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NCERT Solutions for Class 9 English Beehive Chapter 5 The Snake and the Mirror

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NCERT Textbook Questions

Thinking about the Text (Page 60)

I. Discuss in pairs and answer each question below in a short paragraph

Question 1

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Question 2.

What two “important” and “earth-shaking” decisions did the doctor take while he was looking into the mirror?

Answer:

The doctor took the following two ‘important’ and ‘earth shaking’ decisions:

- (a) He would shave daily and grow a thin moustache to look more handsome.
- (b) He would always keep that attractive smile on his face.

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Question 3.

“I looked into the mirror and smiled,” says the doctor. A little later he says, “I forgot my danger and smiled feebly at myself.” What is the doctor’s opinion about himself when (i) he first smiles, and (ii) he smiles again? In what way do his thoughts change in between, and why?

Answer:

The doctor thought that he had a good smile when he first smiled. But when he smiled a little later, he laughed at his destiny. His life was in danger. His thoughts got changed because of the snake. He was quite near to death.

II. This story about a frightening incident is narrated in a humorous way. What makes it humorous?

(Think of the contrasts it presents between dreams and reality. Some of them are listed below).

Write short paragraphs on each of these to get your answer.

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1. The doctor is a poor man. He does not have much money. His house has no electricity. It is a small rented room which has many rats. He has about sixty rupees in his suitcase. Along with some shirts and dhotis, he also possesses one solitary black coat.
2. He wants to be a handsome person. So he decides to shave daily and grow a thin moustache. He also wishes to accumulate wealth.

Question 2.

1. The person he wants to marry
2. The person he actually marries

Answer:

1. He intends to marry a woman doctor who has plenty of money and a good medical practice. He wishes to have a fat wife so that she cannot run after him and catch him when he would make a mistake.
2. The person he actually marries is a thin reedy person with the gift of a sprinter.

Question 3.

1. His thoughts when he looks into the mirror
2. His thoughts when the snake is coiled around his arm

Answer:

1. He thinks that he should look smart. So he decides to shave daily and retain his smile. He is happy and contented when he looks into the mirror.
2. When the snake coiled around his left arm above the elbow, he kept sitting there holding his breath. He became motionless. He was afraid of the snake.

Thinking about language

(Page 61)

Question 1.

6. I looked into the mirror and smiled. It was an attractive smile.
7. I was suddenly a man of flesh and blood.
8. I was after all a bachelor, and a doctor too on top of it!
9. The fellow had such a sense of cleanliness ... ! The rascal could have taken it and used it after washing it with soap and water.
10. Was it trying to make an important decision about growing a moustache or using eye shadow and mascara or wearing a vermilion spot on its forehead.

Answers:

- The sentences (1), (3), (4), (5) tell that the author (a) was afraid of the snake.
- The sentences (6) and (8) tell that he (b) was proud of his appearance.
- The sentences (9) and (10) tell that (c) he had a sense of humour.
- The sentences (2) and (7) tell that (d) he was no longer afraid of the snake.

Question 2.

Expressions used to show fear

Can you find the expressions in the story that tell you that the author was frightened? Read the story and complete the following sentences.

1. I was turned
2. I sat there holding
3. In the light of the lamp I sat there like

Answers:

1. I was turned to stone.
2. I sat there holding my breath.
3. In the light of the lamp I sat there like a stone image in the flesh.

Question 3.

sentence. The first one has been done for you.

1. I knew a man was following me, I was scared out of my wits,
2. I got a fright when I realised how close I was to the cliff edge.
3. He nearly jumped out of his skin when he saw the bull coming towards him.
4. You really gave me a fright when you crept up behind me like that.
5. Wait until I tell his story—it will make your hair stand on end.
6. Paralysed with fear, the boy faced his abductors.
7. The boy hid behind the door, not moving a muscle.

Answers:

1. I knew a man was following me, I was scared out of my wits, (very frightened)
2. I got a fright when I realized how close I was to the cliff edge, (too scared to move).
3. He nearly jumped out of his skin when he saw the bull coming towards him. (frightened by something that happens suddenly)
4. You really gave me a fright when you crept up behind me like that, (made someone feel frightened)
5. Wait until I tell his story—it will make your hair stand on end. (very frightened)
6. Paralysed with fear, the boy faced his abductors, (too scared to move)
7. The boy hid behind the door, not moving a muscle, (too scared to move)

Question 4.

Report these questions, using if/whether or why/when/where/how/which/what. Remember the italicised verbs change into the past tense.

1. Meena asked her friend, "Do you think your teacher will come today?"
2. David asked his colleague, "Where will you go this summer?"
3. He asked the little boy, "Why are you studying English?"
4. She asked me, "When are we going to leave?"
5. Pran asked me, "Have you finished reading the newspaper?"
6. Seema asked her, "How long have you lived here?"
7. Sheila asked the children, "Are you ready to do the work?"

Answers:

Speaking

(Page 63)

Question 1.

Using some of the expressions given above in exercise III, talk about an incident when you were very scared. You may have a competition to decide whose story was the most frightening.

Answer:

For self-attempt.

Dictation

(Page 63)

The following paragraph is about the Indian Cobra. Read it twice and close your book. Your teacher will then dictate the paragraph to you. Write it down with appropriate punctuation marks.

The Indian cobra is the common name for members of the family of venomous snakes, known for their intimidating looks and deadly bite. Cobras are recognized by the heads that they flare when angry or disturbed; the heads are created by the extension of the ribs behind the cobras' heads. Obviously the best prevention is to avoid getting bitten. This is facilitated by the fact that humans are not the natural prey of any venomous snake. We are a bit large for them to swallow whole and they have no means of chopping us up into bite-size pieces. Nearly all snakebites in humans are the result of a snake defending itself when it feels threatened. In general snakes are shy and will simply leave if you give them a chance.

Writing

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Question 1.

Try to rewrite the story without its humour, merely as a frightening incident. What details or parts of the story would you leave out?

Answer:

Do yourself.

Question 2.



The fairest of them all

A monkey preens itself using a piece of mirror, in the Delhi ridge.

(‘To preen oneself’ means to spend a lot of time making oneself look attractive, and then admiring one’s appearance. The word is used in disapproval.)

Answer:

It was a sunny day. A monkey was walking in the garden. Fortunately he came to the corner of the garden and found a piece of mirror. The monkey started looking in the mirror. First of all he looked his face in the mirror and was very happy. He thought that God has given him a human face. Again he looked his hands and fingers in the mirror. He was very proud because he realised that his hands were long and he could hold things easily. At last he decided to look his body in the mirror. This time he was not so much happy because it was full of hair. The monkey was sad and his hands started trembling. Unfortunately, the mirror fell down from his hand and broke into several pieces. When he tried to look his face in the pieces of mirror, he saw his cut faces. This time he became angry and left the place.

Translation

(Page 64)

The text you read is a translation of a story by a well-known Malayalam writer, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer.

In translating a story from one language to another, a translator must keep the content intact. However, the language and the style differ in different translations of the same text.

– Here are two translations of the opening paragraphs of a novel by the Japanese writer, Haruki Murakami. Read them and answer the questions given below :

A	B
<p>When the phone rang I was in the kitchen, boiling a potful of spaghetti and whistling along with FM broadcast of the overture to Rossini's The Thieving Magpie, which has to be the perfect music for cooking pasta.</p> <p>I wanted to ignore the phone, not only because the spaghetti was nearly done, but because Claudio Ab- bado was bringing the London Symphony to its musical climax.</p>	<p>I'm in the kitchen cooking spaghetti when the woman calls. Another moment until the spaghetti is done ; there I am, whistling the prelude to Rossini s La Gazza Ladra along with the FM radio.</p> <p>Perfect spaghetti cooking music!</p> <p>I hear the telephone ring but tell myself, Ignore it. Let the spaghetti finish cooking. It's almost done, and besides, Claudio Ab- bado and the London Symphony Orchestra are coming to a crescendo.</p>

Compare the two translations on the basis of the following points :

- the tense of narration (past and present tense)
- short, incomplete sentences
- sentence length

Which of these translations do you like? Give reasons for your choice.

Answer:

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- Sentence length

Opinion : The Column B has short sentences. They are simple and easily comprehensible. Besides, they are framed in the present tense.

Reason : I like the paragraph marked as B. The sentences are framed in the present tense. They give out clear-cut ideas in its simple form. We can easily remember the facts expressed in the present tense.

Extract Based Questions (3 marks each)

Read the passage given below and answer the questions that follow:

Question 1:

It seemed as if God appreciated that. The snake turned its head. It looked into the mirror and saw its reflection. I do not claim that it was the first snake that ever looked into the mirror. But it was certain » that the snake was looking into the mirror. Was it admiring its own beauty ? Was it trying to make an important decision about growing a moustache or using eye shadow and mascara or wearing a vermilion spot on its forehead ?

1. Where did the snake move its head ?
2. Why did the narrator call it the “first snake” ?
3. Find a word in the passage that means ‘look at with pleasure and satisfaction’.

(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-013)

Answer:

1. The snake moved its head towards the mirror.
2. The narrator calls it the “first snake” because this was the first snake he had seen which enjoyed looking into the mirror.
3. Admiring.

Question 2:

“I took my friend and one or two others to my room to move my things from there. But we found we had little to carry.”

snake.

2. There was little to carry because thieves had stolen his things.
3. Foe.

Question 3:

I didn't jump. I didn't tremble. I didn't cry out. There was no time to do any such thing. The snake slithered along my shoulder and coiled around my left arm above the elbow. The hood was spread out and its head was hardly three or four inch from my face!

It would not be correct to say merely that I sat there holding my breath I was turned to stone.

1. Why did the author not jump, tremble and cry ?
2. Did the snake bit the speaker ? What was his reaction ?
3. What does the word "tremble" from the above lines mean ? **(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-038)**

Answer:

1. The author did not jump, tremble and cry because a snake had fallen on his shoulders.
2. No, the snake did not bite the speaker. He said, "Oh!" He had a relief as he was not bitten by the snake.
3. Shiver.

Question 4:

The snake unwound itself from my arm and slowly slithered into my lap. From there it crept onto the table and moved towards the mirror. Perhaps it wanted to enjoy its reflection at closer quarters.

1. Where did the snake settle after uncoiling from the writer's arm ?
2. Why did the snake move towards the mirror ?
3. What does the word "slithered" mean ? **(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-041)**

Answer:

1. The snake settled in the writer's lap after uncoiling from the writer's arm.
2. The snake moved towards the mirror to have a closer look of its image.
3. Crept.

3. Find a word from the passage which means the same as "stretched".

(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-023)

Answer:

1. The snake coiled around his left arm above the elbow and spread out its hood'
2. Death was just three or four inches away from him.
3. Spread.

Short Answer Type Questions (2 marks each)

(About 30-40 words each)

Question 1:

What was the doctor thinking while he was seated before the mirror ? **(SA-1,2014-15)**

Answer:

The doctor thought of various medicine he had and if any medicine was good enough to save him if the snake did bite him. He also realized that God had punished him for being so proud and arrogant.

Question 2:

Why did the doctor run from his house ? **(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-014)**

Or

Why did the doctor run away to his friend's house ? **(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-052)**

Answer:

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He sat on the chair holding his breath. His body was still but his mind remained very active.

Question 4:

How did the snake change the writer's opinion about himself ? **(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-025)**

Answer:

The writer was proud of being a doctor. Coming face-to-face with the snake made him humble. He thought he was only a poor and stupid doctor who should not be proud of his profession.

Question 5:

While looking into the mirror, what important and earth-shaking decisions did the doctor make ? **(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-027)**

Or

What were the two important decisions taken by the doctor while looking into the mirror ? **(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-039)**

Answer:

The important decision made by the doctor was that he would shave daily and grow a thin moustache, to look more handsome.

The earth-shaking decision made by the doctor was that he would always keep that attractive smile on his face.

Question 6:

What did the doctor do on seeing the snake ? **(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-029)**

Answer:

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Question 7:

What type of woman did the doctor in the story "The Snake and the Mirror", want to get married to and why?

(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-031)

Answer:

The doctor, who had plenty of money and good medical practice, wanted to get married to a woman who was fat. The reason he gave was that if he, the doctor husband ever made any mistake, and tried to run away, she would not be able to catch him and stop him from escaping.

Question 8:

Why did the author of "The Snake and the Mirror" fantasize a fat woman as his wife? **(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-037)**

Answer:

The author of "The Snake and the Mirror" fantasizes a fat woman as his wife since she would never be able to catch the doctor on his mistakes. She would not be able to run after him and he would be saved of all kinds of punishments. Thus, the author fantasizes a fat woman as his wife.

Question 9:

Why did the snake leave the doctor's arm? **(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-040)**

Answer:

The snake left the doctor's arm because it saw its reflection in the mirror and was fascinated by it and so wanted to enjoy its own reflection by having a closer look. Like his parents even he respects all religions.

Question 10:

What made the doctor utter "Death lurked four inches away" ? **(Board Term 1,2012, ELI- 048)**

Answer:

The doctor was under the grip of the snake, and sat motionless as a statue, his body was inactive but mind was completely active. He knew very well that the snake would bite him at the slightest movement. This is what made his utter these words.

Long Answer Type Questions (4 marks each) **(About 80-100 words each)**

Question 1:

"Birds of the same feathers flock together" goes the saying. Does the encounter between the snake and the doctor in the story "The Snake and the Mirror" support the saying? Why or why not ? **(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-016)**

Answer:

Yes, the story supports the saying which means that the people of similar habits and tastes find each other. The doctor enjoyed self-appreciation and could not resist the temptation of looking at his reflection in the mirror. He also takes a number of decisions, so as to improve his looks. The snake that coiled itself on the doctor's arm, kept staring at its reflection in the mirror for a long time, enjoying its beauty and appreciating its form. The snake was so much engrossed in its beauty that it forgot as to why it had come to the author's house.

Question 2:

Without mirror, the story will lose its charm and reality. Justify. **(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-018)**

Answer:

The story would lose its charm and reality without the mirror because it fascinates both the characters i.e., doctor and the snake. The doctor makes two important decisions – saving daily and growing thin moustaches to make himself more handsome and keeping a smile on the face all the time while looking at

Answer:

The doctor and the snake had striking similarities. Both were victims of self-adoration. This is clearly visible in two decisions of the doctor- to shave daily and a grow moustache and also to wear an attractive smile on his face to look handsome. While the snake enjoyed looking at his reflection at closer quarters. It did not move the doctor's arm and later crept into the table and moved towards the mirror. ,

Question 4:

Justify the title of the story 'The Snake and the Mirror'. **(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-020)**

Answer:

The story revolves round th#narrator, the snake, and the mirror. The narrator hears some fanjiliar sounds – a dull thud and a snake lands on his shoulder. The doctor is terrified and sits there like a stone. He suddenly feels the presence of the cfeator of the world and death 4-inches away. He forgets danger and smiles feebly. The snake looks into the mirror, moves towards the mirror and wants to enjoy a close reflection in the mirror. Thus the title is justified as the story revolves around the snake and the mirror.

Question 5:

Describe in detail the doctor's feelings when he saw the snake coiled around his arm ?**(Board Term 1,2012, ELI-043)**

Answer:

The doctor was so engrossed in his day dreaming that he did not realize that a snake had wriggled over the back of the chair and landed on his shoulders and could round his left arm with its hood spread out. The doctor sat there without moving an inch, he was afraid lest the snake might strike. He thought of various medicines he had and if any one of them was good enough to save him if the * snake struck him. He realized the presence of God and felt that it was a punishment for being proud and arrogant.

Value Based Question (4 marks)

Question 1:

God has a lot of ways of controlling Our lines. Discuss this in the light of the story 'The Snake and the Mirror' . .

Answer:

Our life is definitely in the hands of God. He is fire supreme power in control of our lives. At times we forget this like the young doctor. He was under the false belief that he was the one who would decide what was going to happen in his life. He was standing in front of the mirror with a lot of pride thinking about his future.

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