



My
English
Reader



Class-VII

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People at Work



Introduction

I. Look at the list of people given below and encircle the ones whose vocation does not affect our lifestyle at all.

doctor	domestic help	driver	shopkeeper
teacher	courier man	electrician	sweeper
singer	florist	engineer	plumber

II. 'The work done by each individual is important and it affects our lives directly or indirectly.' Discuss in groups of four.

III. In the word basket at the bottom of this page, several professions are mentioned. Each one of them falls in one of the categories mentioned below. Complete the job ladder by writing appropriate profession on each rung.

EDUCATION

SCIENCE

MEDIA

ENTERTAINMENT

MISCELLANEOUS



- A.1. How do you feel when you join a new school or a new group of friends? Do you quickly get accustomed to the new surroundings or do you take time? Here is a play about a new assistant and his first day at work. Read how confidently he manages everything but.....

▶ The New Assistant

Characters

Mr Higgins, owner of the shop

Tom, the new assistant

First Customer

Young Man

Young Woman

Rich Lady

SCENE 1

A shop. It is full of old things including antique pieces: pictures, pots, plates and some furniture. It is Tom's first morning in the shop. Mr Higgins is explaining the business to him.

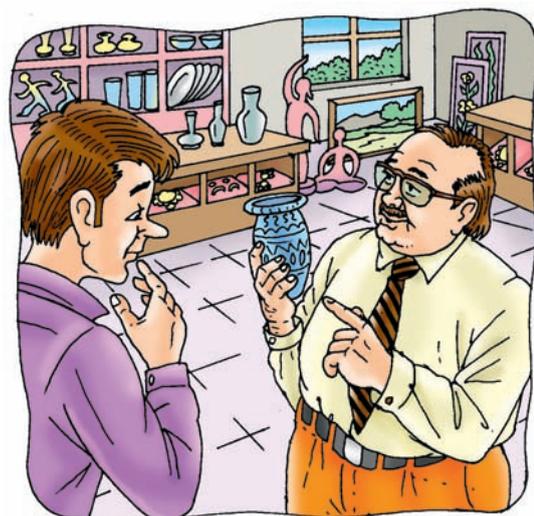
Mr Higgins : It takes a long time to learn about these old things. I've sold them all my life, but I still make mistakes.

Tom : Well, I don't want to make mistakes.

Mr Higgins : (Picking up a silver pot) This silver pot, for example.

Tom : It looks quite nice.

Mr Higgins : I paid ten pounds for it. But it's worth only about seven pounds. It isn't very good silver. I made a mistake when I bought it.



Tom : I see. What price will you get for it?

Mr Higgins : Perhaps eight pounds. So I'll lose two pounds. But look at that picture over there. (He points to a picture).

Tom : The big one, near the window?

Mr Higgins : That's the one. Well, I paid only fifteen pounds for it, but I'll sell it for twenty-five.

Tom : A profit of ten pounds! That's quite good.

Mr Higgins : Yes, it's not bad. But remember, a few things in the shop are worth a hundred pounds also.

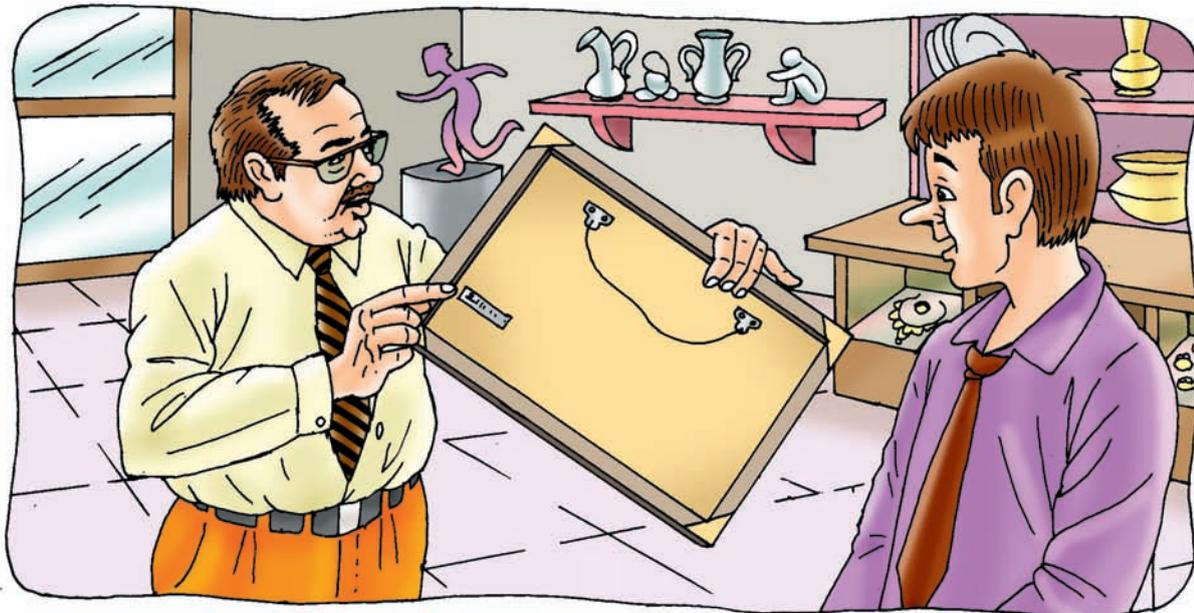
Tom : But how can I know the price? I can't be sure.

Mr Higgins : I'll tell you, of course. I don't want to lose money!

Tom : But you may not be here. What shall I do then?

Mr Higgins : I've thought of that. I've marked the price in very small numbers. You can try to get a bigger price. The customer won't see the numbers.

Tom : I'm beginning to understand.



Mr Higgins : For example, I've marked the price at the back of the picture. Twenty-five pounds. And I've marked it under this pot. Pick it up and have a look.

Tom : (Picking up the silver pot) Yes, here's the price. Eight pounds. But I can try to sell it for nine.

Mr Higgins : That's the right idea! You're learning quickly! Yes, ask for nine pounds and perhaps you'll get eight. That's business.

Tom : But perhaps the customer will only offer six.

Mr Higgins : That's not enough. But he may buy two or three things. Then you can sell it for six. Do you understand the idea?

Tom : Yes. I mustn't lose money.

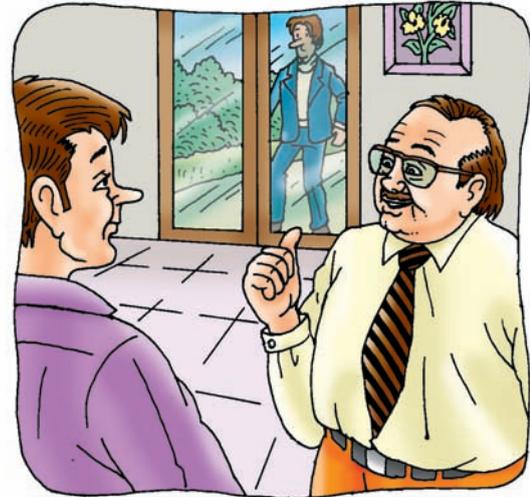
Mr Higgins : That's right. If you lose money, you're not the right assistant for me.

Tom : But you'll be in the shop today, won't you?

Mr Higgins : I have to go out for a short while, for about an hour. But it's all right. Remember, I've marked the price on things. If you're not sure, don't sell.

Tom : All right. I'll take care.

Mr Higgins : Look, there's a man outside the shop now. He's coming in. Listen to me and you'll learn something. (The man comes into the shop.)



Mr Higgins : Good morning, sir.

First Customer : Good morning. I wanted to look round your shop.

Mr Higgins : Yes, of course, sir. Are you looking for something special?

First Customer : I'm interested in glass things.

Mr Higgins : Glass? I have a few good pieces of glass. Allow me to show them to you, sir. (He takes out some pieces of glass and puts them in front of the man). Do you like any of these? (The man picks up two or three pieces and looks at them.)

First Customer : This flower vase is rather nice.

Mr Higgins : Yes, it is. Isn't it? It's quite an old piece. I haven't many pieces like that.

First Customer : My wife likes glass things. I'm looking for a present for her.

Mr Higgins : Well, she'll certainly like this.

First Customer : How much is it?

Mr Higgins : Three pounds, sir.
Not much for a vase like this.

First Customer : I know. But I don't want to spend three pounds.

Mr Higgins : All right. You can have it for two pounds 75 pence. I paid two pounds 50 pence for it. I must make a small profit, mustn't I?



First Customer : That's a fair price. All right. I'll take it.

Mr Higgins : You won't be sorry, sir. Your wife will like it. (Mr Higgins puts the vase in some paper. The customer pays Mr Higgins and takes the vase.)

Mr Higgins : Thank you, sir. (The customer goes out. Mr Higgins and Tom are alone in the shop.)

Mr Higgins : Well, do you understand the idea?

Tom : Yes, but you didn't make much profit. Only 25 pence.

Mr Higgins : Of course I did. I made quite a good profit.

Tom : But you paid two pounds 50 pence for the vase.

Mr Higgins : Oh, I said that. But in fact I paid one pound 50 pence. So I made a profit of one pound 25 pence. That's not bad, is it?

- Tom** : It's very good.
- Mr Higgins** : And you must do the same, young man. Well, I'm going out now. I'll be back before twelve. Remember, if you're not sure, don't sell.
- Tom** : I won't forget, Mr Higgins. (Mr Higgins puts on his hat and coat and goes out.)

SCENE 2

Tom is alone in the shop. He walks round and picks up certain things. He wants to learn the prices. A young man and woman come into the shop.

- Tom** : Good morning. Can I help you? Are you looking for something special?
- Young Man** : Yes, we wanted to look at some rings.
- Tom** : With pleasure, sir. We have a few rings. I'll show them to you. (Tom puts some rings in front of them.)
- Young Man** : Have a look at these, dear. Do you like any of them?
(to the woman)



- Young Woman** : (Picking up two or three rings) They're all rather heavy. Ah, here's a nice one.
- Young Man** : And it's the right size. We'll take it if you like it.
- Young Woman** : But what's the price?
- Young Man** : How much does it cost?
(to Tom)



Tom : There's a small card on the ring. Let me see. (The woman gives Tom the ring). Yes, twelve pounds.

Young Woman : Can we have it for eleven?
(to Tom)

Tom : I'm sorry, madam. I can't change the price. I'm only an assistant.

Young Man : It's all right. We'll take it. (He takes out twelve pounds from his pocket and gives it to Tom).

Tom : Thank you, sir. Good day. Come again!
(The young man and woman go out of the shop.)

Tom : Well, that wasn't bad. I didn't make a profit, but I didn't lose any money. Perhaps I'll make a profit next time!

(After some time, the next customer comes in. She is wearing very good clothes and is clearly rich.)

Tom : Good morning, madam. Can I help you?

Rich Lady : Good morning. I want to see some pictures. Have you got any good ones?

Tom : Yes, madam. Do you like that one? (He points to the big picture near the window.)

Rich Lady : (Going to the picture) Yes, it's rather nice. How much does it cost?



Tom : (Thinking quickly) Well, the price is thirty pounds, but you can have it for twenty-eight.

Rich Lady : Twenty-eight. No, I'll give you twenty-seven for it.

Tom : All right, madam. Do you want to take it or shall I send it?

Rich Lady : I'll take it. I have my car outside.

Tom : I'll wrap it in some paper. It'll take a few minutes. Please look round the shop.

(The rich lady walks around in the shop. She stops in front of a large blue vase. It is very ugly.)

Rich Lady : Oh, I like this. It's very old, isn't it?

Tom : (Quickly) Yes, Mr Higgins said it was old. He knows about these things. It's Chinese.

Rich Lady : How much is it?

Tom : I'll have a look. (He picks up the vase and looks under it. The numbers are not very clear, so he takes it to the window.) Ah yes, one hundred and ten pounds. Quite a lot of money! Of course you don't often see Chinese vases like this.



Rich Lady : A hundred and ten pounds. Well, it may be worth it, but I don't want to pay that price. I'll give you a hundred pounds for it.

Tom : I can't take off ten pounds, madam. I'm only an assistant here. I'm not the owner of the shop. But you can have it for a hundred and five pounds.

Rich Lady : No, a hundred. It may be worth only ninety. Who knows?

Tom : I'm sorry, madam.

Rich Lady : Well, it doesn't matter. I've saved a hundred pounds. Will you bring the picture to my car?

Tom : Of course, madam. With pleasure.

(The woman pays Tom for the picture and goes out of the shop. Tom takes the picture to the car and comes back.)

Tom
(to himself) : Let me see. How have I done this morning? I sold the ring for the right price and I made two pounds on the picture. I didn't sell the vase, but perhaps the woman will come back. I hope this will please Mr Higgins.

SCENE 3

Later that morning. Mr Higgins has come back to the shop.

Mr Higgins : Well, young man, how have you done? What have you sold this morning?

Tom : A young man and woman came in. They bought a ring. They paid twelve pounds for it. I got the right price for it.

Mr Higgins : Good.

Tom : Then a rich lady came to the shop.

Mr Higgins : And she bought the picture. How much did you get for it?

Tom : Twenty-seven pounds. I asked for twenty-eight, but she only wanted to pay twenty-seven. So I accepted it.

Mr Higgins : Good! Good! That's a profit of twelve pounds. It was worth fifteen pounds only. You're learning quickly! Did she buy only the picture?

Tom : Yes, that was all. Oh, she also wanted that blue vase.

Mr Higgins : The ugly one? Why didn't you sell it to her? It doesn't cost much.



Tom : But the price is rather high. It's Chinese, isn't it?

Mr Higgins : One pound ten pence isn't much money!

Tom : One pound ten pence? Are you sure? (He looks at the price on the vase). Yes, you're quite right.

Mr Higgins : Of course I'm right. Why, how much did you ask for it?

Tom : I asked for a hundred and ten pounds.

Mr Higgins : (Laughing) A hundred and ten pounds! For that ugly old vase! Well, of course she didn't want to pay that.

Tom : No, but she offered me a hundred pounds.

Mr Higgins : Is this a joke? (He is not laughing now.)

Tom : No, it isn't a joke, Mr Higgins. She offered me a hundred pounds.

Mr Higgins : And you didn't take it?

Tom : Well, no sir. I thought that it was worth a hundred and ten pounds. I asked for one hundred and five, but she didn't want to pay that. I didn't want to lose money, sir.

Mr Higgins : (very angry) You didn't want to lose money! You've lost nearly a hundred pounds. I have sold old things for forty years, and no one has offered me a hundred pounds for an old vase. And you said NO!

Tom : I'm very sorry, Mr Higgins.

Mr Higgins :!



—Bonn Byrne

A.2. On the basis of your reading of the play, complete the following statements.

- (a) Mr Higgins felt that he made a mistake when he bought the silver pot because _____ more than _____.
- (b) Mr Higgins told Tom that he would prove to be the right assistant for him only _____.
- (c) Tom could not change the price of the ring because _____
_____.
- (d) The actual price of the picture was _____
and Tom sold it for _____.
- (e) The rich lady didn't buy the vase because _____
_____.
- (f) At the end of the play, Mr Higgins was angry at Tom because _____
_____.

A.3. Tom's Performance Appraisal

Good sales assistants should possess certain attributes. Some attributes are mentioned below. Put a tick (✓) against the ones which you think Tom had.

Good sales assistants should—

- be polite,
- have good product knowledge,
- be ready to assist customers,
- be sincere in their duties,
- be good negotiators,
- be confident.

A.4. HOTS

How many stars would you give Tom for his performance on the first day at work? Give reasons.

I would give Tom _____ stars out of five because _____

_____.

A.5. Life Skills

‘Oops! I made a mistake.’

“I’ve sold them all my life, but I still make mistakes,” says Mr Higgins. All human beings are fallible. All of us commit mistakes.

Please indicate how often you react in the following manner when you realise that you have committed a mistake.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
I feel sorry and cry a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I brood over it endlessly.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I take it casually.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I learn from my mistakes and try to improve.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I share the experience with my friends and discuss what I should have done.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

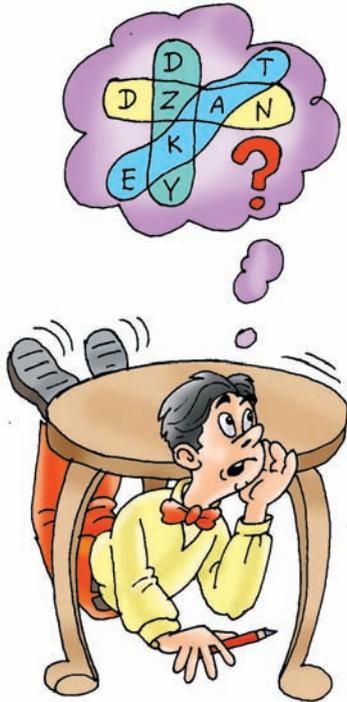
Which reactions are appropriate? Why? Discuss in a group.

A.6. While reading the play, you must have come across a few pairs of opposite expressions, e.g.

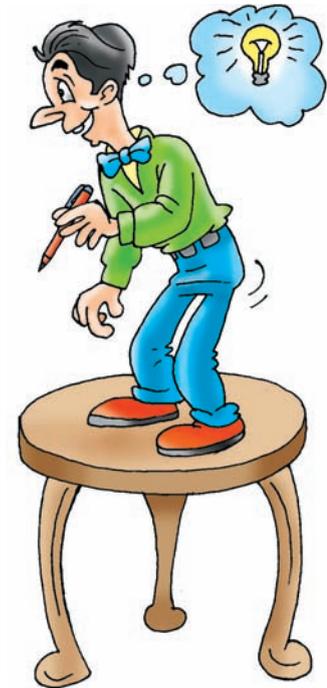
I’ve marked the price **behind** the picture.

Tom puts some rings **in front of** them.

Seven pairs of opposite words are hidden in the grid below. Identify them and write them in the space provided. Move diagonally, vertically or horizontally to locate them. One is done for you.



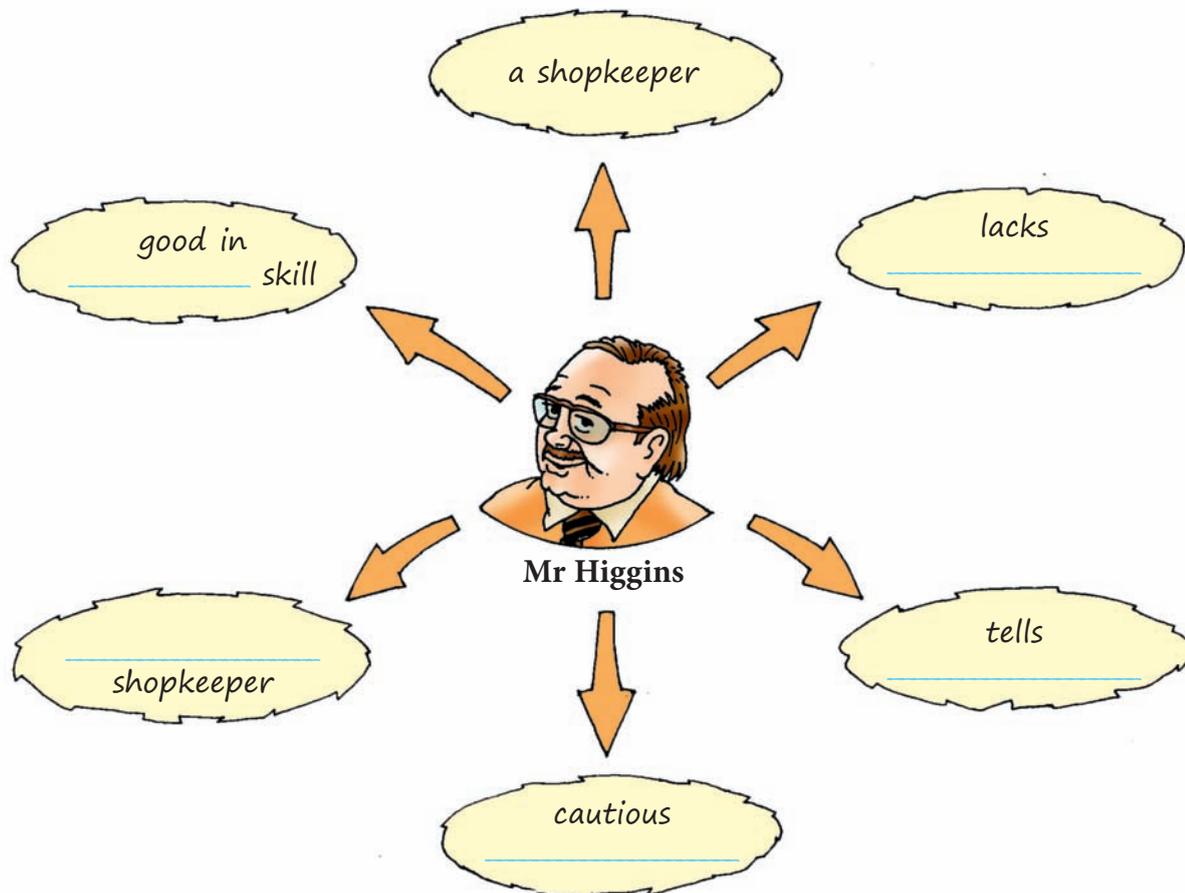
a	e	u	b	p	g	o	o	d	b
h	y	b	u	h	n	f	i	x	i
e	l	a	y	u	e	t	v	e	g
a	b	k	g	h	w	s	e	l	l
v	a	e	h	y	o	m	w	r	k
y	d	y	t	z	v	a	f	c	l
d	z	a	n	d	e	l	t	o	i
q	k	b	o	j	r	l	o	m	g
e	y	o	b	v	g	i	v	e	h
x	g	l	t	i	m	i	d	s	t
u	n	d	e	r	g	i	r	x	b



take	give

Listen to the audio CD titled *Listen & Comprehend* (Class-VII). After listening, answer the questions asked in the audio CD verbally. Listen to the tape script once again and attempt the given question. The tape script is given on page no. 32.

- A.7.** Listen to what Tom feels about Mr Higgins at the end of his first day at the shop. As you listen complete the given blanks.



- A.8.** Cast your vote.

Read the following questions.

1. Do you think Tom was responsible for the loss of hundred pounds to Mr Higgins?
2. Did Tom prove to be a good assistant?

Now ask all the students to cast their votes and find out what percentage of students says 'Yes' and what percentage says 'No' for the above two questions.

For the Teacher

- Divide the class into two groups for a discussion.
- To ensure maximum participation, tell the students that each speaker will get only one chance to present his/her argument.
- Encourage the students to present counter-arguments.

B.1. Now read this poem about a teacher who prays to God to enable her to perform her duties sincerely and properly.

► **Teacher's Prayer**

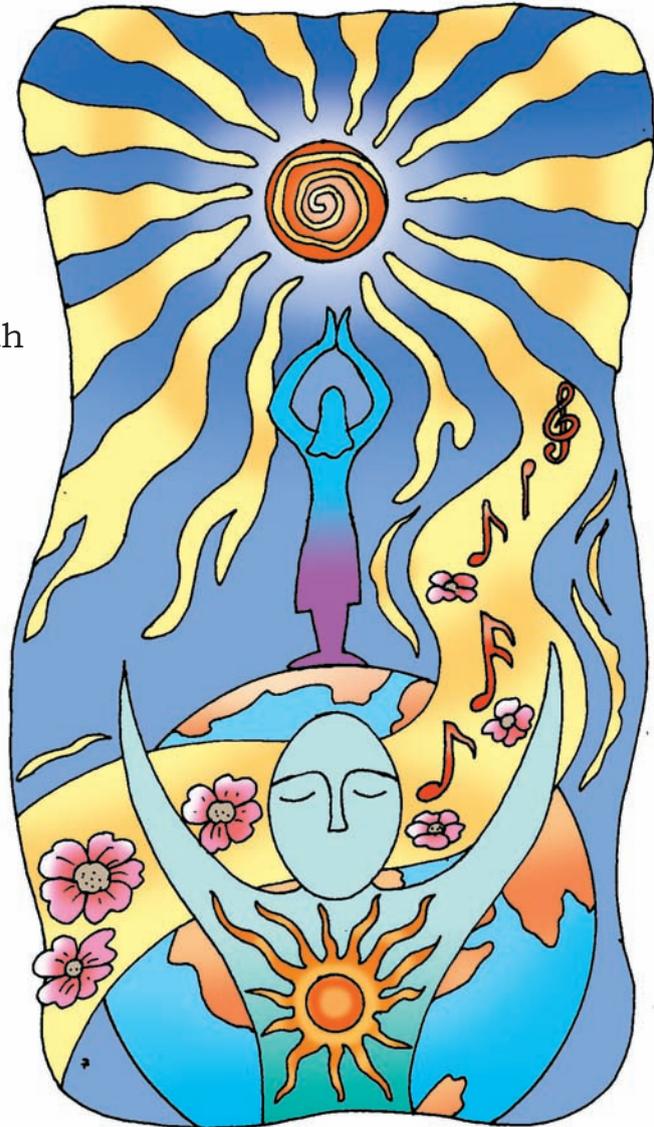
I want to teach my students
how to live this life on earth,
To face its struggle and its strife
and improve their worth.

Not just the lesson in a book
or how the rivers flow,
But how to choose the proper path
wherever they may go.

To understand eternal truth and
know the right from wrong,
And gather all the beauty
of a flower and a song.

For if I help the world to grow
in wisdom and in grace,
Then, I shall feel that I've
won and I have filled my place.

And so I ask for guidance, God,
that I may do my part,
For character and confidence
and happiness of heart.



—James J. Melcalf

B.2. On the basis of your understanding of the poem, complete the summary of the poem.

The teacher wants to teach her students how to lead their life nicely on this earth, how to overcome the _____ and _____ that one faces and how to improve their _____.

She doesn't want her students to have only _____ knowledge. What is more important is that they should be able to choose the _____ path. They should be able to distinguish between _____ as well as appreciate the _____ of nature.

She feels that she'll have done her duty sincerely if she can teach the children to develop _____ and _____.

Finally, she prays to God to _____ her in making this world full of individuals who have _____, _____ and _____.

B.3. Select an appropriate title for each stanza from the choices given below.

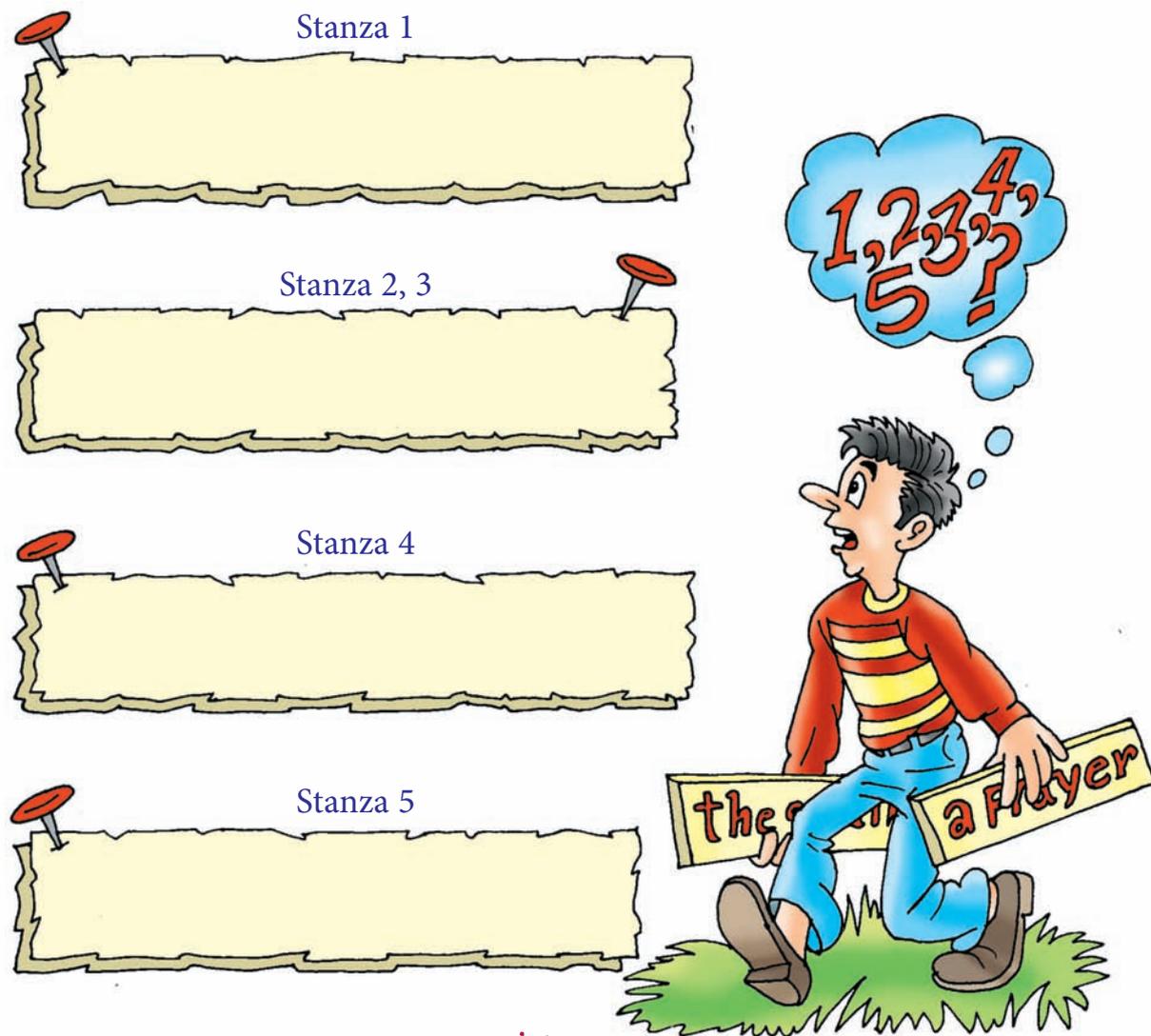
[a satisfied soul, a prayer, the guiding force, correct judgments]

Stanza 1

Stanza 2, 3

Stanza 4

Stanza 5



B.4. Select any four students in your class for a survey. Speak to them and find out whether they have been influenced by a teacher who brought about any change in their—

• behaviour

• personality

• academic performance

Complete the following table on the basis of your survey.

Name of the student	Name of the teacher/s	Subject/s taught	Change brought about in the student



B.5. HOTS

In the poem the teacher wants to teach her students ‘improve their worth’.

(a) What does the expression ‘improve their worth’ mean?

(b) How can students ‘improve their worth’?

B.6. Values

In the poem the teacher wants that her students should be able to make a distinction between the right and the wrong. Why is it important for us to tread the righteous path?

B.7. Read this diary entry of a Maths teacher who is very thrilled about the result of his entire class, especially of a student, Vaibhav, who has shown a very positive change.

July 7, 2016

10:30 p.m.



Tuesday

Today, I am very thrilled to see the performance of VII B in Maths. All the students have done so well in exams that the average result of this section is the best among all. To think that it was once considered to be the worst performing section in Class-VII! These students have made me feel proud of them.

I am especially happy about Vaibhav, who has shown a wonderful result and kept his promise of becoming a disciplined student. His changed behaviour and attitude have impressed the students as well as the teachers. I am so happy to be teaching a bunch of such sweet children.

B.8. Imagine yourself to be Vaibhav. Write a diary entry expressing your feelings of happiness and a sense of achievement on performing so well. Also, mention your feelings of gratitude to your teacher, who has been the guiding force behind you.



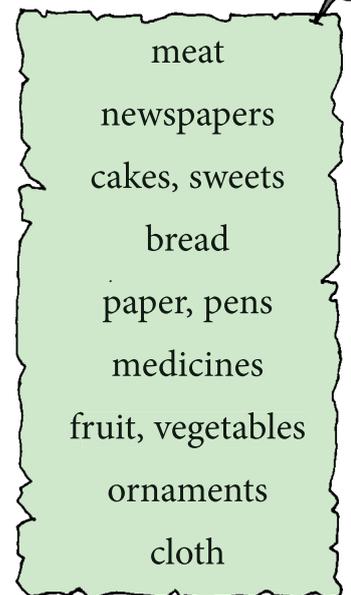
Today when my Maths teacher _____



Write the things sold by the following people with the help of the Clue Box.

- (a) draper _____
- (b) butcher _____
- (c) pharmacist _____
- (d) jeweller _____
- (e) green grocer _____
- (f) baker _____
- (g) stationer _____
- (h) confectioner _____
- (i) news-vendor _____

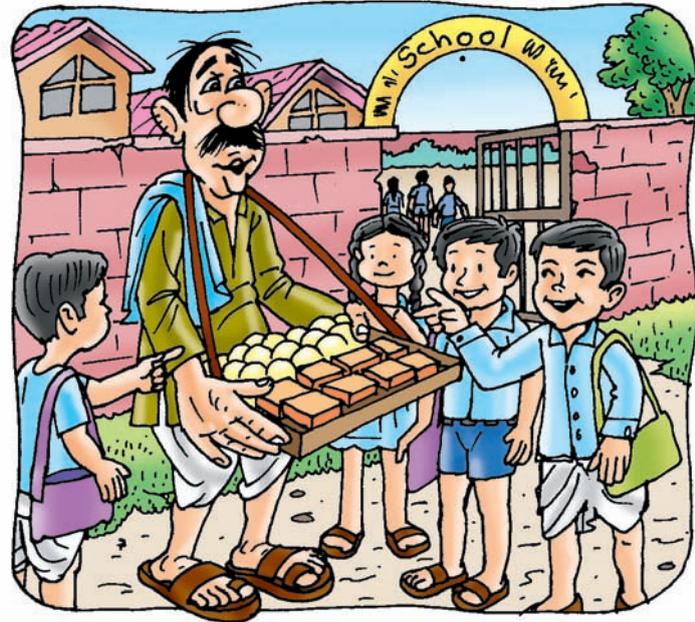
Clue Box



- C.1. Now read a story about Munisamy, who is a street vendor and sells sweets to school children. One day, while going for work, a small accident brings about a change in him. Read yourself to find out what happens to him and how he turns a new leaf in his life.

▶ The Vendor Of Sweets

He was a vendor of sweets. He had his own peculiar method of advertising and doing business. He never depended upon others for help and worked hard all alone. I speak of Munisamy—the man who sold sweets. His customers were children, the future citizens of the world.



At the stroke of nine in the morning, Munisamy would stand in front of the school with his tray of sweets. Till about eleven, the sale would be brisk. After that he moved off to other places. Even when the sweets became sticky in the heat, his business never **slackened**.

At five minutes to one in the afternoon, he again presented himself near the school. Between one and two, the lunch hour for children—he did good business, and at two-thirty went away to sell in the streets. He would go round every nook and corner of the town and try his luck and present himself again at the school at four.

Thus, Munisamy found a thriving business in vending sweets. There was depression in his trade only when the holidays came.

His child was now two-years old—an age at which a child is apt to put all kinds of things into its mouth. Munisamy, however, would not let him touch even the little crumbs that dropped on the ground.

‘Papa! a sweet for me,’ the little one would ask. ‘You will only have a kick,’ would come the angry voice of the father.

slackened: had fewer customers

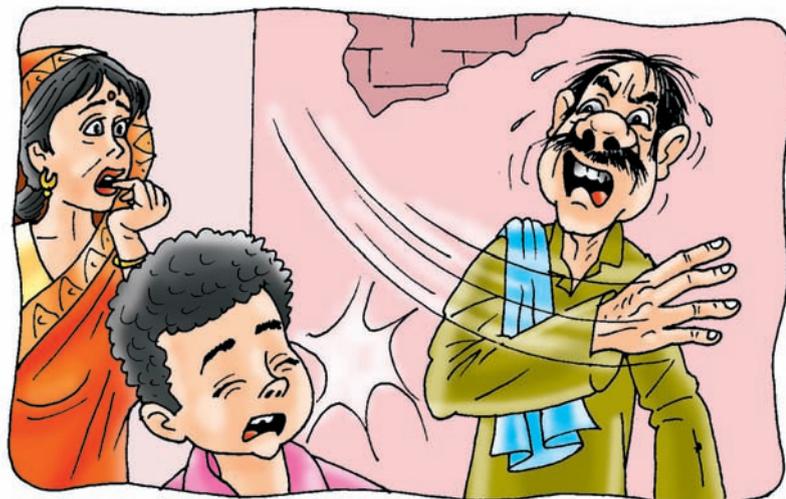


‘How you shout at a little child! What does he know?’ his wife would protest.

The child would stand crying for the sweet. The sight would fill the mother’s heart with pain, and **enrage** the father.

It was the re-opening day of the school. Munisamy got up early. He had decorated the tray with coloured paper and arranged the sweets in it. At that moment, the child approached the tray, picked up a sweet from it and put it in his mouth.

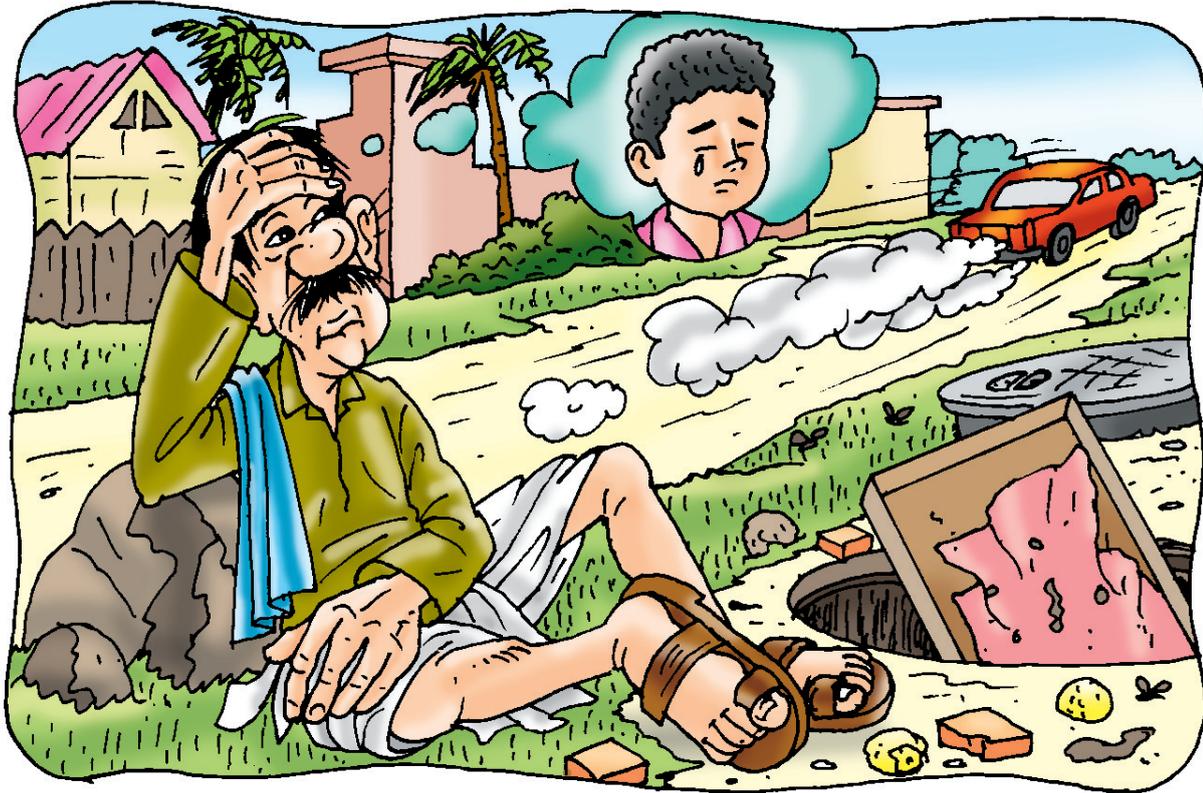
Munisamy saw it, ‘Damn the fellow!’ he cried and gave a sharp slap on the tender cheek of the child. He then hastily took up the tray and went out of the house. The child sank on the floor shrieking with pain.



Meanwhile, Munisamy was walking along very fast, with the tray on his head. ‘The little fellow’s hand has touched the sweets. It is an ill-omen. Suppose it affects the sale today!’ he reflected. Just as he was going

enrage: to make very angry

along a lane, he suddenly saw a big car **bearing down** in his direction. He hurried to a side, when his foot stumped against a big stone and he fell headlong on the ground. The sweets tray fell from his head into the gutter by the side of the road.



The sweets—the whole lot, from which he would not allow a single bit to be removed even for his own child lay in a heap before his very eyes, in the gutter. They were lost.

He beat his head and reflected bitterly, 'I prayed to God for a good sale. But I beat the child and was not aware that he was the image of that same God.'

All at once he was filled with an intense desire to go home and see the child. He got up and started back for home. The child had cried itself to sleep. Munisamy saw the red marks of his fingers on the soft cheek. He also saw the stains of tears over his face.

Munisamy's eyes filled with tears. He said to his wife, 'I swear to God I'll not touch the child again. I sinned and God has punished me.' He broke into sobs. In this **commotion**, the child woke up from its sleep and looked at them.

bearing down: moving in a threatening manner

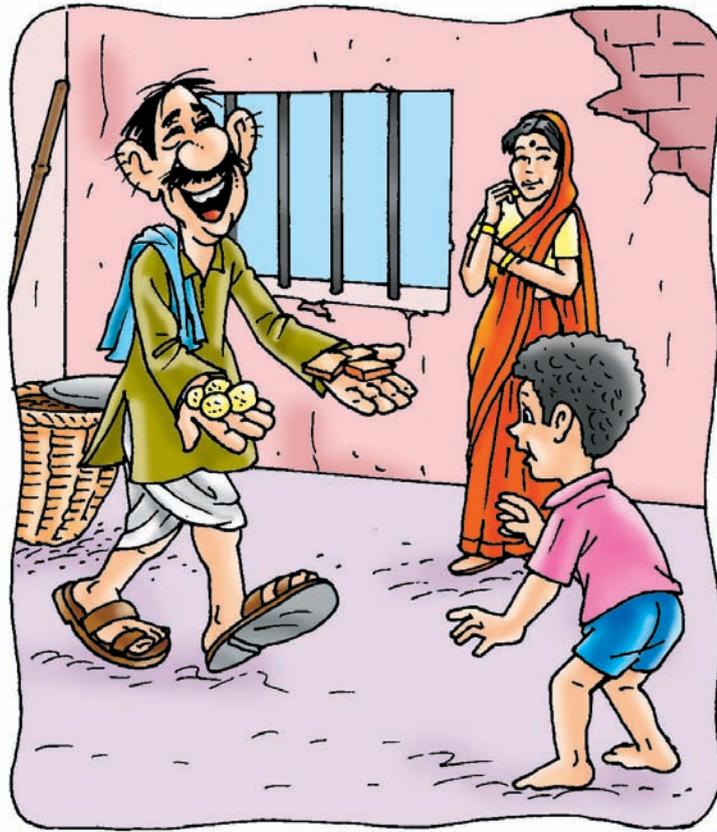
commotion: noisy confusion

Munisamy got up and went to the basket in which he stored sweets. He came back with his hands full of sweets and gave them to the child.

‘My darling! From today you will be the first to have the sweets,’ he said and kissed the cheek which he had slapped in the morning.

The child smiled. Biting a sweet, he looked at his parents and burst into a laugh.

—Sri K.V. Jagannathan

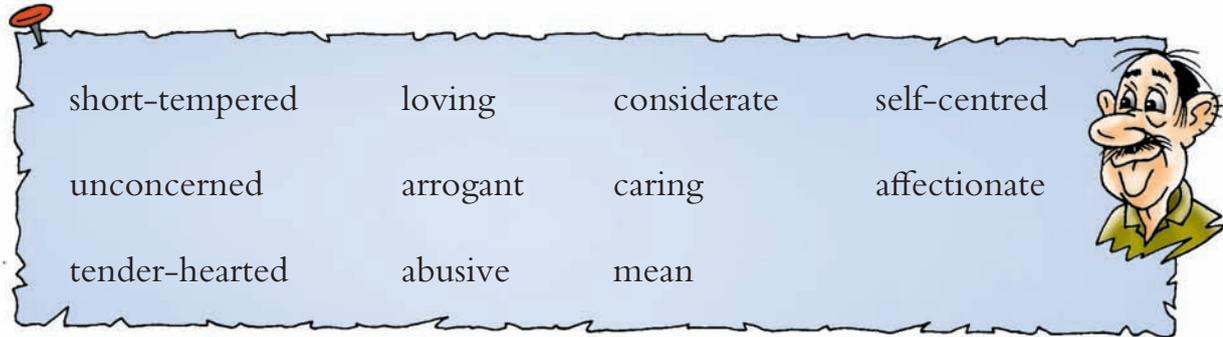


C.2. On the basis of your understanding of the text, complete the following statements.

- (a) At nine in the morning, Munisamy would stand _____
_____.
- (b) During vacation, there was _____
_____.
- (c) At the tender age of two, Munisamy’s child _____
_____.
- (d) The mother’s heart would fill with pain when she saw _____
_____.
- (e) When the child picked a sweet to eat, it _____
_____.

(f) When Munisamy was going to the school, all the sweets from the tray _____.

C.3. Underline the words that tell you about the nature of Munisamy before the accident and encircle the ones that refer to new Munisamy.



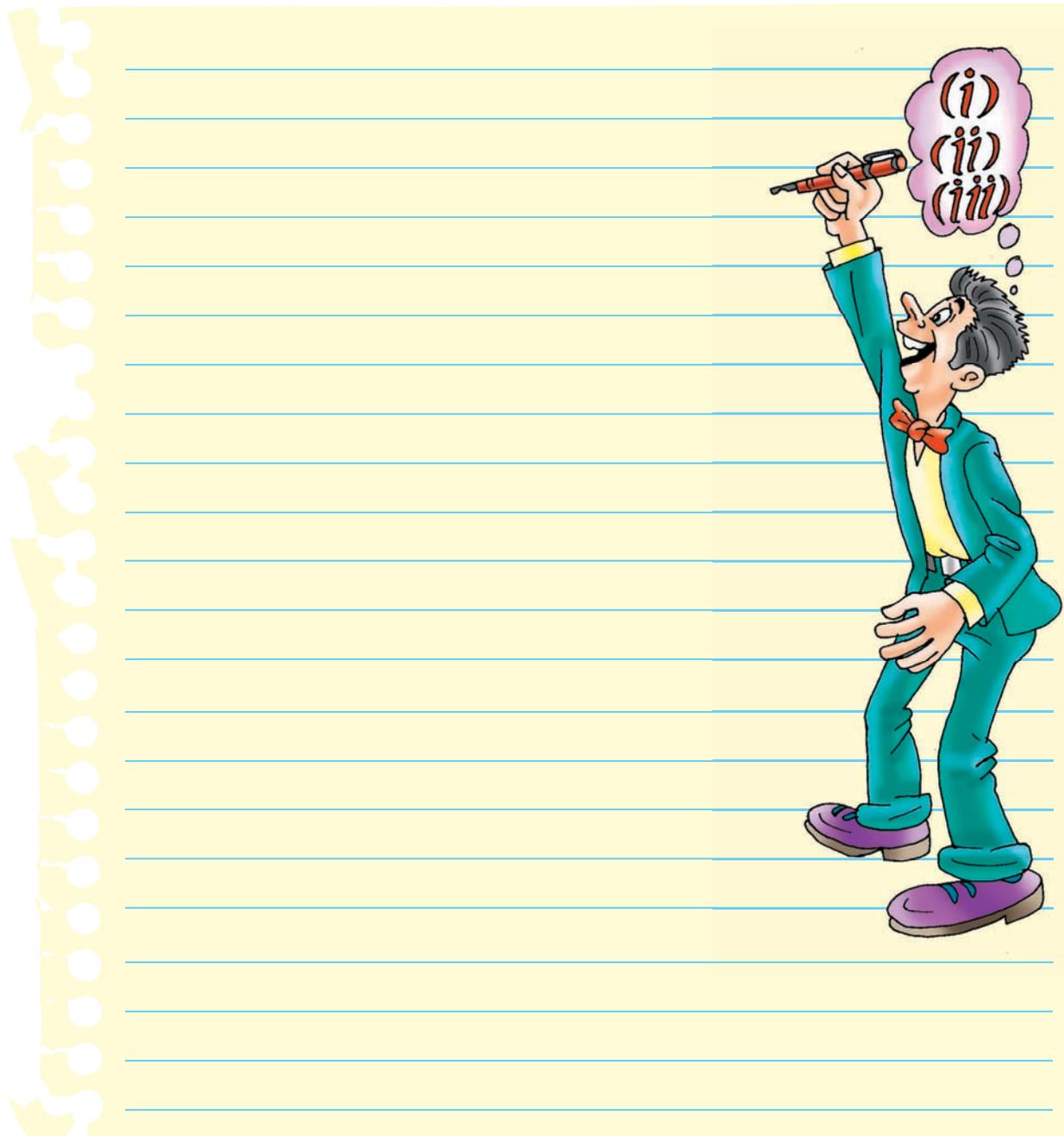
short-tempered loving considerate self-centred
unconcerned arrogant caring affectionate
tender-hearted abusive mean

C.4. The incidents mentioned below are from the story but they are not in order. Put them in the correct order and re-write them in the form of a paragraph in the space provided on the next page.

- (i) At home, his two-year child was not even allowed to touch those sweets.
- (ii) He sold his sweets mainly to school children and was doing a thriving business.
- (iii) On his way to the school, Munisamy fell headlong on the road while trying to avoid a collision with a car.
- (iv) Once on the re-opening day of the school, Munisamy was getting ready to go out to sell sweets.
- (v) The child cried and went to sleep.
- (vi) Munisamy was a hard-working sweet vendor.
- (vii) He saw his child picking up sweets from the tray.
- (viii) His sweets fell into the gutter.
- (ix) He slapped the child in a rage and went out with his tray.
- (x) He returned home and promised to give the child the sweets before he sold them to others.
- (xi) Munisamy realised that it was God's punishment for slapping the child.



Brief Summary



C.5. HOTS

Do you think Munisamy would have realised his mistake if his tray of sweets had not fallen into the gutter accidentally?

C.6. Life Skills

Munisamy's son picked a sweet from his tray which infuriated Munisamy. He considered it an 'ill-omen'. Superstitions often put us in trouble. Imagine you have a friend who is superstitious like Munisamy. He/She stops if a black cat crosses his/her path or does not go out if someone sneezes when he/she is about to step outside. How will you explain to him/her to shun superstitions and have a rational approach towards life?

C.7. Words in a Word

A few words from the story are given below. Use a dictionary to find their meanings. Then write four words containing four letters or more using the letters of the given words. One has been done as an example.

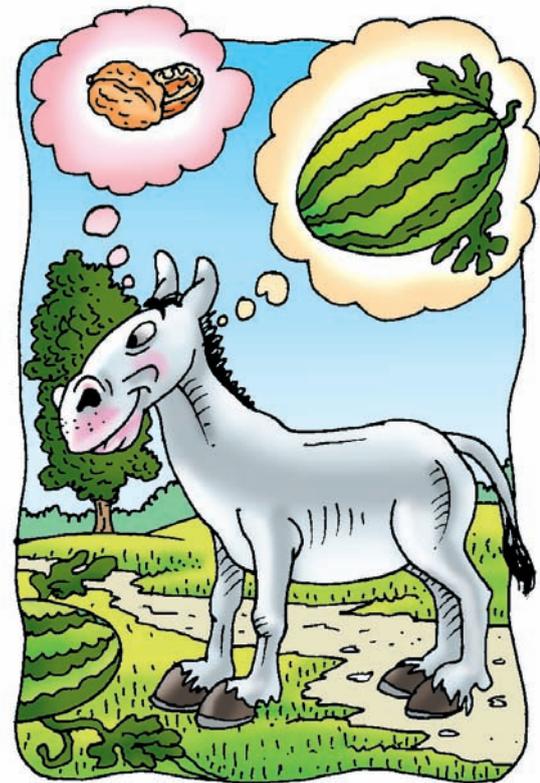
	WORD	MEANING	FOUR-LETTER WORDS
1.	commotion	<i>noisy confusion</i>	<i>omit, coin, moon, icon</i>
2.	intense		
3.	peculiar		
4.	thriving		
5.	reflected		
6.	shrieking		
7.	protest		

- C.8. In the paragraph given below, some words are written in capital letters. The antonym along with the synonym of each highlighted word is also given in the table below the paragraph. Guess the correct word and write it in the space provided.

GOD'S JOB

A peasant driving a donkey reached a melon farm. **TIRED** and thirsty, he sat down and rested under the shade of a **NEARBY** walnut tree. Enjoying the view of the spreading vines of big watermelons, he looked up and **NOTICED** a few walnuts **DANGLING** among the very **HIGH** branches of a monstrously high tree. Bewildered by the work of God, he wondered why small walnuts grew on such an **ENORMOUS** tree, while the big watermelons hung from a flat and **FLIMSY** vine. The peasant was lost in his thoughts when a falling walnut hit his head. He stretched his hands high up towards the sky and said **THANKFULLY**, 'O Almighty God, it was **CLEVER** of you not to let melons grow on big trees, for I would have been **DEAD** by now.'

Synonym	Antonym	Word
hanging	lying	
huge	tiny	
intelligent	foolish	
weary	fresh	
gratefully	ungratefully	
lifeless	alive	
closeby	far-away	
feeble	sturdy	
observed	ignored	
towering	low	



C.9. Look at the advertisement below. Discuss what are the essential elements in any newspaper/magazine advertisement.

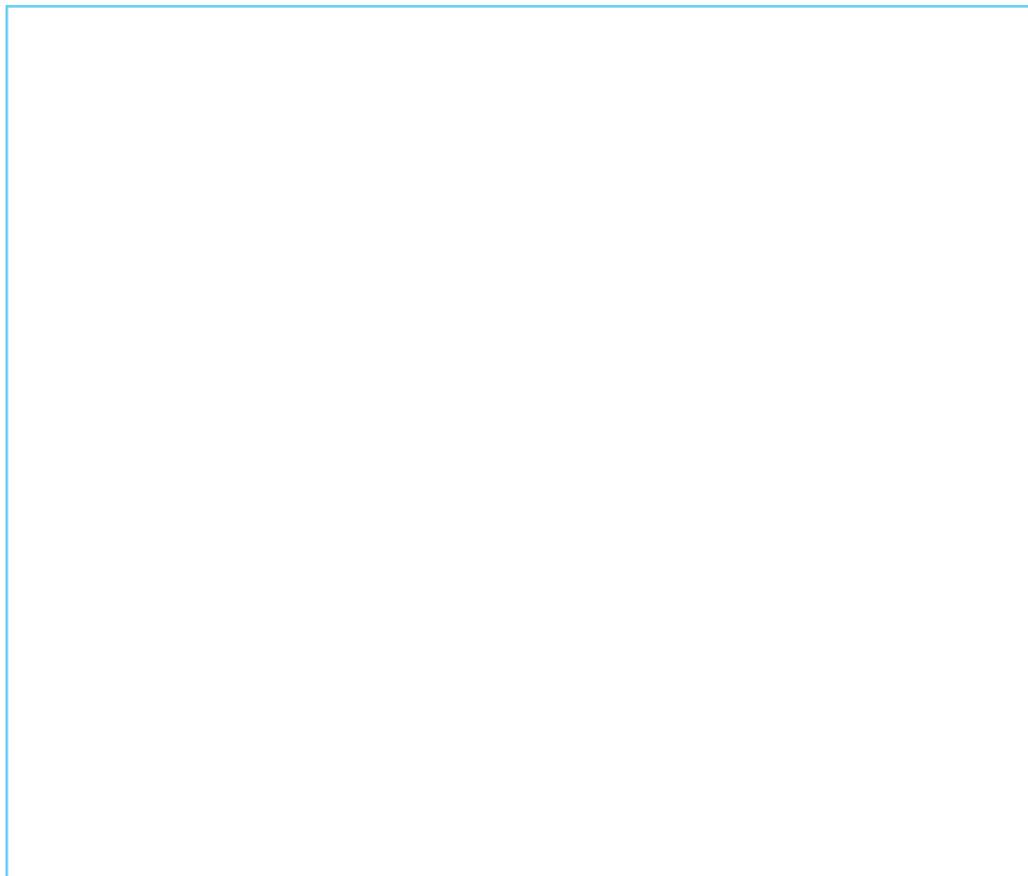


C.10. Keeping all the elements of a good advertisement in mind, design an advertisement on any one of the following:

- soft drinks
- watches
- pens



elements?





Read it Yourself

Read the experience of Iain Levison under the title ‘Caution—Man at Work’.

► Caution—Man At Work

It would be hard to single out my worst job ever. In the last ten years, I’ve had 42. It wasn’t supposed to be like this. My original plan involved writing a novel, but instead I seem to have become, without realising it, an **itinerant** worker—albeit one with a degree in English literature.

Looking back, though, I’d have to say the incident with the donkey might be right up there in the top ten worst career disasters. I’d got a job driving a truck for a company that supplied oil for heating homes. The company catered to rich people, many of whom had mansions for houses, with new sports car in every driveway. As I drove around, I wondered what these people did for a living. Did all these houses belong to geniuses and inventors of rocket engines and cures for diseases?

The hardest part was learning where the oil fill for each house was located. Every delivery notice provided a little map, but the fill itself was a metal pipe about 12 centimetres in diameter, and it was often behind bushes, under rocks—or buried completely in the snow. On the particular day I’m recalling, one house had, instead of a map, a delivery slip that said simply, ‘Fill at the donkey’s nose.’



itinerant: travelling from one place to another

I drive up and see a huge statue of a donkey in the front garden, so I go over and examine its nose. The donkey must be a heating oil tank, I decide. Its cement nostrils are large enough to accommodate an oil **hose**, though I don't see any threading in which to screw the nozzle.



I join the pump up its nostrils as far as it will go and turn on the oil full blast. Immediately, the donkey's head explodes, and I am showered with home heating oil and concrete. I **grope** around blindly for the hose. I limp back to the truck and call my bosses.

'Yes, I'm at the house. Their heating tank just broke.'

'What do you mean it broke?' Charlie who has worked for the company for 15 years, knows every delivery by heart. 'That's the one beside the donkey, right?'

Beside the donkey? What did that mean? 'Yes,' I say cautiously.

'I'll get someone out there.'

I ran over to the headless, oil soaked donkey. I scarp madly at the ground underneath where the donkey's nose had been, and my hand hits metal under the snow. I sweep the snow aside and there, laughing at me, is the oil fill.



hose: a flexible tube made of rubber or plastic, used for directing liquids

grope: to try to find by feeling with the hands

'*Fill* is a noun and a verb,' I explain.

'*Fill* at the donkey's nose is ambiguous.'

Charlie is not going to fire me because he's seen things like this before, and also because mine was not the biggest blunder.

—Iain Levison



Tape Script



Hi, I'm Tom.

Mr Higgins is a shopkeeper. He has been selling old things at his shop for last forty years. He understands that it takes a long time to learn about old things, yet he gets angry when his assistant makes a mistake on the first day of his joining. So, he lacks tolerance. Mr Higgins is a great manipulator. He makes many stories about the articles in his shop so that he could sell them. He even tells lies about the cost of his wares. He is cautious about his customers and has the ability to engage them into profitable conversation. He is a clever shopkeeper who has written the prices on the articles for sale but expects that the customer won't be able to see or understand the numbers. As shopkeeper, Mr Higgins is well-versed with negotiating or bargaining skills. He also plays upon his customers' emotions to sell his wares.

