



Before You Read

We all have dreams and aspirations which we want to achieve, irrespective of the hurdles that may come our path. What do you aspire for? Is there something that makes you afraid that you might not succeed? Or are you sure that your dream will one day become a reality? Discuss in class.

"Please, sir," he said, "could you tell me the time?"

"Twenty minutes to eight," I replied, looking at my watch.

"Oh," he remarked. Then added for my information after a pause: "I haven't got to be in till half-past eight."

After that we fell back into our former silence, he at his end of the park seat, I at mine.

"And do you live far away?" I asked.

"Oh no, only over there," he answered, indicating with a sweep of his arm the northern half of London where it lay darkening behind the chimney-fringed horizon. "I often come and sit here."

It seemed an odd pastime for so very small a citizen. "And what makes you like to come and sit here?" I said.

"Oh, I don't know," he replied, "I think."

"And what do you think about?"

"Oh, lots of things."

"What things?" I asked.

He inspected me critically out of the corner of his eye. It raised me in my own conceit to find that the inspection contented him, he evidently feeling satisfied that here was a man to whom another gentleman might speak openly and without reserve.

conceit: excessive pride in oneself



He wriggled sideways, slipping his hands beneath him and sitting on them. "Oh, fancies," he explained; "I'm going to be an author when I grow up, and write books."

Then I knew why it was that the sight of his little figure had drawn me to sit beside him, and why the little serious face had seemed so familiar to me, as of someone I had once known long ago.

So we talked of books and bookmen. He told me how, having been born on the fourteenth of February, his name had come to be Valentine. In return I confided to him my name, and discovered that he had never heard it, which pained me for the moment, until I found that of all my contemporaries, excepting only Mr Stevenson, he was equally ignorant, having lived with the heroes and the heroines of the past.

Scott and Dumas and Victor Hugo were his favourites. *Gulliver's Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Don Quixote* and *The Arabian Nights* he knew almost by heart, and these we discussed, exchanging many pleasant and profitable ideas upon the same. He liked 'real stories' he told me, naively unconscious of the satire, 'where people did things.'

"I used to read silly stuff once," he confessed humbly, "magical tales and that sort of thing, you know, but Mama said I'd never be able to write if I read such fairy tales."

wiggled: twisted and turned with quick movements

confided: trusted someone to share a secret

contemporaries: people of the same age; a person or thing existing at the same time as another

naively: in a way that shows lack of experience, wisdom, or judgement; innocently

"So you gave it up," I concluded for him.

"Yes," he answered. But a little sigh of regret, I thought, escaped him at the same time.

"I want to learn to write very, very well indeed," he suddenly added after a pause, his little earnest face growing still more serious, "then I'll be able to earn heaps of money."

It rose to my lips to answer him that it was not always the books written very, very well that brought in the biggest heaps of money; that if heaps of money were his chief hope, he would be better advised to devote his energies to the glorious art of self-advertisement and the gentle craft of making friends upon the Press. But something about the innocent face beside me silenced my middle-aged cynicism.

"And what would you do, Valentine, with heaps of money?" I asked.

For a moment his old shyness returned. Perhaps it was not quite a legitimate question from a friend of such recent standing. But his frankness wrestled with his reserve and once more conquered.

"Mama need not do any work then," he answered. "She isn't really strong enough for it, you know," he explained, "and I'd take her to live in the country—the country air is so much better for her, you know—and Aunt Emma, too."

But I confess that as regards Aunt Emma his tone was not enthusiastic.

I spoke to him—I trust not discouragingly—of the trials and troubles of the literary career, and of the difficulties and disappointments awaiting the literary aspirant, but my croakings terrified him not.

"Mama says that every work worth doing is difficult," he replied, "and that it doesn't matter what career we choose, there are difficulties and disappointments to be overcome, and that I must work very hard and say to myself 'I will succeed' and then in the end, you know, I shall."

"Though of course it may be a long time," he added cheerfully.

Only one thing in the slightest daunted him, and that was the weakness of his spelling.

"And I suppose," he asked, "you must spell very well indeed to be an author."

I explained to him, however, that this failing was generally obscured by a little judicious indistinctness of calligraphy, and all obstacles thus removed, the business of a literary agent seemed to him an exceptionally pleasant and joyous one.

"Mama says it is a noble calling," he confided to me, "and that anyone ought to be very proud and glad to be able to write books, because they give people happiness and make them forget things, and that one must try to be awfully good if one's going to be an author, so as to be worthy to help and teach others."

"And do you try to be awfully good, Valentine?" I enquired.

"Yes," he answered; "but it's awfully hard, you know. I don't think anybody could ever be quite good—until," he corrected himself, "they were grown up."

cynicism: belief that people are driven by self-interest

judicious: (here) careful

indistinctness: not clearly standing out

obscured: (here) covered

calligraphy: (here) handwriting



"I suppose," he added with a little sigh, "it's easy for grown-up people to be good."

It was my turn to glance suspiciously at him, wondering if the seeds of satire could have taken root already in that tiny brain. But his eyes met mine without flinching, and I was not loath to drift away from the point.

"And what else does your Mama say about literature, Valentine?" I asked.

For the strangeness of it was that, though I kept repeating under my breath "Copy-book maxims, copy-book maxims," the words stirred within me old childish thoughts and sentiments that I, in my cleverness, had long since learnt to laugh at; and finding in them in spite of myself a certain element of truth, a certain amount of helpfulness, an unpleasant suggestion of reproach.

He tucked his hands underneath him, as before, and sat swinging his short legs.

"Oh—oh lots of things," he answered vaguely.

"Yes?" I persisted.

"Oh, that—" he repeated it slowly, recalling it word for word as he went on, "that he who can write a great book is greater than a king; that a good book is better than a good sermon; and that an author should never forget that the gift of being able to write is given to anybody in trust." I could not avoid

satire: use of humour, irony or exaggeration to ridicule a person or ideas

copy-book maxims: copy-book is an exercise book to teach handwriting, usually these books have some common phrases or sayings to be copied, so anything which is repeated and predictable is referred to as copy-book maxims

a smile. But the next moment something moved me to take his hand in mine, and, turning his little solemn face towards mine, say:

"If ever there comes a time, little man, when you are tempted to laugh at your mother's old-fashioned notions—and such a time may come—remember that an older man than you once told you that had he always kept them in his heart, he would have done better work."

Then growing frightened at my own earnestness, as we men do, deeming it something to be ashamed of, I led the conversation back to him.

"And have you ever tried writing anything?" I asked him.

Of course he had, what need to question! And it was, strange to say, a story about a little boy who lived with his mother and aunt, and who went to school.

"It is sort of," he explained, "sort of auto-bio-graphical, you know."

"And what does Mama think of it?" was my next question, after we had discussed the advantages of drawing upon one's own personal experiences for one's material.

"Mama thinks it is very clever—in parts," he told me.

"You read it to her?" I suggested.

"Yes," he acknowledged, "in the evening, when she's working, and Aunt Emma isn't there."

Suddenly he said, "Please, sir, could you tell me the time?"

"Just over the quarter, Valentine," I answered, looking at my watch.

He rose and held out his hand.

"I didn't know it was so late," he said, "I must go now."

He raised his cap with an old-fashioned courtesy and trotted off. Some distance down the path, he turned and waved his hand to me, and I watched him disappear into the twilight.

I sat on for a while, thinking many thoughts, until there rang a hoarse cry, "All out, All out," and slowly I moved homeward.

— Jerome K. Jerome

About the Author

Jerome K. Jerome (1859–1927) was an English novelist and playwright, who is best known for his comic travelogue *Three Men in a Boat* (1889). His simple style of writing was filled with satire and humour. Inspired by his sister, he tried his hand at acting but was more interested in writing and began his career as an author by writing essays, short stories and satires. He wanted to serve his country in World War I but was not selected as he was over aged to be enlisted, so he decided to drive an ambulance to do his bit for the country. His autobiography, *My Life and Times*, was published in 1926.



earnestness: seriousness and determination

Read and Understand



A. Choose and tick (✓) the correct option.

1. What was the first thing that the boy asked the narrator?
 - a. the narrator's name
 - b. the time
 - c. his seat number
 - d. if he could lend him a book
2. 'Conceit' means _____.
 - a. innocence
 - b. vanity
 - c. ignorance
 - d. anger
3. Valentine wanted a lot of money so that he could _____.
 - a. buy lots of toys
 - b. buy his mother a house in the country
 - c. go to another city
 - d. travel the world
4. What did Valentine want to become?
 - a. an author
 - b. a farmer
 - c. a traveller
 - d. a chef
5. Valentine's mother thinks that writing is a 'noble calling' because _____.
 - a. it helps people read
 - b. people earn lots of money
 - c. it makes people forget their sorrows
 - d. it is a great hobby

B. Answer the following questions.

1. What does Valentine mean by 'real stories'? What kind of stories does he refer to as 'silly'?
2. What does Valentine want to become? Why does he want to become so?
3. What prevented the narrator from bursting Valentine's idea about writers earning a lot of money?
4. What does the narrator want Valentine to remember?
5. What according to Valentine could hamper his chances of becoming a writer?

C. Think and answer.

1. The story talks of 'copy-book maxims'. Identify the one used in the story. If you were to choose a maxim which one would it be and why?
2. Even though he is very young, Valentine is sure of what he would like to be when he grows up. Have you decided about what you want to become when you grow up? If your answer is 'yes' then what is it and why? If your answer is 'no' then why not?

Vocabulary

Phrasal Verbs

Look at these examples from the text.

- After that we fell back into our former silence, he at his end of the park seat, I at mine.
- It was my turn to glance suspiciously at him, wondering if the seeds of satire could have taken root already in that tiny brain.

The highlighted words in each sentence are phrasal verbs.

A **phrasal verb** is a verb that is a combination of the main verb together with an adverb or a preposition or both.

You must remember that their meaning is not obvious from the individual words themselves.

Fell back into means to go back into doing something in a way that was done earlier.

Taken root means that an idea has been formed somewhere else, but begins to be accepted in another place.

Look carefully at the table given below.

Verb	Meaning	Example
bring up	mention a topic	My mother <u>brought up</u> the matter of my poor score in English.
bring up	raise children	It is not easy to <u>bring up</u> children in the present times.
ask around	ask many people the same question	The police <u>asked around</u> but nobody admitted to seeing anything.
back up	reverse	You need to <u>back up</u> your car so that I can take my car out.
back up	support	You have to <u>back me up</u> over my decision to lodge a complaint.
break down	get upset	He <u>broke down</u> when the police informed him of the tragedy.
break in	forced entry into a house or building	Someone <u>broke into</u> their apartment and stole their valuables.

The verb and adverb elements in an intransitive phrasal verb are never separated.

Example: We broke up two years ago.

In case of transitive phrasal verbs, if the direct object is a noun then the verb and the adverb or preposition element can be separated.

Example: They pulled the house down.

In case the object is a pronoun, then the pronoun will come between the verb and the adverb.

Example: They pulled it down.

Fill in the blanks with appropriate phrasal verbs. Make changes wherever required.

look down on break out hand out hand in put up put off give in

1. The teacher _____ the question paper to the students.
2. I refuse to _____ with your bad behaviour.
3. My father taught me not to _____ those with less.
4. The prisoner _____ of the prison with the help of his friends.
5. The manager asked the official to _____ the report by Saturday.
6. We had to _____ our trip to Europe.
7. They refused to _____ to the demands of the kidnappers.

Language Skills



Expressions with 'Heap'

Look at the given expression from the text.

- Then I'll be able to earn heaps of money.

The highlighted expression means a considerable sum of money.

There are many expressions with 'heap'. Match the expressions in column A with their meaning in column B.

Column A

1. heap sight
2. heap on
3. heap coals of fire on someone's head
4. heap up
5. heap with

Column B

- a. to apportion or give a large amount
- b. to collect or gather
- c. very much; a lot
- d. to pile something onto something
- e. go out of the way to make someone feel remorseful

Grammar



Clauses

Read the following sentences from the story.

- I'm going to be an author when I grow up.
- I sat on for a while, thinking many thoughts.

The highlighted parts are **principal clauses**, and the underlined parts are **subordinate clauses**.

The sentence is the basic unit of communication which is normally made of one or more clauses. A **clause** is a group of words containing both a subject—who or what the sentence is about—and a verb describing the action of the subject.

Independent or Principal Clause	Dependent or Subordinate Clause
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is a group of words with a subject and a verb 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is a group of words with a subject and a verb
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> makes complete sense 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not make complete sense and needs another clause to complete its meaning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can stand alone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot stand alone

A. Each sentence has a clause which has been underlined. Identify whether it is a principal clause or subordinate clause.

- After John caught a fish, Kelly caught one also.
- If Lousie goes to the store, she will be late for the movie.
- While the family slept, the mouse ran through the kitchen and ate the bread.
- I like to eat lunch outside when the sun is shining.
- We approached the relationship manager who proved to be very useful.
- I like to curl up inside a quilt when it gets cold.

Types of Subordinate Clauses

Noun Clause	Adverbial Clause	Adjective Clause
acts as a noun	acts as an adverb by asking questions like <i>how, when, where, under what conditions</i>	does the work of an adjective
acts as subjects, direct objects	begins with subordinating conjunctions	begins with a relative pronoun
begins with words like <i>how, whomever, whoever, who, whom</i>	begins with words like <i>unless, if, when, and, although</i>	begins with words like <i>who, whom, which, that, what, etc.</i>

B. Complete the sentences using appropriate relative pronouns.

- I met a woman _____ could speak six languages.
- Emma lives in a house _____ is a hundred years old.
- Sam, _____ we saw at the dance, is going to start a new company.
- My uncle and aunt, _____ we loved a lot, settled in another country.
- Edgar Allan Poe, _____ wrote the famous poem, *The Raven*, was born in Boston in 1809.

Note

Adjective clauses are also called relative clauses.

Listening



Listen to the text being read by your teacher and answer the given questions.

- What kind of positions do footballers specialise in?
- Is the training done mostly indoors or outdoors?

3. How much time do professional players devote to training?
4. How frequent is the training in amateur clubs?
5. How do football players spend most of their time?

Speaking



Form pairs. Imagine that the two of you have never met each other and are trying to begin a conversation. Discuss the conversation with your partner and demonstrate it to the rest of the class.

Some situations are given here. However, you may improvise and create your own situations.

1. It's the first day of school and you have a nervous new student in your class. Start a conversation to make him/her feel more comfortable.
2. You went to visit your grandmother during your summer vacation. Her new neighbours have a child of the same age as you. Begin a conversation with that child so that you can enjoy your vacation with a new friend.

Writing



Diary Entry

A **diary entry** is the most personal method of noting down one's personal and emotional thoughts. It is also an informal form of communication. It can be based on a personal experience, description or narration of an event or any other activity which is close to the writer's heart.

During an examination if one is asked to do a diary entry, then remember that your imagination, creativity and also your expression will be tested.

- A good diary entry must specify the following (no fixed format but this information is important):
 - Day
 - Time
 - Date
 - Place
- The tone should be personal and informal; depending upon the subject it can be reflective also.
- As a diary is a personal document, you do not need to sign at the end.
- It is mostly written in the simple past tense, present perfect or future tense.
- It is written in the first person.
- The entry may begin with a general sentence describing the day or some momentary feelings.
- Discuss the events, your feelings and how is it likely to affect you.
- Conclude with a final remark and a future course of action.
- The word limit can be about 100-120 words.

You lost your favourite Parker pen which had been a gift from your grandfather. You considered the pen your lucky charm and your annual exams are about to begin in a week. Write a diary entry expressing your feelings.