

# 13. Writing and Teaching of Writing and Composition

*'Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man and writing an exact man.' And a women too!*

—Francis Bacon

Q. 1 <sup>6m</sup> Mention the two different ways in which 'writing' is understood and point out the stages in writing.

Reading and writing do not come naturally even to native users of a language. For example, most children even in English-speaking countries like the UK or the USA, start listening and speaking English without any formal instruction; but they are to be taught reading and writing.

*Writing* is understood in two ways: (a) the mechanics of writing and (b) composition, the art of composing. In the initial stages, the mechanics of writing is very important. The cultivation of proper writing habits is as important as the process and product of writing pieces of composition. Copy books are generally used for practising good handwriting. In addition, proper punctuation marks are to be taught in the initial stages. *Spelling* is another important aspect of writing.

Wilga Rivers (1981) suggests that there are four stages in writing:

Stage	Name	Goal
I	Writing down	Learning the conventions of writing
II	Writing in the language	Learning the potential of the code
III	Production	Composition; writing paragraphs, letters, etc.
IV	Expressive writing	Purposeful communication; original composition for a real audience; creative writing.

Traditionally, the stage I corresponds to the early primary level and stages II and III to the upper primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Expressive writing at the stage-IV level is an advanced type of writing and it is not practised until the student has been learning English for several years. Even in one's own mother tongue, the stage IV writing is difficult for many.

Unfortunately, there are no 'rules' in learning the mechanics of writing, handwriting, spelling, punctuation, etc. There are very few rules that can help us and there are so many exceptions to any 'rule' we can formulate. There are many conventions and styles even in handwriting. Cursive writing is the one that is widely used in the copy books used for practising handwriting.

### Q. 2 In what ways computers help in the process of writing?

Now, there are new tools in the form of computer spell-checkers, electronic dictionaries, and even style-checkers that can be useful if one is using computers for writing. Here are some of the tasks that word-processing softwares can do:

- check spelling (some use British and some American)
- check grammar (not very sophisticated)
- create outlines and tables of contents
- automatically set margins
- underline, boldface, italicize and change fonts (i.e. type faces)
- prepare and format bibliographies very easily
- revise, rearrange, cut and paste
- do word counting
- arrange words alphabetically
- Some new programmes are interactive and include 'tutorials'.

Not all students are in a position to make use of computers for writing. Where such tools are not available, which is the case in most parts of India, it is better to teach the mechanics of writing at early stages.

### Q. 3 What are the activities that can be given to make young learners of English write?

A valuable resource for making young learners write is pictures: drawings, photographs, posters, cartoons, magazine advertisements, diagrams, charts and maps. The use of pictures provides a variety of activities in the class; in the case

of young learners, the use of simple pictures reduces the burden of reading comprehension because pictures can make them respond to visual images directly; moreover, children like to look at pictures and the use of pictures provides a stimulating focus for getting the attention of children.

A simple sketch of a room can be drawn on the blackboard—a living room, a kitchen, the plan of a house, etc. Children can be asked to name the items in the room like chairs, desks, bookcases and even doors, windows, etc. They can be asked to describe the room, using *next to*, *on the left*, *in the corner*, etc. They have to use *there is*, *there are*, etc. Another sketch can be drawn and children can compare the two rooms.

Sentences can be arranged into short paragraphs; if necessary, two paragraphs can be written. Children can discuss what the other rooms in the house/office might look like and produce other paragraphs.

Sets of pictures depicting a story can be used for writing simple stories. Similarly, diagrams, tables, charts and graphs can be used for making the students write since they provide a lot of visual information. A family tree or a population chart of two or three towns can be used for writing one or two paragraphs. A simple list of who does what, like the one below, can be used:

Member of the family	Their work
mother	cooks
father	cleans the house
brother	repairs broken things
sister	washes clothes
	washes dishes
	pays the bills
	goes to the bank
	takes children to school

Children can write sentences and arrange them into paragraphs.

Maps of areas of the town like the market place or some streets can also be used to describe areas; the map of a country or a state can be used. One picture can produce a sequence of activities; similarly, sets of pictures can be used for one activity.

The dictation technique is familiar to most teachers; the teacher reads a paragraph slowly and the children write down the sentences, paying attention to the mechanics of writing—spelling, punctuation, capitalisation and handwriting. The teacher can ask some students to read out a corrected piece of his/her writing. This kind of dicto-comp can be varied by asking the students to combine sentences by dictating segments or giving only segments or giving only some tips.



*long*  
Q. 4 Write short notes on guided composition.

Composition writing may be *controlled* or *guided*; guided composition is less controlled than controlled composition. In the early stages of teaching English, the aim of composition exercises is to give practice in repeating and in producing language items taught; original composition may not be possible at the primary- or middle-school stage. Oral preparation or oral composition and constant guidance will be required at the early stages.

Children may be asked to write sentences from substitution tables.

Example:

Ask			Answer		
Do you swim			Yes	I do	
Do you know sing				I can	
how to dance		?		he/she does	
Can you draw			No	I don't	
Does he/she speak English				I can't	
				he/she doesn't	

Sentences may be elicited orally before the children start writing. Other 'ask and answer' type substitution tables suggested in the chapter on teaching grammar can be used for controlled writing. Substitution tables are useful for exercises based on structures like the use of tenses, determiners, adjectives, adverbs, etc. Using reading for writing is another popular technique in teaching writing. Students can be asked to read a text—a story, a letter, a short piece of writing from a newspaper, etc.—and circle all the cohesive links like *also*, *in addition*, *then*, *finally*, *however*, *but*, *on the other hand*, etc. Using a similar text, they can be asked to fill in the blanks.

Similarly, passages where pronouns, adjectives, verbs or even punctuation marks are omitted can be given and students will have to fill in the blanks. A list of jumbled up items can also be provided at the bottom of the passage and students can select items from the list.

A set of questions may be asked or written on the blackboard; students answer these questions and arrange the answers in the form of a paragraph.

Jigsaw sentences: This activity involves straight copying, but done thoughtfully. Children are asked to match the halves of sentences and write them out.

Example:

A	B
Dogs	grunt
Cats	bray
Snakes	bark
Pigs	hiss
Donkeys	purr

*wm, gm, ym*  
Q. 5 Write a short essay on composition writing at the secondary school stage.

Composition work at this stage represents the stage of transition from controlled to guided writing. For example, from dictation one can move on to note-taking. The teacher reads a text aloud and students take notes and write a paragraph, using the notes taken. Students can be asked to observe or watch an event and take notes; then they write an account of what they observed. Story-telling is another activity that can be used for making them take notes and write stories.

A number of other activities will be useful:

- (i) *Filling in forms* like survey forms or application forms;
- (ii) *Writing letters*—short notes, informal and formal letters; writing letters in response to advertisements;
- (iii) *Making lists*—classifying and alphabetising them—of activities to be completed, shopping items, etc.;
- (iv) *Making daily notes*, writing a diary, writing instructions, etc.;
- (v) *Parallel writing* (a kind of 'free' controlled writing) where students are asked to write something similar; for example, given the description of one city, they write the description of another city with or without outlines
- (vi) *Paragraph writing*: At this stage, students must be taught the arrangement of ideas and sentences. The arrangement of ideas is called **thought pattern**; a thought pattern is essential for effective writing. A paragraph constitutes a unit of thought; a paragraph often begins with a statement of its central idea, known as a **topic sentence**. The topic sentence is followed by a series of subdivisions that develop the topic sentence, preparing for the addition of other ideas in later paragraphs. This characteristic of a paragraph is known as **unity** or **singleness of purpose**. Unity is achieved through **coherence**. This means that each sentence in a paragraph should naturally grow out of each previous sentence in developing the central idea. Supporting details and arguments in order of importance are to be given in a logical manner. In addition, various transitions—words or

phrases that connect one idea to another—are to be used to ensure a paragraph's coherence.

A good exercise for learners will be the identification of topic sentences, unity and coherence in paragraphs given to them. Arranging sentences in a logical order and putting the topic sentence at the right place can be useful before attempting paragraphs of their own.

Preparing outlines of ideas that will go into a paragraph is another useful exercise. This is an important step towards writing better paragraphs.

After undertaking the pre-writing steps, students can be asked to write on specified topics. The tasks that take them from meaning to organisation will be helpful. Brainstorming sessions on topics like 'English pronunciation and spelling' may be conducted; making order out of some chaos that is produced to get a piece of writing is the main aim of such activities. Rewriting a text from another point of view, parallel writing that involves more freedom and imagination, more reading-oriented writing, expanding proverbs, summarising and such other activities will be helpful.

(vii) *Imaginative writing*: Some stories in the textbook in the supplementary readers can be used for this purpose. Students may be asked to narrate the story from another point of view. If there is 'a tiger and a lamb' story, students may narrate the story from the lamb's point of view. Even letter-writing can be linked to this type of exercise; for example, the lamb may write a letter to the tiger, explaining why he should stop bothering other animals in the forest. Children may like this type of imaginative writing. Oral composition, as a preparation for the written work, will be useful.

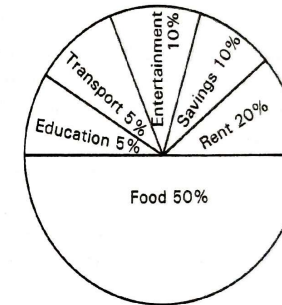
(viii) *Dictation*, which was condemned once, is gaining popularity. Even at the secondary-school level, dictation is a useful exercise. At the early stages, words and phrases may be given for dictation; at the secondary level, sentences and paragraphs may be given.

Students may be encouraged in turns to dictate lines from a passage or a poem they have studied and the teacher can monitor the activity.

(ix) *Sentence combining*, where students are asked to combine short sentences and make a connected story or passage, will be useful for using appropriate connectives.

(x) *Reducing passages* by removing unnecessary words and phrases, making only cosmetic changes to the original, can be attempted. Even group work can be encouraged at this stage.

- (xi) *Summarising passages* will be another useful exercise. A passage can be read and students may be asked to make a summary. Students may be asked to prepare short notes from some cues given verbally, like in a message taken over the phone.
- (xii) *Guided writing* can be made more interactive; students are asked to respond to a stimulus—may be a letter, an advertisement, a news item, a comic strip or a cartoon.
- (xiii) *Dialogue completion*, diary writing, writing to pen-friends and story completion may be useful exercises at this stage.
- (xiv) *Writing from maps, graphs, statistical data, flow charts* and the like can be very interesting and challenging. For example, a pie chart like the following can be used as a prop:



A family spends its money as shown above. Describe how they spend the money and suggest ways of spending their income properly.

There are other graphic forms like bar charts and tree diagrams that can be used in the composition class.

Q. 6 <sup>for school</sup> What are *cloze passages*? How are they used in teaching writing?

*Pure cloze passages*: Cloze passages are gapped passages; they are used as reading tests but can be used as a good teaching tool in the composition class.

In a pure cloze passage, there is a regular deletion rate (usually every seventh word or every *N*th word). Students are asked to supply the missing words and compare the passage with the original one.

*Modified cloze passages*, where we can select words to be deleted (not necessarily at regular intervals), may also be used in writing exercises.



*Multiple-choice cloze passages* with one or two or more options at this stage can also be used.

Example: Switching on the light (he/she/Mr Mohan, Mrs Mohan/they) looked at the (newspaper/ceiling/table lamp/clock). It was only (5 a.m./5 p.m.) In another hour (he/she) would be able to (go back to bed/run/meet the doctor). The old lady ...

Jumbled up sentences and paragraphs can be useful in teaching logical arrangement.

**Q. 7** <sup>how</sup> **Composition writing must be interactive. Explain and illustrate.**

Read the text given below:

During the World War II a British ship the SS Benlomond was torpedoed in the Atlantic Ocean on 23 November 1942. The only survivor was a young Chinese sailor, Poon Lim. Poon Lim drifted on a raft for 4 ½ months till he was finally picked up by a fishing boat in the Brazilian waters on 3rd April 1948. When his supplies ran out, the gutsy seaman kept himself alive by catching and eating fish and seagulls. Rainwater provided him with drinking water. His feat of endurance won him a place in the record books for the longest survival alone on a raft, and it brought him applause from all over the world—but it could not get him the job of his choice. On settling in America, he tried to join the US Navy, but was turned down on the ground that he had flat feet.

- (1) Say whether the following statements are true or false. Quote the phrase or sentence that proves your point.
  - (a) Poon Lim floated aimlessly on the sea.
  - (b) A Brazilian fisherman saved the life of Poon Lim.
  - (c) The American Navy found Poon Lim medically unfit.
  - (d) The whole world applauded him for eating raw fish and seagulls.
- (2) Answer the following questions.
  - (a) What did Poon Lim do for food and water?
  - (b) How was Poon Lim's feat received by the world?
  - (c) What did Poon Lim want to become?
  - (d) Why was his application turned down by the US Navy?

- (3) Guess the answers to the following.
  - (i) A British ship SS Benlomond was torpedoed. Who torpedoed it?
    - (a) The Germans
    - (b) The Chinese
    - (c) The Americans
  - (ii) His feat of endurance won him a place in the record books. Name a famous record book that recognises rare feats.
    - (a) Guinness book of the world records
    - (b) The Yellow book of rare feats
    - (c) The Malayala Manorama
  - (iii) The US Navy rejected the application of Poon Lim. Why?
    - (a) because he had eaten raw fish and seagulls
    - (b) because he had flat feet
    - (c) because he had become old and weak
  - (iv) ... till he was picked up by a fishing boat in the Brazilian water. What language would the fisherman have spoken?
    - (a) Spanish
    - (b) French
    - (c) English
- (4) Write on the following.
  - (a) You are Poon Lim. You have just been saved by a Brazilian fisherman. Send a telegram to your parents that you are safe.
  - (b) You are Poon Lim. You have applied for the post of a sailor in the US Navy and attended an interview. Now send a telegram to the US Navy requesting them for the result of the interview.
  - (c) The ship SS Benlomond has been torpedoed. There were 300 sailors in it. It is feared that all of them are killed. Write a suitable headline for an English newspaper.
  - (d) You are a senior officer of the N.C.C. unit of your college. You have invited Poon Lim to speak to the N.C.C. cadets. Send a suitable circular to the students asking them to be present when Poon Lim comes (specify day, date venue and the purpose).

- (e) You are working for a company producing super toys. You are introducing a new toy—a ship that moves on water with the help of batteries. Your company has named the new toy 'Poon Lim'. Write two 'catchy' advertisements.
- (f) You are a friend of Poon Lim. He is getting married to an American girl, Lynda Bernnan, at St Patrick's Church, New York. Poon Lim has asked you to design his wedding card. How would you design the invitation card?
- (g) Poon Lim has been rejected by the US Navy. But later he got appointed as an officer in a merchant ship, the US Strayers. Send him a congratulatory telegram.
- (5) Poon Lim has applied for the post of a sailor in the US Navy. He has been called for an interview. Now write the text of the interview, using the hints given below.
- (i) Poon Lim seeks the officer's permission to enter.
  - (ii) The officer asks him to enter.
  - (iii) Poon Lim introduces himself.
  - (iv) The officer asks him to sit down.
  - (v) The officer asks Poon Lim why he has come.
  - (vi) The officer politely says that he could not be selected.
  - (vii) Poon Lim enquires why he could not become a sailor.
  - (viii) The officer says that Poon Lim was not medically fit.
  - (ix) Poon Lim wants to know what was wrong with his medical fitness.
  - (x) The officer is sorry that Poon Lim has flat feet.
- (6) (A) You are interviewing Poon Lim after he has become an officer in a private shipping company. His answers are given. Write your questions for which he has given the answers.
- (i) \_\_\_\_\_  
Yes, I was a sailor in the SS Benlomond when it was torpedoed.
  - (ii) \_\_\_\_\_  
I was just floating on water for 4 ½ months.
  - (iii) \_\_\_\_\_

- (iv) \_\_\_\_\_  
A Brazilian fisherman picked me up from the sea.
- (v) \_\_\_\_\_  
Because I wanted to become an American citizen and join the US Navy.
- (vi) \_\_\_\_\_  
I was rejected by the US Navy because I had flat feet.
- (vii) \_\_\_\_\_  
I applied to a private shipping company after the US Navy rejected me.
- (viii) \_\_\_\_\_  
The shipping company has given me the post of an officer in their ship.
- (ix) \_\_\_\_\_  
I get a salary of 5,000 dollars a month.
- (x) \_\_\_\_\_  
Yes, I am very very happy.
- (B) No, it is not the money but the fact is that I have got the job of my choice.
- (B) Poon Lim, the great sailor, speaks to you about what one should and should not do, if one is cast out like him in the midsea. Here is his speech:
- If you find yourself alone in the midsea cast out into the sea from a sinking ship you should not panic, but keep yourself calm. You must try to get hold of some floating object. You must try to recover from the sinking ship as much tinned food and water bottles as you can. You must not use up the food in a hurry. You must not lose heart even if the food supply is over. You must learn to catch fish in the sea with your hands. You must not shout unnecessarily. You must believe that God will save you.



Using the above speech to write three *dos* and three *don'ts*.

Dos	Don'ts
Example: Try to get hold of some floating object	Do not panic
1	1
2	2
3	3

- (C) Poon Lim has written this letter to you (you are the students' under-officer of your college N.C.C. unit)

Dear Mr Verma,

I am reaching India on 14 February. After a week at Delhi, I shall be in Chennai on 20th February. I will be able to visit your college on 22nd or 23rd. I can spare an evening for your N.C.C. unit and speak to the students. If it is 22nd, it will be convenient because I have my flight back to Bombay in the early hours of the 24th.

Thank you,

Yours Sincerely,  
Poon Lim

Your friends want to know about the contents of the letter. How will you report the letter to them. Begin like this.

Mr Poon Lim is reaching India ...

**Q. 8 Suggest ways of doing correction work in composition classes.**

**Paragraph-writing**, letter-writing, note-taking and note-making, description of people, places, processes, transfer of information from tables, charts, graphs, writing slogans, advertisements, telegram, short messages, precis-writing and writing abstracts, writing reports, essay-writing, writing poems ... the list can be extended. If composition is interactive and a context created for writing, students learn to react to texts in situations and the writing will be more meaningful.

It is almost impossible for teachers of large classes to correct all written work; however, if writing goes uncorrected or unchecked, there will be no feedback and students will not take written work seriously. Teacher correction is very important particularly in free composition. When students are writing, the teacher can go around and do spot-checking, making corrections and explaining the mistake and appreciating good work. Peer-marking is sometimes possible; the teacher can give the correct answers and students can mark or correct each other's

work. Group work pays sometimes; forming small groups and group leaders can monitor the work that is done in the class. Teachers will have to decide on how correction work can be done in the class, depending on the level of the class and the nature of the written task.

There are basically five distinct techniques of dealing with errors:

- (a) The teacher gives sufficient *clues* to enable *self-correction* to be made.
- (b) The teacher *corrects* the script.
- (c) The teacher deals with errors through *marginal comments* and footnotes.
- (d) The teacher *explains* orally to individual learners.
- (e) The teacher uses the errors as illustration for *explanation in the class*.

All these techniques can be used after taking into account the nature of the error concerned, its frequency and the standard of the class as well as that of the student who made it.

There is no single standard method of dealing with errors in composition. The teacher must make a choice among the most appropriate and effective of the techniques suggested.

**Think and Answer:** A recipe book, a railway timetable or a cartoon strip is good enough for making students write. Comment.

## 14. Teaching Prose

*Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree.*

—Ezra Pound

Q. 1 What are the factors that are to be considered in exploiting a prose passage for teaching English?

The factors that are to be considered in exploiting a passage for teaching are: (a) linguistic complexity, (b) length of the passage, (c) interest level and (d) the aims of teaching that particular passage.

- Linguistic complexity:** If a text is full of difficult words and too long, it can be split into two or more parts. A simple text is more suitable for listening comprehension than one which is full of difficult words or which has too many long sentences.
- Length:** Passages should not be too long or too easy; the length of the text should be suitable for a reading lesson. Students need not understand every single word in the text in order to understand it.
- Interest level:** If a passage is full of interest, the linguistic complexity or the length may not even matter much. Textbooks that have long but very interesting stories are read by students even without much help in the classroom.
- Aims:** The teachers must be clear about the aims of teaching a particular text. Is it for listening or teaching some new words or practising a grammar point or for a discussion? The teacher must have a mental plan about the purpose for which the passage is to be used.

Q. 2 What are the major steps in dealing with a prose passage?

There are basically four major steps in dealing with a prose passage:

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1. **Introduction and task setting:** This step is for the arousal of interest. There must be a reason for listening or reading a passage. To do this, the teacher can ask some *guiding questions*; the guiding questions are meant to motivate the students and not for teaching them words or structures.

The guiding questions may be about something related to the content of the lesson to be presented. Some important words used in the text may also be used in the guiding questions; such words may be written on the blackboard along with their meaning to serve as a 'mini-dictionary' for the students.

2. **Reading and listening:** The second step is that of reading and listening. Students should not be asked to read texts aloud. The teacher must read the text aloud and offer a good speech model or a reading model. It is better to ask the students not to look at the text so that they listen carefully; if the text is to be heard, the books should remain closed. If the text is open, students will start reading the text silently and that will take away their attention from listening. The teacher can make any necessary sketch on the blackboard while reading, break sentences or rephrase difficult areas and make the reading sound authentic or spontaneous.

Then, students can keep the books open and the teacher reads the text aloud; in the second reading only the text is read without any additional material. At this stage, the teacher can point out how certain words are pronounced properly and how certain sentences are read with proper pause and intonation.

After the loud reading by the teacher, students are asked to read the passage silently, setting time limits for their reading.

3. **Exploiting the text orally and in writing:** The activities listed below can be used to exploit the text, sometimes with the text open and sometimes the text closed.

- Reproduction:** Wh-questions that are generally used to test one's comprehension of the text are best suited to judge the depth of understanding.
- Limited response:** True-false statements, yes-no questions and choice-questions can be used to check students' understanding of the meaning of words and phrases.
- Grammar awareness:** One or two questions on any grammatical nicety in the passage can be pointed out.
- Scanning:** Students can be asked to quickly point out some date or some other detail in the text. This will enable them to scan the text.



- (v) *Dictation*: Two or three sentences from the text can be dictated and corrections can be made by the students. Students can take turns and dictate two or three sentences each; this will give them practice in reading aloud.
- (vi) *Query time*: Students can ask questions about what they want to know about the meanings of words and sentences.
- (vii) *Discussion*: Argument and debate about the point of view presented in the text can make the lesson lively.
- (viii) *Review*: The passage is reviewed

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- (i) *Writing*: The review of the passage is written in the form of a paraphrase; students can take turns and contribute ideas and sentences. It may be guided writing or free composition.
- (ii) *Communication*: The teacher encourages the class to be adventurous with the language, extending the text outside its limits. Dramatisation, presentation of other points of view, changing the mode of narration, presenting the text in graphic representations and such other activities can be attempted. This text is expanded and converted into a basis for communication.

The activities suggested above for exploiting a text need not be crowded into a single lesson. It is also not necessary to exploit every part of a prescribed prose lesson in an exhaustive manner. Depending on the nature of every passage, the activities can be varied to generate interest and enjoyment, resulting in learning.

Q. 3 Given below are two sample prose lessons with the exercises that go with them. Study them carefully and make a list of the exercises that can be framed for prose lessons.

(I) The Conjuror's Revenge

Stephen Leacock

*A conjurer is one who practises the magic arts, and therefore he has to hide the secret of his art. The rule of the game is for the audience to sit back and enjoy the tricks. What happens if someone tries to be one up on the conjurer? Read on.*

'Now, ladies and gentlemen,' said the conjurer, 'having shown you that the cloth is absolutely empty, I will proceed to take from it a bowl of goldfish. Presto!'

1

All around the hall people were saying, 'Oh, how wonderful! How does he do it?'

2

But the Quick Man on the front seat said in a big whisper to the people near him 'He-had-it-up-his-sleeve.'

3

Then the people nodded brightly at the Quick Man and said, 'Oh, of course; and everybody whispered round the hall, 'He-had-it-up-his-sleeve.'

4

'My next trick,' said the conjurer, 'is the famous Hindostance rings. You will notice that the rings are apparently separate; at a blow they all join (clang, clang, clang)—Presto!'

5

There was a general buzz of stupefaction till the Quick Man was heard to whisper, 'He-must-have-had-another-lot-up-his-sleeve.'

6

Again everybody nodded and whispered, 'The-rings-were-up-his-sleeve.'

7

The brow of the conjurer was clouded with a gathering frown.

8

'I will now,' he continued, 'show you a most amusing trick by which I am enabled to take any number of eggs from a hat. Will some gentleman kindly lend me his hat? Ah, thank you—Presto!'

9

He extracted seventeen eggs, and for thirty-five seconds the audience began to think that he was wonderful. Then the Quick Man whispered along the front bench, 'He-has-a-hen-up-his-sleeve,' and all the people whispered it on. 'He-has-a-lot-of-hens-up-his-sleeve.' The egg trick was ruined.

10

It went on like that all through. It transpired from the whispers of the Quick Man that the conjurer must have concealed up his sleeve, in addition to the rings, hens and fish, several packs of cards, a loaf of bread, a doll's cradle, a live guinea-pig, a fifty-cent piece and a rocking-chair.

11

The reputation of the conjurer was rapidly sinking below zero. At the close of the evening he rallied for a final effort.

12

'Ladies and gentlemen,' he said, 'I will present to you in conclusion, the famous Japanese tricks recently invented by the natives of Tipperrary. Will you, sir,' he continued, turning towards the Quick Man, 'will you kindly hand me your gold watch?' It was passed to him.

13

'Have I your permission to put it into this mortar and pound it to pieces?' he asked savagely. The Quick Man nodded and smiled.

14

The conjurer threw the watch into the mortar and grasped a sledge-hammer from the table. There was a sound of violent smashing, 'He's-slipped-it-up-his-sleeve,' whispered the Quick Man.

15

'Now, sir,' continued the conjurer, 'will you allow me to take your handkerchief and punch holes in it? Thank you. You see, ladies and gentlemen, there is no deception; the holes are visible to the eye.' 16

The face of the Quick Man beamed. This time the real mystery of the thing fascinated him. 17

'And now, sir, will you kindly pass me your silk hat and allow me to dance on it? Thank you.' 18

The conjurer made a few rapid passes with his feet and exhibited the hat, crushed beyond recognition. 19

'And will you now, sir, take off your celluloid collar and permit me to burn it in the candle? Thank you, sir. And will you allow me to smash your spectacles for you with my hammer? Thank you.' 20

By this time the features of the Quick Man were assuming a puzzled expression. 'This thing beats me,' he whispered, 'I don't see through it a bit.' 21

There was a great hush upon the audience. Then the conjurer drew himself up to his full height and, with a withering look at the Quick Man, he concluded: 22

'Ladies and gentlemen, you will observe that I have, with this gentleman's permission, broken his watch, burnt his collar, smashed his spectacles and danced on his hat. If he will give me the further permission to paint green stripes on his overcoat or to tie his suspenders in a knot, I shall be delighted to entertain you. If not, the performance is at an end.' 23

And amid a glorious burst of music from the orchestra the curtain fell and the audience dispersed, convinced that there are some tricks, at any rate, that are not done up the conjurer's sleeve. 24

#### I. Understanding the text

##### (A) Answer the following questions:

1. Where was the bowl of goldfish to come from?
2. How did the Quick Man spoil the goldfish trick?
3. Were the people impressed by the 'Hindostanee rings' trick when they first saw it? Which phrase gives us the clue?
4. How would you have reacted to the Quick Man's whisper, 'He has a hen up his sleeve'?
5. Read paragraph 11. Do you think that the writer is with the conjurer or with the Quick Man? What is the reason for your choice?

6. Read paragraphs 13 and 14. Find a noun and an adverb which show that the conjurer was up to some mischief.
7. Do you think the Quick Man believed that his watch was destroyed? You have a clue in Para 15. Find it.
8. 'This time the real mystery of the thing fascinated him.' Do you think there was a mystery at all to feel fascinated about?
9. What did the audience feel as they dispersed?

##### (B) Complete the following sentences appropriately by filling in the blanks:

1. From this absolutely empty cloth you will see me \_\_\_\_\_ Presto!
2. Everyone in the hall \_\_\_\_\_
3. The apparently separate rings \_\_\_\_\_
4. A gathering frown could be seen \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_ someone \_\_\_\_\_ lend me his hat \_\_\_\_\_ I can show you a most \_\_\_\_\_
6. I'm sure \_\_\_\_\_, how else \_\_\_\_\_ take so many eggs \_\_\_\_\_ from that hat.
7. No one in the audience asked the Quick Man how \_\_\_\_\_
8. The conjurer asked the Quick Man \_\_\_\_\_ to smash his gold watch.
9. You can see the holes and convince yourself \_\_\_\_\_
10. If this gentleman will give me further permission I shall entertain you by \_\_\_\_\_

#### II. Language study

##### A(1) Read paras 1 to 12 and spot the words with the following meanings:

- |  |                   |                |
|--|-------------------|----------------|
| (a) took out                               | (b) spoilt        | (c) completely |
| (d) approvingly                            | (e) fast          | (f) hidden     |
| (g) came to be understood                  | (h) as it appears | (i) good name  |
| (j) the state of being surprised very much |                   |                |

##### A(2) Read paras 13 to 24. Find single-word equivalents or phrases which mean the following:

- |  |                                   |                  |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| (a) the face, considered as a group of parts | (b) recovered as from unhappiness | (c) not long ago |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------|



- (d) finally
- (e) smash
- (f) can be seen
- (g) absolute silence
- (h) realizing

A(3) Study the words in the box:

conjurer	revenge	empty	cloth	proceed	nod
bowl	continue	grasp	deception	stripes	separate
trick	audience	conceal	live	hand	delight
orchestra	expression	wonder			

- 4m (i) Find words from the list which are opposite in meaning to the following:
- 6m (a) full (b) stop (c) reveal (d) let go
- 4m (ii) Five of the words listed above can form words with '-ful'. Spot them and use them in sentences.
- 6m (iii) Fill in the blanks to form compound words and phrases:  
 nodding \_\_\_\_\_ wire  
 \_\_\_\_\_ and stripes \_\_\_\_\_ cloth \_\_\_\_\_ grasp
- (iv) Complete the following table. Leave a blank if you can't find the relevant part of speech:

Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb
orchestra	orchestrate	orchestral	_____
_____	_____	_____	deceptively
_____	_____	expressive	_____
_____	continue	_____	_____
conjurer	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	separate	_____

A(4) Each of the phrases in List A goes with one of the words in List B. Make three-word sentences from these lists, e.g. The fire blazed.

A	B	A	B
the fire	the sun	the gold	the candle
the water	the stars	the lightning	glittered
sparkled	twinkled	shone	blazed
flickered	flashed		

A(5) Note the phrase 'up his sleeve'. This is a prepositional phrase, i.e. a phrase that begins with a preposition (up). In the sentence, 'He had it up his sleeve' the phrase means 'hidden in his sleeve'. But it also means kept secret for use at the right time.

Look up the word 'sleeve' in your dictionary. You will find other phrases with 'sleeve' meaning different things.

B(1) Read para 1

'Now, ladies and gentlemen, having shown you that the cloth is absolutely empty, I will proceed to take from it a bowl of goldfish.' This is a combination of two sentences:

- I have shown you ... empty.
- I will (now) ... goldfish.

Write out the component sentences in the following:

- (i) I will now show you a trick by which I am enabled to take any number of eggs from a hat.
- (ii) The conjurer exhibited the hat, crushed beyond recognition.
- (iii) The audience dispersed, convinced that there are some tricks that are not done up the conjurer's sleeve.
- (iv) It transpired from the whispers of the Quick Man that the conjurer must have concealed up his sleeve hens and fish.

B(2) Rewrite the following pairs of sentences as single conditional sentences:

- (a) Hand me your spectacles. I will smash them with my hammer.
- (b) Give me your celluloid collar. I will burn it in the candle.
- (c) He gives me further permission to paint green stripes on his overcoat. I shall be delighted to entertain you.
- (d) He doesn't. The performance is at an end.

How do sentences (a)-(c) differ from (d)?

B(3) Change the following into reported speech:

- (All the sentences are from the lesson you have just read.)
- (a) 'Now, ladies and gentlemen, having shown you that the cloth is absolutely empty, I will proceed to take from it a bowl of goldfish.'
- (b) The people were saying, 'How does he do it?'
- (c) 'Will you kindly hand me your gold watch?' he asked.
- (d) 'This thing beats me,' he whispered, 'I don't see through it a bit.'
- (e) 'If he will give me further permission to paint green stripes on his overcoat, I shall be delighted to entertain you.'

## III. Word skills

(1) Fit these verbs into the phrases below:

- |            |         |         |          |           |
|------------|---------|---------|----------|-----------|
| excavate   | forge   | reveal  | abandon  | preserve  |
| accomplish | inherit | undergo | denounce | intercept |
- (a) to \_\_\_\_\_ a secret      (b) to \_\_\_\_\_ an imposter  
 (c) to \_\_\_\_\_ a fortune      (d) to \_\_\_\_\_ medical treatment  
 (e) to \_\_\_\_\_ a messenger      (f) to \_\_\_\_\_ a buried city  
 (g) to \_\_\_\_\_ a sinking ship      (h) to \_\_\_\_\_ a task  
 (i) to \_\_\_\_\_ a signature      (j) to \_\_\_\_\_ old documents

(2) Do you know that a pair of game-birds is called 'brace'? Do you know that a piece of music for three is called a 'trio'? Now try answering the following:

- When a pilot flies alone, he flies \_\_\_\_\_
- Four children born at the same time are called \_\_\_\_\_
- Two weeks are called a \_\_\_\_\_
- A figure with six equal sides is called a \_\_\_\_\_
- A group of twelve is called a \_\_\_\_\_
- A hundred years is called a \_\_\_\_\_
- A man in his seventies is called an \_\_\_\_\_
- One of four equal parts is called a \_\_\_\_\_
- Two people singing together sing a \_\_\_\_\_
- A period of a thousand years is called a \_\_\_\_\_
- A plant with leaves divided into three little leaves is \_\_\_\_\_
- A train travelling on a railway with a single rail is \_\_\_\_\_

## IV. In your own words

- Imagine that you are the conjurer. Narrate the evening's events.
- Now, you are the Quick Man. Write a paragraph about your own conduct and how you felt about what the conjurer did to you.

(II) A suggested working-model for a prose lesson  
Warming-up activities

We usually buy birthday cards but making them is fun and it adds a personal touch to the relationship. Look at the expressions in some birthday cards:

The day you were born ... the world got a little brighter.  
Some people make the world brighter by being in it; you are one of those.

- Write two birthday cards that can be given to elderly/respectable persons—someone who is not a close friend.
- Write two birthday cards to two of your close friends.
- Here is an interesting story:

## A Birthday for a Daughter

By the roadside on the road to Kamar Pukur is Ranjit Raya's Lake. Bhagavati, the divine mother, was born as his daughter. Even now, people hold an annual festival there in the month of *Chaira*, in honour of this divine daughter.

Ranjit Raya was the landlord of that part of the country. Through the power of his meditation, he obtained the divine mother as his daughter. He was very fond of her and she too was very much attached to him. She hardly left his presence.

One day Ranjit Raya was engaged in the duties of his estate. He was very busy. The girl, with her childlike nature, was constantly interrupting him saying, 'Father, what's this? What's that?' Ranjit Raya tried to persuade her not to disturb him, and said: 'My child, please leave me alone for some time. I have a lot of work to do. I'll talk to you later.' But the girl would not go away. At last, rather absent-mindedly, he said, 'Get out of here!' At this, she left home and nobody saw her again.

## I. Test your understanding

- Who is Bhagavati?
- Where was she born?
- How did Ranjit Raya get her as his daughter?
- Why is it that there is no mention of the mother of Bhagavati? Does it reflect the absence of one's mother's name in the full name of a person?
- Why did Bhagavati leave home? Did she come back?
- What morals do you learn from this story?
- Generally, in India, only the birthdays of famous male babies are celebrated. Can you name some?
- Do you know of any religion in which the birth of a baby girl is celebrated? If so, give details.



9. In Hindu mythology, all the ten incarnations (i.e. avatars) of Lord Vishnu are male. Why is it so?
10. Is there a deep-rooted gender-bias even in our religious festivals?
11. Ask your parents or teachers and find out the reasons for not celebrating the birthdays of goddesses.

## II. Increase your word power

1. Tick the word or phrase nearest in meaning to the key word taken from the passage.

- |                |  |   |
|----------------|--|---|
| i. obtain      | a. to throw away                             | b. to get                               |
|                | c. to separate                               | d. to discard                           |
| ii. hardly     | a. firmly                                    | b. strongly                             |
|                | c. almost not                                | d. forcefully                           |
| iii. childlike | a. childish                                  | b. foolish                              |
|                | c. child-hood                                | d. a natural guileless, lovable quality |
| iv. interrupt  | a. to break the flow of something continuous | b. to be connected to each other        |
|                | c. a stretch of time between events          | d. to interfere                         |
| v. persuade    | a. to cause worry                            | b. encourage                            |
|                | c. convince                                  | d. force                                |
| vi. pretext    | a. excuse                                    | b. a main body of writing in a book     |
|                | c. false                                     | d. related to a text appearance         |
| vii. engaged   | a. busy                                      | b. decided                              |
|                | c. to take                                   | d. enhanced responsibility              |

### 2. Confusables

*Childlike, childish*—both mean *in the manner of a child*, but the first one is complimentary (and it means *innocent, trusting*, etc.) and the second is derogatory (it means *immature, foolish, silly*). *Childlike* and *childish* are normally used when we talk about adults and they emphasise, respectively, the appealing and less appealing characteristics of children.

*Examples:* She has big, *childlike* eyes; Some say that love is a *childish* emotion.

*Now, write similar notes for the following pairs of confusables:*

- |                                 |                         |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| a. complimentary, complementary | b. interrupt, interpret |
| c. honorary, honourable         | d. human, humane        |
| e. magic, magical.              |                         |

*Give examples to show the difference in meaning.*

### 3. Be word-perfect

The word 'infant' has the following synonyms: babe, baby, nursing, suckling, yearling, child, kid, the little-one, tiny-tot, the new-born, brat, ...

*Now, write from your memory as many synonyms as you can for the following:*

(a) girl:

(b) boy:

### 4. Test your medical vocabulary

- (a) The treatment of bone and muscle disorders is called O\_\_\_\_\_paedics.
- (b) The treatment of disorders of the nervous system is called N\_\_\_\_\_logy.
- (c) The treatment of skin diseases is called D\_\_\_\_\_logy.
- (d) The branch of medicine that deals with diseases relating to the reproductive system of women is called G\_\_\_\_\_logy.
- (e) The treatment of children's diseases is called P\_\_\_\_\_ics.
- (f) The treatment of disorders and diseases of the bladder is called U\_\_\_\_\_gy.
- (g) The branch of medicine that is concerned with pregnancy and childbirth is called O\_\_\_\_\_ics.
- (h) The medical treatment in which needles are inserted into the skin or body at given points is called A\_\_\_\_\_ture.
- (i) The use of chemicals to treat diseases like cancer is called C\_\_\_\_\_therapy.
- (j) The use of exercise, heat, or massage to treat injury or disability is called \_\_\_\_\_therapy.

### III. How 'passive' are you?

Women appear to be passive but they are not. Similarly, some constructions appear to be passive but they are not.

Look at the following sentence: Bhagavati was born as his daughter.  
We cannot say: He bore Bhagavati. (not used)

Say which ones are Active and which ones Passive. Put a tick mark in the box and give reasons for your answer:

	Active	Passive
a. The police want him.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. He was drowned.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Women lack confidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. We have a nice house.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. He hoped to meet his daughter.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. The jacket does not fit you.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. She resembles her mother.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. The woman shook her head.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Leela is interested in politics.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. The window is broken.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[Although it is a general principle that transitive verbs can be either active or passive, there are a number of exceptions where the active and passive sentences are not in systematic correspondence. A lot depends on usage.]

Do you know how zero was *invented*?

Be *active* and do the *passive*.

Until about the sixteenth century, the Roman-Latin system was the only number system that *was used* in Europe. It *must have been invented* about two thousand years ago. It is not a simple system since it is *built* on a base often.

The number 10 *is shown by* X, 100 by C, 1,000 by M; the symbol for 1 is I, for 5 V, for 50 L and 500 D. The system is quite complicated since sometimes you add, as in MDC (=1,600), and sometimes you subtract, as in XL (=40). There was no zero in the Roman-Latin system. Long before the birth of Christ, Indians had invented a far better number system. It *was brought* to Europe by Arab traders; it *is called* the Indo-Arabic numeral system.

Answer the questions below.

- (a) What is the difference between *discover* and *invent*?

- (b) The number 10 is shown by X, 100 by C, 1,000 by M. There are some understood words in the sentence. Supply the understood words and say whether they are active or passive constructions.
- (c) What is the reason for the use of a number of Passives in the paragraph above?

Now, *continue* and write a paragraph, using the hints given below:

All numbers written with nine digits—each symbol given a value according to the place in which it is written—the value for zero shown by its position—for example 50 means five 10s and no units, or fifty units 5 written in 10's place shown by the zero—in the Roman system 205 written CCV—place values not shown—in the Indo-Arabic system 205 shown by putting 2 in the 100's place, 0 in the 10's place to show that there are no 10s, and the 5 in the 1's place to show that there are five units—the notion of value according to place shown by the zero in the Indo-Arabic system.

That is why there is a proverb in Arabic which says 'Man is number one and Woman is a Zero'.

Answer the questions:

1. What does the Arabic proverb mean? Does it belittle the status of women? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Mark the passives in the paragraph you have written and explain the reason for the use of the passive.

### IV. Spell and speak

#### 1. Learn to punctuate properly.

At last, rather absent-mindedly, he said, 'Get out of here!'

In the sentence given above, the quotation marks are used. The quotation marks are also referred to as 'inverted commas' (especially in British-English) or 'quotes' (in informal English).

Quotation marks may be single ' ' or double " ". But, whichever form is used for ordinary quotations is not used for *quotations within quotations*:

'I heard "Get out of here" being shouted,' she said.

"I heard 'Get out of here' being shouted," she said.

The full stop (also called 'the period' in American English), the comma and other punctuation marks are placed inside the closing quotation marks for Direct Speech with Reporting clauses:



"Father, what's that?" she asked. [1]

'You are just in time,' she said. [2]

She said, 'You are just in time.' [2a]

Although the quoted sentence in [2] begins with a capital letter, it does not end with a full stop (.) because the included sentence is not complete.

UM Punctuate the following:

the hen bird was just about to lay, and she said to her mate cannot you find me some place convenient for laying my eggs? and is not this he replied a very good place for the purpose? no she answered for it is continually overflowed by the tide. am I, then, so feeble he exclaimed that the eggs laid in my house are to be carried away by the sea? the hen laughed and said there is some considerable difference between you and the sea but that won't help us.

[What is the considerable difference that the hen refers to? Does this story have a moral?]

## 2. Stress in compounds

Compound nouns generally have a *primary* stress on the first element and a secondary stress on the second: *absent-minded*

Learn the stress in the following compounds:

earth quake	life boat	waiting room	fire extinguisher
head master	first class	down stairs	up stairs

## V. Mail-box

1. Write a letter to Ranjit Raya, asking him how the divine mother was born.
2. Write a letter to the divine daughter, asking her why she disappeared.

[*Empowerment English*—Macmillan India Limited]

**Think and Answer:** Study each lesson carefully and say at what level or what class you will use the prose lesson in your own context.

[*Note:* For the various kinds of questions that can be asked for testing comprehension, vocabulary, grammar and composition, please see the chapter on tests and testing. (Chapter 18)]

# 15. Teaching Poetry

*Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility.*

—William Wordsworth

bm

Q. 1 Write a note on the figurative use of language. (10m write example)

The *figurative use of language* is an important feature of poetry. Like idioms, in figurative use, expressions say one thing and mean another. The metaphorical use of expressions is also common in everyday use. For example, in advertisements we come across slogans that often use similes and metaphors. Here are some:

Put a tiger in your tank. (Esso)

Thirst knows no season. (Coke)

Tide's in, dirt's out. (Tide detergent)

Learners must be made to discover that most poems do something similar. When Wordsworth says 'I wandered lonely as a cloud', he compares himself with a cloud in respect of his loneliness.

Idiomatic expressions in English are characterised by rhythm, alliteration, assonance, etc.

Examples:

spick and span; sink or swim; wishy-washy; topsy-turvy; run with the hare and hunt with the hound; a sight for sore eyes; etc.

The figurative use of language is something that we use both in prose and in poetry. Everyday language has a lot of poetic element in it. Proverbs use devices that are found in poetry.

Examples:

Blood is thicker than water.

A bird in hand is worth two in the bush.  
 The burnt child dreads fire.  
 Don't cross your bridges before you come to them.  
 The early bird catches the worm.  
 Every cloud has a silver lining.  
 A rolling stone gathers no moss.

Learners must be encouraged to look at such expressions so that they understand poetic language and imagery. For example, in

The city now doth, like a garment wear  
 The beauty of the morning  
 —Wordsworth

there is a fusion of simile and metaphor. The city is personified and it wears garments and the garment is the beauty of the morning.

In *similes* the comparison is explicit but in *metaphors* more is implied than stated.

Examples:

The sky looks bright at dawn, like someone rejoicing in a birth. (Simile)  
 The sky rejoices in the morning's birth. (Metaphor)  
 Even eternity is too short  
 To extol Thee.

## Q. 2 Explain the focus in teaching poetry.

A poem not only contains the content, the theme or the subject matter (maybe, a story or an experience or a description) but also the way it is said, the rhythm of its verse, the special beauty and music, the poetic diction, the figurative features and the suggestive power. A poem conveys the poet's imagination, mood and feelings through words as well as music. These are to be conveyed to the learners while teaching a poem; that is where the teaching of a poem is different from the teaching of prose. Some may argue that a poem is actually caught and that it cannot be taught. Ideally it is true but, in practice, to a large extent it can be taught; it has to be.

The focus of a prose lesson is more on teaching language but the aim of a poetry lesson is what is usually called 'appreciation' or, to be more precise, enjoyment; the teaching of poetry must be a lively, stimulating and challenging *participatory activity*.

We should be clear about what **appreciation** and **enjoyment** mean at various levels. It is not always scholarly or critical interpretation of a poem that can be called 'appreciation'. If a teacher can get the students in the class to feel a

pleasure in reciting a poem or in listening to it when it is read and share the 'enjoyment', the teacher has succeeded in making the learners appreciate the poem. This joy or pleasure is not just a sign of appreciation but the outcome of appreciation.

How such enjoyment can be stimulated without having to explain too many things in the poem constitutes the essence of teaching poetry. It all depends on how it is done in the class, according to the level of the learners and the nature of the poem. A brief discussion of the theme of the poem or some parallel situation or even something similar in the poetry of the student's mother tongue or in a film/TV programme can serve as an introduction; it can motivate the class. There is no need to talk about the life of the poet or even tell them when and why the poet wrote the poem unless it is absolutely necessary.

The next step is the loud reading of the poem by the teacher in an expressive manner; this alone can give life to the poem. The reading should be done with an adequate emphasis on the rhythm and music of the poem and appropriate expression of the mood and feeling found in it. If recordings of the poem can be found, they can be played in the class; some of the poems are read by the poets themselves or by trained speakers. A great part of the enjoyment and comprehension of the poem depends on the effective rendering of the poem either by the teacher or by some other person. The rhythm of the poem and the beauty of expression are passively absorbed by the learners when the rendering is done effectively. The reading can be repeated two or three times.

During the third reading, the teacher can digress and give some necessary information, explanation and meanings of difficult words with the accompanying blackboard work. This has to be done naturally and casually without interfering with the natural flow of the poem. Next, the teacher should encourage the students to read the poem aloud, imitating the earlier renderings as the model. Students may be encouraged to memorise some poems by conducting recitation work in the class. This can be even a part of the work at home followed by poetry reading sessions in the class. Dramatisation of some poems may help. Only such activities can create what is called *appreciation*.

Finally, it is necessary to see that the poem is understood and appreciated. Questions can be asked to see if students have understood the general theme of the poem. Portions of the poem can be read and questions asked. There are several indirect ways of making the students do this without making them feel that they are tested. Even paraphrasing a poem or asking for the summary may not bring out their feeling of appreciation; those may be only reproductions from other sources.



In any language, there are a large number of poems which have given pleasure to both children and adults. Throughout the ages, children as well as adults have made up their own songs, rhymes, jokes, puns, word games, and, in the language of children, we find a wealth of poetic images. This wealth or rich potential must be exploited in teaching poetry. Poetry is not something to be set aside for highdays and holidays; it is part of our daily life and fun which are also special, as special as poetry. It is not just for examination requirements and answering comprehension questions that we teach poetry! That is why we should know what characterises poetry; then we can think of how to teach it at various levels.

Q. 3 What is the use of teaching nursery rhymes? How can they be taught effectively?

English nursery rhymes have been a source of enjoyment in Indian schools for a very long time, not only in schools where English is the medium of instruction but also in non-English-medium institutions, as children enjoy singing and reciting nursery rhymes.

Nursery rhymes could be used for (a) choral reading; (b) singing; (c) miming and dramatisation; (d) music and movement; (e) getting children to draw and paint.

There are excellent audio and video tapes available now and they could be used in the classroom whenever possible. The rich tradition of rhymes, jingles and folklore in Indian languages too can be used to stimulate children's imagination in teaching poems.

Sensitising young learners to the sounds and rhythmic patterns of English and developing the skill of speaking are to be the aims of teaching poetry at the primary level. Recitation of nursery rhymes accompanied by bodily gestures will be useful at this stage. The teacher should read aloud the nursery rhymes and ask the children to repeat them after him/her. Simple practice material can be used to introduce nursery rhymes.

Example:

'bang	'bang	'bang	note any Sta Rhyme
^'bang	^'bang	^'bang	
^'Ding	^'dong	^'bell //	
'Pussy's	'in the	'well //	
'Who	'put her	'in //	
'Little	'Tommy	'thin //	
'Who	'pulled her	'out //	
'Fat	'Tommy	^stout ///	

Diacritic marks:

- ^ under the word indicates a pause;
- ' indicates stress and beat;
- ` shows the falling tone;
- ^ above the word indicates rise-fall, here, a pleasant surprise;
- // shows long pause.)

The diacritic marks are intended only to help the teacher read the poem properly.

There are hundreds of poems and poets to choose from and some enjoy a great deal of popularity with textbook writers and syllabus makers. There is no reason, however, why some comic verses—limericks, nonsense rhymes, puzzles—should not be introduced just for reading and enjoyment. Here are some examples:

- (i) There was once an old man from Beijing  
Who boarded a bus bound for Darjeeling  
He saw on the door:  
Please don't spit on the floor.  
He stood up and spat on the ceiling.
- (ii) There was a young lady of Lynn  
Who was so excessively thin  
That when she essayed  
To drink lemonade  
She slipped through the straw and fell in.

—Anon

(The authorship of such poems is unknown; the short form *Anon* means 'Anonymous'.)

Q. 4 What are the main points worth remembering in the teaching of poetry?

There can be many approaches and several methods to the teaching of poetry in schools. The basic principle is the understanding and the appreciation of poetry through interaction, through discussion between students and teachers and between pupils.

In short, the following points are worth remembering in the teaching of poetry:

1. Poetry (rhymes, songs, simple poems) is taught at the primary level to give variety to lessons and to practise speech rhythm. Its musical quality appeals to the ear and to the mind. (At the secondary and tertiary levels, poetry can be taught for understanding, enjoyment and critical appreciation.)

2. A proper selection is to be made to suit the levels of difficulty in understanding and appreciation, bearing in mind the interests of the pupils, their emotional development, their range of vocabulary, experience and imagination.
3. The following steps are suggested in teaching poetry at the primary and upper primary levels:
- (a) The teacher explains a few new words that are essential for the comprehension of the poem. Archaic words, inversion of normal word order and culture-words should be explained.
- (b) The teacher reads or recites the poem two or three times with proper stress, pause and expression to comprehend its sense and rhythm. The pupils listen to the teacher with their books closed.
- (c) The teacher asks a few general questions on the poem.
- (d) The teacher asks the pupils to read the poem silently. He/she supplies the meanings of words/expressions on demand.

Q. 5 Given below are two sample poetry lessons with the exercises that go with them. Study the samples and make a list of the exercises that can be framed for poetry lessons.

(1)

#### The Twins

*We always have an interesting situation when one person is mistaken for another. This is what is meant by mistaken identity. It can happen between brothers, sisters, or between people who are in no way related, if they resemble one another. And it can be a real problem for twins. In this humorous poem, HS Leigh takes it to extremes.*

#### Notes:

*feature:* any of the noticeable parts of the face

*an awful pitch:* a frightful degree

*got christened me:* was given the name intended for me

*dogg'd:* followed closely

*flogg'd:* thrashed severely

In form and feature, face and limb

I grew so like my brother

That folks got taking me for him

And each for one another.

It puzzled all our kith and kin,  
It reach'd an awful pitch;  
For one of us was born a twin  
And not a soul knew which.

One day (to make the matter worse),  
Before our names were fix'd,  
As we were being washed by nurse,  
We got completely mix'd.  
And thus, you see, by Fate's decree,  
(Or rather nurse's whim)  
My brother John got christened me,  
And I got christened him.

This fatal likeness even dogg'd  
My footsteps when at school,  
And I was always getting flogg'd  
For John turn'd out a fool.  
I put this question hopelessly  
To everyone I knew—  
What would you do if you were me,  
To prove that you were you?

Our close resemblance turned the tide  
Of my domestic life;  
For somehow my intended bride  
Became my brother's wife.  
In short, year after year the same  
Absurd mistakes went on;  
And when I died—the neighbours came  
And buried brother John!

—HS Leigh

#### Understanding the poem

1. Why did people take the poet for his brother?
2. Read lines 5 and 6. What does 'it' stand for?
3. What does the poet say about his christening?
4. Why does the poet call the likeness between him and his brother fatal?
5. Which question did the poet put to everyone he knew? Why does he say that he put it 'hopelessly'?



6. How did their likeness affect the poet's domestic life?
7. The appearance of the same sound or sounds at the beginning of two or more words that are next to or close to each other is known as **alliteration**. Poets often make use of this device for special effects. There are two good instances of alliteration in the poem. Can you find them?
8. Exaggeration is a figure (of speech) by which things are represented as greater or less, better or worse, than they really are. Do you think the poet uses this device in this poem?

[*Macmillan English Reader—Book Seven*]

## II. Warm-up

1. Do you like pets? Why are they called 'pets'?
2. Why do people keep pets at home?
3. In India, people have mostly bad associations with cats. Can you name some?
4. What's the name of the organisation that propagates kindness towards animals?
5. Name at least three pets that you would like to keep and the reasons for keeping each one as a pet.
6. Do you have a pet-name?

Let's look at a poem on a cat—a mystery cat.

### Macavity: The Mystery Cat

Macavity's a Mystery Cat: he's called the Hidden paw—  
For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law.  
He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the flying squad's despair:  
For when they reach the scene of crime—Macavity's not there!

4

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
He's broken every human law, he breaks the law of gravity.  
His powers of levitation would make a fakir stare,  
And when you reach the scene of crime—Macavity's not there!  
You may seek him in the basement, you may look up in the air—  
But I tell you once and once again, Macavity's not there!

10

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
For he's a fiend in feline shape, a monster of depravity.  
You may meet him in a by-street, you may see him in the square—  
But when a crime's discovered, then Macavity's not there.

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He's outwardly respectable. (They say he cheats at cards.)  
And his footprints are not found in any file of Scotland Yard's.  
And when the larder's looted, or the jewel-case is rifled,  
Or when the milk is missing, or another peke's been stifled,  
Or the greenhouse glass is broken, and the trellis past repair—  
Ay, there's the wonder of the thing! Macavity's not there.

26

And when the Foreign Office find a Treaty's gone astray,  
Or the Admiralty lose some plans and drawings by the way,  
There may be a scrap of paper in the hall or on the stair—  
But it's useless to investigate—Macavity's not there!  
And when the loss has been disclosed, the Secret Service say:  
'It *must* have been Macavity!'—but he's a mile away.  
You'll be sure to find him resting, or a—licking of his thumbs,  
Or engaged in doing complicated long division sums.

34

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
There never was a Cat of such deceitfulness and suavity.  
He always has an alibi, and one or two to spare:  
At whatever time the deed took place—MACAVITY WASN'T THERE!  
And they say that all the Cats whose wicked deeds are widely known  
(I might mention Mungojerrie, I might mention *Griddlebone*)  
Are nothing more than agents for the Cat who all the time  
Just controls their operations: the Napoleon of crime!

42

A mini-dictionary just to help you understand the poem:

*alibi*: a statement that a person was in another place at the time of a crime  
*bafflement*: puzzle, frustration, something strange to understand  
*deceitfulness*: dishonesty depravity: wickedness  
*fakir*: an Indian performing magic tricks such as floating in the air  
*feline*: (adjective) of the cat family  
*fiend*: a devil; an evil spirit  
*ginger*: reddish yellow  
*larder*: a cupboard or a small room for storing food  
*levitation*: power to raise the body through spiritual powers  
*peke*: pekingese (= a small dog) (also called Pekinese)  
*rifle*: to search through something looking for something to steal

*stifle*: to make somebody feel unable to breathe properly  
*suavity*: smooth manners in spite of bad behaviour  
*to go astray*: to become lost  
*to spare*: extra; more than what is needed  
*trellis*: support for a plant

## Glossary

## 1. Speech practice

- (i) What are the words in the poem that rhyme with 'Macavity'?
- (ii) Pick out the words that rhyme with:
- (a) paw \_\_\_\_\_ (b) thin \_\_\_\_\_ (c) snake \_\_\_\_\_  
 (d) stare \_\_\_\_\_ (e) domed \_\_\_\_\_ (f) thumbs \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Read the following lines:

'his head is highly domed'  
 'when the larder's looted'

- What makes these lines musical?  
 —Pick out some more lines from the poem that are musical.

## 3. Sounds and letters:

- (i) Pronounce the following words and say which letter is silent in each one: combed, domed, stifled, time, crime, disclosed
- (ii) Say how the letter *s* is pronounced in each of the following words: thumbs, sums, disclosed, breaks, whiskers, movements, snake
- (iii) Find out how these words are pronounced: suavity, peke, deceit, alibi, admiralty.
- (iv) How are the following pronounced? Macavity's, there's, he's, crime's.
- (v) What does the apostrophe stand for in the words given above?

## 4. Enrich your word-power.

- (i) What is the gender of the word 'cat'? 6M
- (ii) Is Macavity a male cat or a female cat? 4M
- (iii) What's a male cat called?
- (iv) Find out the meaning of the following 'cat-expressions':
- (a) It rained cats and dogs.  
 (b) Don't let the cat out of the bag.  
 (c) While the cat is away, the mice will play.  
 (d) There were cat-calls as he took the seat.

(e) A cat o' nine tails.

## 5. Check your understanding.

- (i) What do the following expressions mean?
- (a) the hidden paw (b) the bafflement of Scotland Yard  
 (c) a ginger cat (d) a fiend in feline shape  
 (e) a master of depravity (f) the Napoleon of crime  
 (g) the flying squad's despair
- (ii) What's the 'human law' (1.6) contrasted with? Which is a criminal act—breaking the human law or the other one?
- (iii) How can Macavity's power of levitation make a fakir stare? (Who is a fakir?)
- (iv) What are the places of operation of Macavity? In what way do these make him different from other cats?
- (v) Why is 'must' **italicised** in 'It *must* have been Macavity'?
- (vi) What's an alibi? Why does the poet say 'He **always** had an alibi—one or two to spare'?
- (vii) What is Macavity's relationship with the other two cats mentioned in the poem? Are the names of these cats real?
- (viii) Will you call this a serious poem or a humorous one? Give reasons for your answer.
- (ix) For describing Macavity, the poet uses expressions that are used to refer to thieves and other criminals. Make a list of these expressions.
- (x) There is one sentence that is repeated several times in the poem. What is the sentence? Why is it repeated?
6. (i) Imagine that you are returning home after a two-day absence for attending a wedding. The house is littered with clothes, papers, magazines and clothes. The fridge is open. Guess what might have happened and write a complaint to the police. 6M
- (ii) Say whether you would like to keep a pet like Macavity in your house. Give reasons for your answer.

**Think and Answer:** Study each lesson carefully and say at what level or at what class you will use the lesson in your own context.