get off the bus
- (c) (i) pleasantly entertained
- (d) The last line shows the girl's self-confidence. She wasn't afraid of travelling alone in the bus.

5. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

The memory of the dead cow haunted her, dampening her enthusiasm. She no longer wanted to look out the window. She sat thus, glued to her seat, until the bus reached her village at three forty. She stood up and stretched herself. Then she turned to the conductor and said, "Well sir, I hope to see you again."

"Okay, madam," he answered her, smiling. "Whenever you feel like a bus ride, come and join us. And don't forget to bring your fare."

- (a) Why did she not want to look out of the window?
- (b) State whether the given statement is True or False.
The bus reached her village at 2 : 40 pm.
- (c) Who is 'madam' in the given extract?
- (e) Complete the analogy with a word from the text:
glued : stuck :: lessen :

Answers

- (a) She didn't want to look out of the window because the memory of the dead cow haunted her. It dampened her enthusiasm and made her sad.
- (b) False
- (c) Valli is 'madam' in the given extract.
- (d) dampen



Short Answer Type Questions

- Q 1. Who was Valli? What kind of girl was she?

Ans. Valli was an eight-year-old girl who lived in a village. She was wiser than the other girls of her age. She did not have any playmates. So, she used to stand in the front doorway of her house and watch everything carefully. She was also courageous.

- Q 2. Why would Valli stand at the front door?

OR

What was Valli's favourite pastime? (CBSE 2015)

Ans. Valli was a eight-year-old girl. She was very curious about things. There were no playmates of her own age on her street. So, her favourite pastime was standing in the front doorway of her house, watching what was happening in the street outside. Watching the street gave her many unusual experiences.

- Q 3. What was the most fascinating thing of all for Valli?

Ans. The most fascinating thing for Valli was the bus that travelled between her village and the nearest town. It passed through her street every hour. The sight of the bus filled each time with a new set of passengers, was a source of unending joy for Valli. It was her favourite pastime.

- Q 4. How did Valli gather the details of the bus journey?

(CBSE 2023)

Ans. Valli had decided to travel by bus. To gather the details of the bus journey, she started listening to her neighbours conversations about their bus rides very carefully. In the process, she would herself ask some careful questions here and there in order to enhance her knowledge about the journey.

Q 5. How did Valli save up money for her first journey? Was it easy for her?

Ans. Valli resisted every temptation to buy balloons, toys, peppermints, etc. to save money. She even did not ride the merry-go-round at the village fair. It was not easy for her. On the contrary, it was rather troublesome for her.

Q 6. What problem did Valli have after saving enough money for the bus ride? How did she solve it?

OR

What time of the day did Valli select for her journey and why?

Ans. After Valli had saved enough money for the bus ride, her next problem was how to slip out of the house without her mother's knowledge. She managed to solve this problem without much difficulty. Every day her mother would nap from about one to four, after lunch. Valli decided to take her bus ride during this time.

Q 7. How did Valli plan her bus ride? What did she find out about the bus, and how did she save up the fare?

OR

Valli's dream was to enjoy a ride on the bus to the nearest town. What preparations did she make to realise her dream?

(CBSE 2019)

Ans. Valli planned her bus ride after knowing all the related facts. These were like the fare, the time it took to reach the town, when it started to and fro. She found out all these details about the bus from the talks of the passengers.

She saved the fare by resisting all her temptations of buying balloons, toys and avoiding the swing in the merry-go-round.

Q 8. What was the reaction of the conductor and other passengers towards Valli?

OR

Why did the conductor called Valli 'Madam'?

(CBSE 2015)

Ans. The conductor was a jolly kind of man. He was fond of joking. He was also very humorous. He enjoyed joking with all alike. When Valli boarded the bus, she acted in a mature and bold manner. So, the conductor decided to humour her. He addressed her as 'Madam' and asked everyone to make way for her. He offered her a seat right in the front. The other passengers looked at Valli and laughed with the conductor.

Q 9. Why does Valli stand up on the seat? What does she see now?

Ans. Valli wanted to see the outside view but there was a canvas blind on the lower part of the window which obstructed her view. Therefore, she stood on the seat to look outside. She could see the canal, palm trees, grassland, distant mountains, the blue sky and acres and acres of green fields.

Q 10. How did Valli react when someone called her 'child'?

Ans. When Valli sat on her seat, she found that her view was cut off by a canvas blind that covered the lower part of her window. So, she stood up on the seat to look outside. She was enjoying the outside view.

Suddenly, she was startled by a voice saying, 'Listen child, you shouldn't stand like that. Sit down.' An elderly man, who was genuinely concerned for her, was asking her to sit down. But Valli was annoyed by his attention. She retorted haughtily that she was not a child. She had paid her fare of 30 paise like everybody else.

Q 11. What did Valli see on her way that made her laugh?

Ans. Valli saw a cow which had come before the bus with its tail raised. The more the driver honked, the more frightened the cow became. It ran faster and faster and always came in front of the bus. This made her laugh.

Q 12. What were the sights that Valli enjoyed from inside the bus?

(CBSE 2020)

Ans. Valli saw many different sights from inside the bus. She saw a canal, palm trees, grasslands, mountains and the blue sky. She was very happy to see these sights. She also saw a young cow running very fast right in front of the bus. The driver sounded his horn loudly again and again. The more he honked, the more frightened the cow became and the faster it galloped, always coming in front of the bus. Valli found this very funny and she laughed and laughed until there were tears in her eyes. She was enjoying her journey.

Q 13. Why didn't Valli want to go to the stall and have a drink? What does this tell you about her?

(CBSE 2015)

OR

What stopped Valli from going to the stall to have a drink? What do we learn about Valli from this?

(CBSE 2023)

Ans. Valli didn't want to go to the stall and have a drink because she did not have enough money to buy it. She also rejected the offer of a free treat by the conductor. This tells us that she was a self-respecting and determined girl. She had self-control on her feelings.

Q 14. What did the conductor come to know when the bus reached the town?

Ans. When the bus reached the town, all the passengers got down, but Valli remained in the bus. She did not get down. The conductor asked her the reason. She told him that she would go back on the same bus, and that she had boarded the bus only to enjoy a bus ride. The conductor also came to know that she had just enough money for her tickets. So, he also offered to buy her a drink but she refused and she didn't have extra money to buy the things. She was also afraid of being alone there.

Q 15. How did Valli react when she saw the dead cow by the roadside?

(CBSE 2016)

Ans. On her return journey, Valli saw a young cow lying dead by the roadside. It was the same cow who had come in front of their bus when they were en route to town. The cow had probably been struck

by some fast moving vehicle. Valli was overcome with sadness on seeing the dead cow. The memory of the dead cow, legs spread eagled, a fixed stare in its lifeless eyes and blood all over; haunted her, dampening her enthusiasm. She came face-to-face with the reality of death. She realised that a lovable and beautiful creature while alive looked horrible and frightening after death. She did not want to look out of the window. She sat glued to her seat like a sad person.

Q 16. Why does Valli refuse to look out of the window on her way back?

Ans. While on her way back, Valli saw a young cow lying dead by the roadside. This scene was horrible and frightening. She lost all her enthusiasm and excitement. That's why she no longer wanted to look out of the window.

Q 17. What does Valli mean when she says, 'I was just agreeing with what you said about things happening without our knowledge'?

Ans. Valli, when said so, only meant to agree with the thoughts of her mother. Her mother was saying that there were many things in this world which happen without our knowledge and even if we know few of them, it is not possible to understand them completely.

Q 18. Valli's unique maiden bus ride experience could be possible because she belonged to a small village. Do you agree? Why?/Why not? (CBSE SQP 2022-23)

Ans. Yes. I agree that Valli's unique maiden bus ride experience could be possible because she belonged to a small village. A bus ride seemed like a fascinating means of recreation unlike in cities or towns where it was common. Had she been living in the city, she would not have found a bus ride so fascinating.

OR

No, I don't agree that Valli's unique maiden bus ride experience could be possible because she belonged to a small village. A child belonging to a village cannot travel alone without being noticed because of the familiarity and can be probably prevented from travelling alone.



Long Answer Type Questions

Q 1. Though Valli was only a child, she behaved like a mature person. Do you agree/disagree? Support your answer with examples from the text.

Ans. It is a fact that Valli was only a small child. But she behaves like a mature person. She is an intelligent and a wise girl. She is fascinated by the bus and nurtures an ambition to ride on it. For that, she plans meticulously. And one day, she rides on it. First, she shows responsibility in planning and riding on the bus. She is a self-respecting girl. Her behaviour with different people on the bus shows that Valli is really a mature person. She glares at the conductor who addresses her as 'madam'. An elderly man

addressed her as a child and she retorted back saying that she was not a child. An elderly woman climbed the bus and sat beside her. She enquired if Valli was travelling alone. Valli told her not to bother about her. Her sadness at the death of the cow also reveal her maturity. Thus, Valli proves in every way that she is mature, though she is still a child.

Q 2. On the basis of your reading of 'Madam Rides the Bus', write the character-sketch of Valli.

OR

Valli was an extraordinary girl who had self-confidence and courage to realise her ambition by planning and drawing on her spirit of adventure. Discuss in reference to the chapter 'Madam Rides the Bus'. (CBSE 2023)

OR

The people and surroundings are a great book to learn from. Valli in the lesson 'Madam Rides the Bus' learns a lot from others. Mention the traits of her character which help her to learn from people and her surroundings. (CBSE 2023)

Ans. Valli was an eight-year-old village girl. She had no playmates. Her favourite pastime was to stand at the doorstep of her house, and watch things, people and their activities. Undoubtedly, the people and surroundings are a great book to learn from.

Valli was an extraordinary girl who had self-confidence, courage and strong determination. She was fascinated by the bus that came to the village every hour. She developed a strong desire to ride the bus. She realised her ambition and meticulously planned for it. She gathered information about the distance, time, ticket and money. Showing self-restraint, she resisted the temptation to buy peppermint, toys or a ride on merry-go-round to be able to save-enough money for her ride.

The way she stopped the bus, boarded it and refused the conductor's free treat, revealed her commanding, confident, self-dependent and self-respecting nature. Her enthusiasm and excitement to look out at the outside scenery shows that she knew how to enjoy herself. She was sensitive, too. Her spirits were dampened and she became sad to see a dead cow.

Though a child, she behaved like a mature person.

Q 3. What did Valli experience during her first journey by bus?

Ans. Valli had a great time on her first bus journey. She got to see many things. Valli saw a canal and beyond it she saw palm trees, grassland, distant mountains and the blue sky. She also saw acres and acres of green fields. She felt that trees came running towards them but then stopped as the bus reached them and then rushed away in the other direction. Valli was greatly amused when she saw a young

cow right in the middle of the road in front of the bus. The more the driver honked, the more the cow got frightened and galloped faster, coming in front of the bus again and again. Valli also saw a railroad crossing. She saw a speck of a train at a distance which grew bigger and bigger as it drew near. She also saw well-laid-out shopping streets with glittering displays of clothes and other merchandise. Valli also experienced sadness on seeing the dead body of young cow. So, we can say that Valli had a pleasant as well as a sad experience on her first bus journey.

Q 4. 'Never mind,' she said, 'I can get on by myself, you don't have to help me,' said Valli to the conductor. She shows extraordinary courage in making the bus journey all alone. Taking inspiration from Valli's character, write how ability and courage to take risk are essential to fulfil one's dream. (CBSE 2015)

Ans. It is seen that human beings are in the habit of dreaming. They always dream about one thing or the other. Dreaming is very important for human progress. But, to fulfil one's dream, one needs ability and courage to take risks. One needs planning, courage and willingness to take risks. If one doesn't have these, one's life becomes boring. So, one must be able to take risks. All the great men have become great only by taking risks. They had the courage to pursue their dreams. When ordinary people slept, they worked hard to achieve their dreams. Valli's character shows all this. So, ability and courage to take risks are essential to fulfil one's dream.

Q 5. Journeys have a great importance in our lives. Journeys give special impact to stories. Explain and elucidate.

Ans. There is no doubt in it that journeys are of great importance in our lives. We always undertake a journey with some planned ideas and pre-conceived notions. We have some thoughts about our journey and some imaginations about our destination. Automatically, some thoughts are created by our mind. After completing the journey, we have many important and unending memories. The same thing we find in this lesson, when Valli decides to have a ride on the bus. She has many different ideas about the journey. She dreams about the sights and all these ideas come true when she starts her journey by bus. All her imaginations come true. On the way, she claps with joy and enjoys her journey. Also, the description of journey gives a very special effect to a story, and this makes it interesting. Everybody loves a story based on journeys. One such example is 'Gulliver's Travels'. This book is based on the travel experiences and is loved by everyone.

Q 6. Give examples from the text to show that Valli was a meticulous planner. (CBSE 2016)

OR

Whenever we want to achieve something difficulties always come in our way. What did Valli have to do to go and ride in a bus? (CBSE 2017)

OR

Once we decide to achieve something difficulties come in our way. With focused attention we can make that achievement. How did Valli succeed in fulfilling her desire of riding a bus? (CBSE 2017)

Ans. Valli indeed was a meticulous planner. The following examples from the text make this clear:

- (i) Over many days and months, Valli listened carefully to conversations between her neighbours and people who regularly used the bus, and she also asked a few discreet questions here and there. This way she picked up various small details about the bus journey.
- (ii) The trip to the town took forty-five minutes. On reaching town, if she stayed in her seat and paid another thirty paise, she could return home on the same bus. This meant that she could take the one-o'clock afternoon bus, reach the town at one forty-five and be back home by about two forty-five.
- (iii) Every day after lunch her mother would nap from about one to four or so. Valli always used these hours for her 'excursions' as she stood looking from the doorway of her house or sometimes even ventured out into the village; these same hours could be used for her first excursion outside the village.

Q 7. As Valli, make a diary entry about your experience of riding the bus alone for the first time. (CBSE 2022 Term-2)

Ans. Day and Date

9 pm

Dear Diary,

Today, I got the chance to experience my first journey by bus alone. I got to see many things. I saw a canal and beyond it I saw palm trees, grassland, distant mountains and the blue sky. I also saw acres and acres of green fields. I felt that trees were running towards us but then stopped as the bus reached them and rushed away in the other direction. I was very amused when I saw a young cow right in the middle of the road in front of the bus. The more the driver honked, the more the cow got frightened and galloped faster. I also saw a railroad crossing. I also saw well-laid-out shopping streets with glittering displays of clothes. On my way home I also experienced sadness on seeing the dead body of the young cow. I can say that I had a pleasant as well as a sad experience on my first bus journey.

Bye.