



Before You Read

There must have been a situation when you have made some plans with your friends. Then, your parents got to know of it later and forbade you from joining your friends as they wanted you to attend to some chores first.

How did you handle the situation? Discuss in class.

Much to Swaminathan's displeasure, his father's courts closed in the second week of May and father began to spend the afternoons at home. Swaminathan feared that it might interfere with his afternoon rambles with Rajam and Mani. And it did. On the very third day of his vacation, Father commanded Swaminathan, just as he was stepping out of the house, "Swami, come here." Father was standing in the small courtyard, wearing a dhoti and a baniyan (vest), the dress which indicated that he did not intend going out in the near future.

"Where are you going?"

"Nowhere."

"Where were you yesterday at this time?"

"Here."

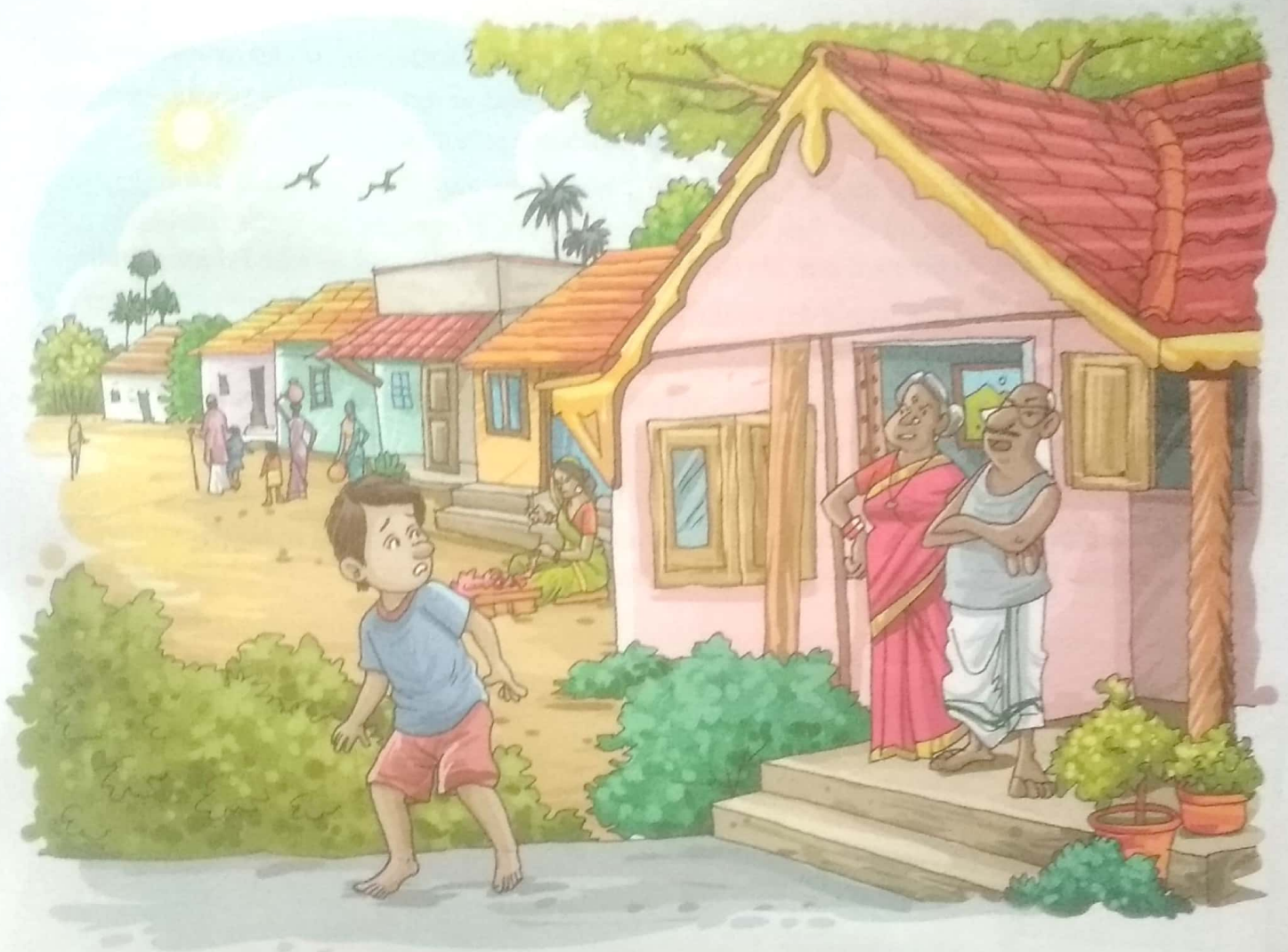
"You are lying. You were not here yesterday. And you are not going out now."

"That is right," Mother added, just appearing from somewhere, "there is no limit to his loafing in the sun. He will die of sunstroke if he keeps on like this."

interfere with: restrict

rambles: walks for pleasure

loafing: spending time aimlessly



Father would have gone on even without Mother's encouragement.

But now her words spurred him to action. Swaminathan was asked to follow him to his 'room' in his father's dressing room.

"How many days is it since you touched your books?" Father asked as he blew off the fine layer of dust on Swaminathan's books, and cleared the web that an industrious spider was weaving between a corner of the table and the pile of books.

Swaminathan viewed the question as a gross breach of promise. "Should I read even when I have no school?"

"Do you think you have passed the B.A.?" Father asked.

"I mean, Father, when the school is closed, when there is no examination, even then should I read?"

"What a question! You must read."

spurred: prompted; encouraged
breach: breaking a law

industrious: very hard working

gross: very obvious and unacceptable

"But, Father, you said before the examinations that I need not read after they were over. Even Rajam does not read." As he uttered the last sentence, he tried to believe it; he clearly remembered Rajam's complaining bitterly of a home-tutor who came and pestered him for two hours a day thrice a week. Father was apparently deaf to Swaminathan's remarks.

He stood over Swaminathan and set him to dust his books and clean his table. Swaminathan vigorously started blowing off the dust from the book covers. He caught the spider carefully, and took it to the window to throw it out. He held it outside the window and watched it for a while.

"Look sharp! Do you want a whole day to throw out the spider?" Father asked.

Swaminathan suddenly realised that he might have the spider as his pet and that it would be a criminal waste to throw it out. He secretly slipped it into his pocket, and after shaking an empty hand outside the window, returned to his duty at the desk.

"Look at the way you have kept your English text. Are you not ashamed of yourself?"

Swaminathan picked up the oily red bound Fourth Reader, opened it, and banged together the covers in order to shake off the dust, and then rubbed violently the oily covers with his palm.



pestered: troubled or annoyed

vigorously: with great effort

sharp: (here) smart

"Get a piece of cloth, boy. That is not the way to clean things. Get a piece of cloth, Swami," Father said half kindly and half impatiently.

Swaminathan looked about and complained, "I can't find any here, Father."

"Run and see."

This was a welcome suggestion. Swaminathan hurried out. He first went to his grandmother.

"Granny, get me a piece of cloth, quick."

"Where am I to go for a piece of cloth?"

"Where am I to go?" he asked peevishly and added quite irrelevantly. "If one has got to read even during holidays, I don't see why holidays are given at all."

"What is the matter?"

This was his opportunity to earn some sympathy. He almost wept as he said, "I don't know what Rajam and Mani will think, waiting for me there, if I keep on fooling here. Granny, if father cannot find any work to do, why shouldn't he go and sleep?"

Father shouted across the hall, "Did you find the cloth?"

Swaminathan answered, "Granny hasn't got it. I shall see if mother has." His mother was sitting in the back corridor on a mat, with the baby sleeping on her lap. Swaminathan glared at her, "You are a fine lady, Mother," he said in an undertone, "Why don't you leave us, poor folk alone?"

"What?" she asked, unconscious of sarcasm, and having forgotten what she had said to her husband a few minutes ago. "You needn't have gone and carried tales against me. I don't know what I have done to you." He would have enjoyed prolonging this talk but Father was waiting for the duster.

"Can you give me a piece of cloth?" he asked, coming to business.

"What cloth?"

"What cloth! How should I know? It seems I have got to tidy up those—those books of mine. A fine way of spending the holidays!"

"I can't get any now."

"H'm. You can't, can't you?"

Swami looked about. There was a piece of cloth under the baby. In a flash, he rolled the baby over, pulled out the cloth, and was off. He held his mother responsible for all his troubles, and disturbing the baby and snatching its cloth gave him a great relief.

He tilted the table and tipped all the things on it over the floor and then picked them up one by one, and arranged them on the table. Father watched him, "Is this how you arrange things? You have kept all the light things at the bottom and the heavy ones on top. Take out those notebooks. Keep the atlas at the bottom." Mother came in with the baby in her arms and complained to

peevishly: fretfully, in an easily annoyed way

undertone: low voice

sarcasm: stating something in a mocking way so that the listener knows that you mean the very opposite of it

Father, "Look at the boy, he has taken the baby's cloth. Is there nobody to control him in this house? I wonder how long his school is going to be kept closed."

Swaminathan continued his work with concentrated interest. Father was pleased to ignore Mother's complaint; he merely pinched the sleeping baby's cheeks, at which Mother was annoyed and left the room.

Half an hour later Swaminathan sat in Father's room in a chair; with a slate in his hand and pencil ready. Father held the arithmetic book open and dictated, "Rama has ten mangoes with which he wants to earn fifteen annas. Krishna wants only four mangoes. How much will Krishna have to pay?"

Swaminathan gazed and gazed at this sum, and every time he read it, it seemed to acquire a new meaning. He had the feeling of having stepped into a fearful maze.

His mouth began to water at the thought of mangoes. He wondered what made Rama fix fifteen annas for ten mangoes. What kind of a man was Rama? Probably he was like Sankar.

Somehow one couldn't help feeling that he must have been like Sankar, with his ten mangoes and his iron determination to get fifteen annas. If Rama was like Sankar, Krishna must have been like the Pea. Here Swaminathan felt an unaccountable sympathy for Krishna.

"Have you done the sum?" Father asked, looking over the newspaper he was reading.

"Father, will you tell me if the mangoes were ripe?"

Father regarded him for a while and smothering a smile remarked: "Do the sum first. I will tell you whether the fruits were ripe or not afterwards."

Swaminathan felt utterly helpless. If only Father would tell him whether Rama was trying to sell ripe fruits or unripe ones! Of what avail would it be to tell him afterwards? He felt strongly that the answer to this question contained the key to the whole problem. It would be scandalous to expect fifteen annas for ten unripe mangoes. But even if he did, it wouldn't be unlike Rama, who Swaminathan was steadily beginning to hate and infest with the darkest qualities.

"Father, I cannot do the sum," Swaminathan said, pushing away the slate.

"What is the matter with you? You can't solve a simple problem in simple proportion?"

"We are not taught this kind of thing in our school."

"Get the slate here. I will make you give the answer now."

Swaminathan waited with interest for the miracle to happen. Father studied the sum for a second and asked, "What is the price of ten mangoes?"

Swaminathan looked over the sum to find out which part of the sum contained an answer to this question. "I don't know," he said.

"You seem to be an extraordinary idiot. Now read the sum. Come on. How much does Rama expect for ten mangoes?"

annas: a currency unit formerly used in our country (an anna was worth one sixteenth of a rupee)
smothering: suppressing a feeling
infest: spread through

'Fifteen annas, of course,' Swaminathan thought, but how could that be its price? Is it a just price? It was very well for Rama to expect it in his avarice. But was it the right price? And then there was the obscure point whether the mangoes were ripe or not. If they were ripe, fifteen annas might not be an improbable price. If only he could get more light on this point!

"How much does Rama want for his mangoes?"

"Fifteen annas," replied Swaminathan without conviction.

"Very good. How many mangoes does Krishna want?"

"Four."

"What is the price of four?"

How could he know? How could he know what that fool Krishna would pay?

"Look here, boy. I have half a mind to thrash you. What have you in your head? Ten mangoes cost fifteen annas. What is the price of one? Come on. If you don't say it ..." Father said. His hand took Swaminathan's ear and gently twisted it. Swaminathan could not open his mouth because he could not decide whether the solution lay in the realm of addition, subtraction, multiplication or division. The longer he hesitated, the more violent the twist was becoming.

In the end when Father was waiting with a scowl for an answer, he received only a squeal from his son. "I am not going to leave you till you tell me how much a single mango costs at fifteen annas for ten."

What was the matter with Father? Swaminathan kept blinking. Where was the urgency to know its price? Any way, if father wanted so badly to know, instead of harassing him, let him go to the market and find it out. The whole brood of Ramas and Krishnas, with their endless transactions with odd quantities of mangoes and fractions of money, were getting disgusting.

Father admitted defeat by declaring, "One mango costs fifteen over ten annas. Simplify it."

Here he was being led to the most hideous regions of Arithmetic Fractions. "Give me the slate, Father, I will find it out." He worked and found at the end of fifteen minutes, "The price of one mango is three over two annas."

He expected to be contradicted any moment. But Father said, "Very good, simplify it further."

It was plain sailing after that. Swaminathan announced at the end of half an hour's agony, "Krishna must pay six annas," and burst into tears.

– R. K. Narayan

About the Author

R. K. Narayan (1906–2001) is one of the leading Indian writers in English. He wrote beautiful stories set in the fictitious town Malgudi. His writing style is simple and humorous. Some of his most famous stories are *Malgudi Days*, *Swami and Friends*, *The English Teacher*, etc.



avarice: greed

obscure: unclear

with a scowl: with an angry expression

squeal: a long high-pitched cry

Read and Understand



A. Read the lines taken from the text and choose the correct options to answer the questions.

Father was standing in the small courtyard, wearing a dhoti and a baniyan, the dress which indicated that he did not intend going out in the near future.

1. What did Swami's father ask him immediately after this?

- a. He asked if Swami was feeling well.
- b. He asked Swami where he was going.
- c. He asked Swami to fetch him some fruits.
- d. He asked Swami why he was feeling down.

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"Look sharp! Do you want a whole day to throw out the spider?" Father asked.

2. Father posed this question to Swami as _____.

- a. he took too long to clean the table
- b. he held the spider outside the window and watched it for a while
- c. his father wanted him to go to school
- d. his father wanted him to play with his friends

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"Can you give me a piece of cloth?" he asked, coming to business.

3. Who asked this and to whom?

- a. Swami asked this to his father.
- b. Father asked this to the mother.
- c. Swami asked this to his mother.
- d. Granny asked this to Swami.

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His mouth began to water at the thought of mangoes.

4. Whose mouth began to water at the thought of mangoes?

- a. Swami's mouth began to water at the thought of mangoes.
- b. Swami's father's mouth began to water at the thought of mangoes.
- c. Swami's friend's mouth began to water at the thought of mangoes.
- d. Granny's mouth began to water at the thought of mangoes.

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Anyway, if father wanted so badly to know, instead of harassing him, let him go to the market and find it out.

5. Swami thought this because _____.

- a. he was struggling to solve the sum given by his father
- b. he did not see any urgency in knowing the price
- c. both a. and b.
- d. neither a. nor b.

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B. Answer the following questions.

1. How did Swami plan to spend the afternoon and with whom?
2. What did Swami regard as a breach of promise?
3. What did Swami think was a criminal waste? What did he do next?
4. How did Swami eventually manage to get a piece of cloth?
5. Why did Swami feel utterly helpless?

C. Think and answer.

1. What does the layer of dust on Swami's books indicate?
2. Why did Swami burst into tears after solving the arithmetic problem?
3. How would you feel after having found out a solution to a difficult situation?

Vocabulary



Phrasal Verbs

Read this sentence from the text.

- He stood over Swaminathan and set him to dust his books and clean his table.

Here, the highlighted portion is a phrasal verb. The main verb 'stand' has been presented in its past form together with the preposition 'over'. A **phrasal verb** consists of a verb and a particle (preposition/adverb, etc.). Often they provide a new meaning.

stand over: stand close to someone; to watch or supervise

Phrasal verbs are made up of a transitive verb and a particle. Here is a list of the most common verbs with their most frequent particles.

bring: about, along, back, forward, in, off, out, round, up

knock: down, out, over

carry: off, out, away, on

give: up, over, in, out

let: down, in, off, out

Read the following sentences and fill in the blanks with the correct combination of phrasal verbs given above.

1. The Government is going to _____ these old buildings and build a community centre.
2. The thief was so guilty about the crime that he _____ himself _____ to the police.
3. I am going to study hard for the final exams because I do not want to _____ my parents _____.
4. When we go for our field trip tomorrow, please _____ a bottle of water for yourself.
5. Even if you face a storm in your life, you should _____ and keep moving forward.

Language Skills

Syllabification

We divide words into parts based on the placement of vowels, when we use them in our speech. These parts are called syllables. A **syllable** is a unit of sound. A syllable has a vowel and one or more consonants.

Example: displeasure → dis-pleas-ure

This word has three syllables. The highlighted syllable in the middle is stronger than the other syllables. This is the stressed syllable.

Pronounce the following words correctly after your teacher. Observe and underline the stressed syllables.

1. in-ter-fere (correct pronunciation: in-ter-feer)
2. ram-ble
3. won-der-ful
4. trans-ac-tion
5. hid-e-ous
6. av-a-ri-ce (correct pronunciation: av-er-is)

Note

There are two stressed syllables in the word 'interfere'. The primary stressed syllable is in-ter-fere.

The secondary stressed syllable is in-ter-fere.

Grammar

Phrases and Clauses

Read the following sentences from the text.

- There was a piece of cloth under the baby.
- How many mangoes does Krishna want?

The highlighted groups of words are phrases. A **phrase** is a group of words that does not have a subject and a verb combination. A phrase can never stand alone as a sentence because it does not make complete sense on its own. It can be used with a clause.

Read the following sentences from the text.

- Here Swaminathan felt an unaccountable sympathy for Krishna.
- His mouth began to water at the thought of mangoes.

The highlighted groups of words are clauses. A **clause** is a group of words that can sometimes act as a sentence and make complete sense on its own. A clause contains a subject and a predicate with a verb. Phrases and clauses are the basic components of a sentence.

A. Write whether the underlined groups of words are phrases or clauses.

1. We watched a film last night and then had ice cream.

2. Sushma wrote her essay last night but forgot to print it out. _____
3. The boy wearing the blue shirt is my brother. _____
4. Her alarm didn't go off this morning because she set it for p.m. instead of a.m. _____
5. After knocking over the vase, the burglar decided it was time to run. _____

B. Make complete sentences of your own using these phrases and clauses.

when you have completed the work at that moment did you enjoy
without further delay just in time

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Listening



Listen to the text being read out by your teacher and fill in the missing words.

1. Abraham Lincoln was born in 1809 in _____.
2. Abraham studied _____ in Illinois.
3. Abraham won national attention for his speeches against _____ during several debates.
4. Abraham Lincoln won the Presidential Election in _____.
5. Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which signaled _____.
6. Lincoln is remembered today for his _____, his _____ and his _____.

Speaking



Form pairs and make preparations for a short skit. Frame dialogues based on any of the following topics and present it to the class.

- One of you has been absent for two weeks from school and you need to take some notes from your friend.
- You have to tell your friend you cannot make it for the outing because your mother wants you to help her in the garden.



Formal Letter

Formal letters include applications, letters to editors, letters to and from organisations, government departments, etc. The expression of these letters should be formal. Formal letters must be to the point, polite and short in length.

Example:

You are Richa Sharma, the monitor of class 7 A, in Ayodhya Public School in Lucknow. Write an application to the Principal requesting him/her to arrange for special coaching in science for your class. Give reasons as why you need this.

To,
The Principal,
Ayodhya Public School,
Lucknow
4th July, 20XX

Sub: Regarding an arrangement for extra coaching class in science

Sir,

As the monitor of class 7 A, I would like to request you to arrange for extra classes in science. Our science teacher was on leave the whole of last month as he was extremely ill. Our half yearly examination will be starting in September but it is impossible to complete the syllabus within one and a half months. We also would need to revise the course.

The extra classes would help us to cover the syllabus comfortably.

Thanking you,
Yours obediently,

(sign)
Richa Sharma
7 A

Write a formal letter to the Principal of your school requesting him/her to provide more dustbins and make other necessary arrangements to keep the school compound clean.

Cover the following points:

- your plans for keeping the surroundings clean
- the necessary equipments
- making students aware about the urgency of keeping the surroundings clean