

ENGLISH LITERATURE BOOK

(Supplementary Reader)

for

Class X

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ਇਹ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਪੰਜਾਬ ਸਰਕਾਰ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਮੁਫਤ
ਦਿੱਤੀ ਜਾਣੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਕਾਊ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ।



PUNJAB SCHOOL EDUCATION BOARD

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FOREWORD

The Punjab School Education Board has continuously been engaged in the preparation and review of syllabi and textbooks. The main objective of preparing language textbooks is to provide the students with interesting and appropriate reading material. This aims to equip the students with the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing so as to enable them to use these in their day to day life.

The Government of Punjab introduced English as a subject from Class I in the year 1998 due to pressing demand from the field. As a consequence, the Punjab School Education Board prepared new syllabi for Classes I to X. New textbooks were prepared on the basis of these syllabi and new series of English Readers for Classes I to X were developed which are presently being used by all the schools in Punjab. This book is the 10th in the series.

This language package for Class X includes the Main Course Book, the literature book (Supplementary Reader) and English Grammar & Composition. This Supplementary Reader is essentially designed to promote in the Learner a love for reading by exposing him to good samples of English Literature. This book holds up the mirror to the different facets of life to encourage the learner to read extensively on his/her own.

The book in hand has been prepared by Mrs Harjit Vasudeva, former Director, Regional Institute of English, Chandigarh and vetted by Dr D.V. Jindal External Faculty Member, Central Institute of English & Foreign Languages, Hyderabad and edited by Sh. Manoj Kumar (retired), Subject Expert.

We would gratefully welcome comments and suggestions from teachers, experts and students as well to improve this book further.

Chairman

Punjab School Education Board

ਸਮਾਜਿਕ ਨਿਆਂ, ਅਧਿਕਾਰਤਾ ਅਤੇ
ਘੱਟ ਗਿਣਤੀ ਵਿਭਾਗ, ਪੰਜਾਬ

CONTENTS

S.No.	LESSON	PAGE NO.
1.	Bed Number 29 <i>Tariq Rahman</i>	1
2.	Half A Rupee Worth <i>R.K. Narayan</i>	5
3.	One Thousand Dollars <i>O' Henry</i>	10
4.	The Dying Detective <i>Arthur Conan Doyle</i>	15
5.	How Much Land Does A Man Need ? <i>Leo Tolstoy</i>	21
6.	Return to Air <i>Philippa A Pearce</i>	28

BED NUMBER-29

Tariq Rahman

A man, whose hobby was painting, met with an accident and lost his eyesight. While he was in hospital, Naeem, his wardmate, encouraged him to paint again. Naeem described different scenes and he painted them. Naeem left hospital before the author got his eyesight back. Who was Naeem and why did he leave the hospital?

Brakes shrieked, something struck, someone cried and there was darkness spreading all around me. Pain leapt in my whole body and a gentle voice said, “Please don’t move, sir. It might be dangerous.” I tried to understand what had happened – I recalled the predawn glow; trees and flowers, the dew bathed grass, – all waiting for the sunrise – I had imprisoned this all on the canvas, my masterpiece, the joy of life. So I named it ‘Life’ – then I remembered the busy street scene, the roar of traffic, the car – and the crash. My hand touched the bandages on my eyes. “No God,” I moaned, “not this.”

My life was a nightmare of sounds, feelings, smells, tastes and dreadful depression. It was a cage of darkness which held me prisoner—darkness and me, that’s all. Time stood still, the sun rose no more for me, the bloom of flowers, the streams and the clear sky were just memory. Life seemed to be dying with me. Hour after hour I would lie on the bed as if staring at the ceiling. “How do you do?” He was my wardmate, Naeem, who was known as Number Twenty Nine, that being the number of his bed. A soft-spoken, cheerful man who comforted me with many a story, diverting my mind from the shocking realities of life. Except he limped and was on Bed No. 29, I hardly knew anything about him. He wonderfully described the birds hopping among smiling brightness of the morning that I imagined I could see the scene myself. “Go on,” I would urge, whenever his voice stopped. Thus he would minutely describe the scene outside his windows the whole day. This gave hope to me.

“Listen”, he said one morning. “Start painting, which, as you said, was your hobby before.” I lashed out at him. I shouted, getting hysterical, that he had no right to joke about my art. He limped away to his bed.

Days passed. Then one day I asked him if he had been moved by anything. “Yes,” he began slowly, “well, many things.” He suddenly brightened. “Ah yes! Once I walked by a farmhouse, on a golden October evening and I saw a haystack. It wasn’t straw, it was pure gold. All around the world was ablaze with colour – red leaves, white ducks, basking in the last golden rays of the sun setting on the blood-red west. There I stood and gasped, unable to move” – “What?” I cried, “didn’t you paint it?” There was an uneasy silence which embarrassed me for having asked such a question, after all, I thought, everyone is not an artist. “I mean, I would have painted it,” I said

hurriedly. “Why don’t you paint? It is in my mind, and I know you can paint. Do, please, say yes.” He pleaded, and before I knew what I did, I said, “Yes”.

My life took a new turn. He had provided everything needed for painting, and when the hospital attendants cried out in surprise as they entered the room, he made them quiet. Then the miracle started, with eager but almost trembling finger, I started drawing a scene I had once admired. I laboured on and on sketching the scene from the canvas of my memory on the paper, too absorbed to think of my blindness. I finished the scene and in a shaky voice called for Naeem. He bounded to my bed, for a while I heard nothing. My heart sank. “I must have bungled it,” I thought. Then his voice broke the silence. “It’s marvellous. It’s unbelievable, you’re a genius, man, a genius, who would say you are blind,” I felt relaxed and I said, “Really! I could never believe, had it not happened with myself.”

Every morning, after breakfast, Naeem would come to my bed, in a dreamy voice he would describe a scene, which I would work from dawn to dusk, as if the day would never end. One canvas finished and another started. It was wonderful. Naeem would make me draw all the magic dreamland scenery. Losing myself in his world of colours, forgetting my blindness, I created on paper all he said. He always praised me and I became more and more convinced of my genius. He would himself mix the colours, and suggest a faint shade here, a dark line there.

It was then that the doctors operated upon me again. Naeem had taken over the work of reading to me, or describing a scene from my window, as I was unable to move from the bed. As days passed, my anxiety increased – partly because I wanted to see the world of colours with my own eyes, but mostly because I had spent my last rupee on this very operation, and in case of failure, I would have to lead the wretched life of darkness and misery.

I went to the doctors’ room with the nurse, when Naeem came and said, “It’s a beautiful day, I hope you see it soon.” I tried to answer but there was a lump in my throat.

I smelt the smell of the operation theatre, I felt gloved hand touching me gently. My bandage was being unwound. The clock ticked and a voice said, “Open your eyes” and I opened my eyes. There was the same unending darkness.

I was back in my room, helped by the nurse. So there was my life – full of darkness. I buried my head in the pillow. Naeem was on my side - consoling me. “I will be going soon, Naeem,” I said sadly one day. “I have no money now, this operation cost me all I had.” He was shocked. “Oh No! I have some money, you can have it,” he said softly. I replied firmly, “Thanks, Naeem. I have never begged nor will I, thanks all the same.” He tried to persuade me, but I didn’t listen.

One afternoon, Naeem came running to my bed, “Listen, old fellow, there is a friend of mine who is an art lover. He wants to buy your paintings.” “How can that be, they must be awful!” I thought. “He is rich, we can strike a bargain.” I consented and Naeem danced round the room with joy. Next day he handed me some crisp bank notes. My happiness knew no bounds. Hope soared once again. Once again I was living for something.

I took to painting again. Every morning Naeem would sit by my side, and begin his dreamy tale. I drew on and on. The unknown buyer appeared off and on and bought my paintings. Naeem described scenes of the four seasons with such feelings, especially the sunset ones – pink, purple, white, violet and all shades of gold were splashed before my ‘mind’s eye’.

All my paintings had been bought, and I found myself ready for the third operation. After the operation, when I regained consciousness, I was told not to move or speak with anyone. When my bandage was to be opened I asked for Naeem, but the nurse said he was ill, and could not come. The doctor removed the bandage and when I opened my eyes, a flash of light tore through my eyes – I could see.

They wheeled me back to my room. I cried, “Naeem, Naeem. Sister, where is Naeem?” The nurse’s face turned pale as she handed me Naeem’s letter – “The goddess of art smiled on me, and then as quickly as she had come she vanished. Mad with grief, I rushed to the cupboard, and there lay all my paintings. Mere masses of haphazard lines, without any colour. The nurse spoke, “He was a very great man. With all his money he bought these paintings, and moved out of the hospital when he couldn’t afford it. He couldn’t have his third operation.”

“What,” I cried, “operation? Which operation?”

“Why? His eyes, of course, he was blind,” she said. I was unable to move for sometime. Tears blinded my eyes.

Under his pillow were four paintings he had painted of the four seasons before he was blind. He described those paintings to me – and tried to paint them on my canvas. Tears blinded my eyes as I held his paintings in my hand.

A. GLOSSARY

<i>shrieked</i>	: made a loud noise
<i>nightmare</i>	: unpleasant situation
<i>divert</i>	: to take someone’s attention away from something
<i>lashed out</i>	: criticized in anger, spoke angrily
<i>hysterical</i>	: shouted in an uncontrolled way
<i>ablaze</i>	: full of bright colours
<i>gasped</i>	: took a deep breath
<i>embarrassed</i>	: ashamed
<i>laboured</i>	: worked hard
<i>absorbed</i>	: interested in something
<i>bounded</i>	: ran with long steps
<i>bungled</i>	: did something very badly
<i>marvellous</i>	: wonderful
<i>lump</i>	: feel pressure in the throat
<i>consented</i>	: agreed
<i>off and on</i>	: from time to time
<i>haphazard</i>	: irregular, not in order

B. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How did the author of 'Bed Number-29' lose his eyesight ?
2. What did the author of 'Bed Number-29' do before he lost his eyesight ?
3. Who did the author of 'Bed Number-29' meet in the hospital ward? Why was he there?
4. When did the author regain his confidence and how?
5. What happened when the author's second operation failed? Who consoled him then?
6. How did the author of 'Bed Number-29' get the money to get operated the third time ? Who helped him ?
7. Where was Naeem when the author regained his eyesight?
8. Did the author know that Naeem was also blind like him? Give reasons to support your answer.
9. Why could Naeem not get his treatment done?
10. How did the author feel when he learnt that Naeem had left the hospital because he had no money for the treatment?
11. How could Naeem describe different seasons in detail?
12. What does the message "The goddess of art smiled on me.... and then it vanished" mean?

C. DISCUSSION

What would you like to be - the author or Naeem? Discuss it with your group.

D. FURTHER READING

'The Thief's Story' by Ruskin Bond

HALF A RUPEE WORTH

R.K. Narayan

Subbiah, a rich merchant, sold rice at a price. A poor man approached him for half - a rupee worth of rice. Did the merchant give him rice?

Subbiah sold rice at the market gate. In his shop you found, heaped in wicker baskets, all varieties: from pebbly coarse rice to Delhi Samba, white as jasmine and slender as a needle. His shop was stuffy and dark but he loved every inch of it. He loved the smell of gunny sack, of rice and husk. Through good times and bad he flourished. There were days of drought when paddy didn't come up and the rice mills were silenced, when people looked hollow-eyed and half dead. But even then he never closed his shop. If he didn't find stuff for twenty baskets, he scoured the countryside and filled at least two baskets, and sold them. There were times when the harvest was so rich he could hardly accept a quarter of the grain that was offered, when it seemed a fool's business to be , selling rice. If you sold rice all day and night you could not hope for a profit of even fifty rupees. They called it 'depression in the trade'.

But Subbiah survived all ups and downs. Rice was in his blood. He had served as an unpaid apprentice when his father ruled. Those were days when Subbiah loathed the rice bags. He longed for the crowded streets, cinemas, football matches and wrestling tournaments, which he saw through the crowded shop door. But his father more or less kept him chained to the shop and discouraged his outside interests. 'Boys should be horsewhipped if they are not to become brigands.' He practised this theory of child-training with such steadfastness that in due course the little man had no eyes or head for anything except rice and the market. When his father died, he slid in so nicely that nobody noticed the difference. Most people thought that the old man was still there counting cash. Business prospered.

Subbiah kept five prized cows and buffaloes whose milk, curd and butter he and his wife and five children had day and night, and then became rotund and balloon-like. He owned thirty acres of land in a nearby village, and visited it once a month to survey his possessions and make sure they were intact. He lent money at exorbitant rates of interest and if people failed to pay he acquired their houses. He became swollen with money. He sent his children to a school, bought them brocaded caps and velvet coats, and paid a home-tutor to shout the lessons at the top of his voice every evening under a lamp in the hall. He loaded his wife with gold ornaments and draped her in gaudy Benares silk; he added on to his house two more storeys and several halls and painted all the walls with a thick blue oil paint, and covered them with hundreds of pictures of gods in gilt frames. All day he sat by his iron safe and kept shoving money into it,

watching closely at the same time his assistants measuring out rice into gunny sacks; he led a satisfying life. There seemed no reason why it should not go on through eternity - the same set of activities and interests, going on and one or the other of his sons to acquire his shape and appearance and continue the family business.

It might have continued thus but for the War. It seemed at first to be the end of civilization, but after the first shock, it proved not so unwelcome after all. His profits piled up as never before. Saigon and Burma ceased to send rice, and that meant the stock he held was worth its weight in gold. People flocked to his shop at all hours. He bought the big house next door for a godown and then the next one and the next; and then bought a dozen more villages. War seemed, on the whole, a very beneficial force till the introduction of Price and Food Control. For the first time in his life he was worried. He could not see how anyone had the right to say what he should sell and at what rate. He felt happy when he heard someone say, 'The Food Department is a hoax. The government is making a mess of things.'

He soon found that he could still survive under a new garb. By waiting before officials, and seeing people, and filling up forms, he was soon allowed to continue his business as a Fair Price Grain Depot. He groaned unhappily when he learnt that he had to surrender all the rice his peasants cultivated in his village fields. The whole thing seemed to him atrocious. "They have to fix the price for my produce! They have to give me permission to take what I myself produce!" but he accepted the position without much outward protest. He slept little and lost the taste for food. All through the dark nights he thought about this problem. Finally, he had a solution. He cried to himself, "I still have my rice in the fields, and I still have the bags in my godown. After all, what does the government want? To have things in nice shape on paper? That they shall have." He kept all the rice he wanted for sale and personal use but out of sight and out of paper. He had to give away a lot of money to people who came to examine his stock and accounts. If he passed a ten-rupee currency note on such an occasion, it meant he had screened from prying eyes a thousand rupees worth of grain. When he thought it over, he realized that all controls were really a boon. He distributed a few annas for charity twice a week, and broke a coconut at the temple on Fridays in appreciation of God's interest in his affairs. Gradually, with experience, he became a master of his situation. At his depot, he measured out rice with a deft hand, so that at the end of a day a considerable quantity accumulated which was nobody's, and then he delayed and opened and closed and reopened his shop in such a manner as to make people come to him several times before they could get any rice out of him : when they had money he had no stock, or when he had rice they had no money. By all this, he accumulated a vast quantity of rice every week; and then out of his village harvest only a small portion reached the Food Department. Very soon he converted one of his houses in a back street into a godown and there piled up rice bags from floor to ceiling. It was supposed to be a store of waste paper and rags, which he collected for the paper mills.

He never sold his rice except in a small quantity, and to known customers. He took their cash in advance and told them to call later. He always threw in a doubt; 'There was a person who had a little rice. I don't know if he still has it. Anyway, leave the cash with me.' Sometimes, he returned the money with, "Sorry, not available, the man said he had it, but you know we can never count on these things nowadays".

One evening, as he had just closed his shop and started out with the key in his pocket, a person halted before him and said, "Oh! You have closed. Just my luck."

"I have other business now, no time to stop and talk", said Subbiah. He went past him. The other man followed him. He held him by the arm and cried: "You must open your shop and give me rice. I can't let you go. My two children are crying for food. They and my old mother have been starving. My ration card was exhausted three days ago. I can't see them in that condition any more". "Please somehow give me some rice. I have gone round and round the whole town today, but I couldn't get a grain anywhere. At home they will be thinking I'm returning with something. They will... God knows what they'll do when they see me go back empty-handed."

"How much do you want?"

'Give me a seer. There are six mouths to feed at home.'

"How much have you?" The man held up a half-rupee coin. Subbiah looked at the coin with contempt. "You expect to get one seer of rice for this?"

"But it's three seers for a rupee, isn't it?"

"Don't talk of all that now. You will starve if you talk of controlled price and such nonsense." He felt enraged. "If you have another eight annas, perhaps, you may get a seer," said Subbiah.

The other shook his head: "This is the end of the month, you see, this is all I have."

"You will get only half a seer. That's the price a man I know will-demand."

"All right," the other said. "Better than nothing."

"Give the coin here," said Subbiah. He took the coin. "Don't follow me; that fellow is suspicious. He will say no the moment he sees anyone with me. You wait here, I will be back, but I can't promise. If he says no, it will be just your luck, that is all. Give me the coin."

He was gone with the eight annas and the man stood on the street corner.

Three hours had gone by and yet there was no sign of Subbiah. The night had deepened. The man began to mutter several times to himself, "Well, what has happened, where is he? Where has he gone? When am I to go home and cook the rice? The children, ah, the children." He turned and walked in the direction the other had gone but that took him nowhere, because the other had pretended to go that way in order not to show where his secret godown was, but actually had turned and gone off in another direction. The man wandered up and down through the silent streets and went back to the main shop, hoping he might be there. He wasn't there either. The lock was still on the door, just as he had seen it before. Then he called at Subbiah's house. He knocked at the door. Subbiah's wife opened it. He asked, "Is Subbiah at home?"

“No. He hasn’t come home at all.” She looked very anxious. By six next morning they became nervous, and in that condition she could not help, saying, “Have you looked for him at the other godown?”

‘Where is it?’

She had to tell, being the only person who knew its whereabouts. They started out. After passing through some bylanes, they came upon the building. The door was bolted from inside. They knocked on it. Finally they had to break open the front ventilator, slip a boy through it, and then have the main door opened. A faint morning light came in through the broken ventilator. In a corner they saw an electric torch lying on the floor and then a half-rupee coin, and a little of a hand stuck out of a pile of fallen bags.

A. GLOSSARY

stuffy	: without much fresh air
drought	: period of time when there is a little or no rain
scoured	: searched the place thoroughly
depression	: period of little economic activity
loathed	: disliked
brigands	: thieves, criminals
prospered	: became successful
intact	: complete-not damaged
rotund	: round (fat body)
exorbitant	: much too high
brocade	: thick cloth with gold and silver material
gaudy	: too bright, lacking taste
gilt	: thin layer of gold used on any surface for decoration
ceased	: stopped
hoax	: something made to look true, though .. is not
waiting	: serving
atrocious	: shocking, brutal
produce(n)	: things that have been grown like wheat, rice, etc
deft	: skilful
accumulated	: increased, gathered more and more

B. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Subbiah manage to get rice during the drought?
2. 'Those were the days when Subbiah loathed the rice bags' Which were those days ? Why did he dislike the rice then?
3. 'Rice was in his blood' means
 - (a) he ate nothing but rice
 - (b) he liked the smell of rice
 - (c) he knew all about rice
4. How did Subbiah's profits increase during the war? Did he follow the rules laid down by the government? How did he tackle the officers?
5. Besides selling rice what else did Subbiah do to earn more?
6. Who came to buy rice one evening when Subbiah was about to go home? Did he give rice to him? What did he say?
7. How much rice did Subbiah agree to sell to him and for how much?
8. Why did Subbiah ask the man to wait? What reasons did he give?
9. Where did Subbiah go to get the rice?
10. Did the man wait for Subbiah for long? How do you know?
11. Where did the man go then? Where was he taken and by whom?
12. How did Subbiah die?
13. Tick the qualities that Subbiah possessed.
 - (a) a hard-working man
 - (b) a cruel father
 - (c) a miser
 - (d) an obedient son
 - (e) a sympathetic shop keeper
 - (f) a religious man
 - (g) an honest citizen

C. DISCUSSION

1. Only the dishonest can prosper. Speak for and against the statement.
2. Greed can ruin a man. Discuss.

D. SUGGESTED READING

'Volpone' by Ben Jonson



ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS

O'Henry

Robert Gillian received one thousand dollars from his uncle's will-that too with a condition. What was the condition? What did he do with the money? Did he spend it sensibly?

"One thousand dollars" repeated Lawyer Tolman, solemnly and severely, "and here is the money."

Young Gillian laughed as he touched the thin packet of new fifty-dollar notes. "It is such a little amount," he told the lawyer.

"You heard the reading of your uncle's will," continued Lawyer Tolman in a dry tone. "I do not know if you paid any attention to its details. I must tell you that you must give us an account of the manner of expenditure of these one thousand dollars as soon as you have spent them. I trust you will comply with the late Mr Gillian's wishes."

"You may depend upon it," said the young man, politely, "I may have to have a secretary. I was never good at accounts."

Gillian thrust the packet of notes in his pocket and went to the club. There he looked for the person whom he called Old Bryson.

Old Bryson was calm at forty. He was in a corner reading a book, and when he saw Gillian coming he sighed, laid down his book and took off his glasses.

"Old Bryson, wake up," said Gillian, "I've a funny story to tell you."

"I wish you tell your story to someone in the billiard room, Gillian," said Old Bryson.

"This one is better one than usual," said Gillian, rolling a cigarette, "and I'm going to tell it to you. It's too sad and funny to go with the game. I've just, come from the office of my uncle's lawyers. He leaves me a thousand dollars. Now, what can a man possibly do with just a thousand dollars?"

"I thought," said Old Bryson, "that the late Septimas Gillian was worth something like half a million dollars."

"He was," said Gillian, joyously, "and that's where the joke comes in. He left almost all his money to a microbe. That is, the part of it goes to a man who invents a new bacillus and the rest to a hospital for doing away with that microbe. The butler and the housekeeper get a seal ring and \$10 each. His nephew gets \$1,000."

"You've always had a plenty of money to spend," said Old Bryson.

"Tons," said Gillian. "Uncle was the fairy godmother as far as an allowance was concerned."

“Any other heirs?” asked Old Bryson.

“None”, Gillian frowned and kicked the divan uneasily. “There is a Miss Hayden, a ward of my uncle, who lived in his house. I forget to tell you that she gets a seal ring and \$10, too. What a joke! Don’t be insulting, Old Bryson – tell me what a fellow can do with a thousand dollars?”

Old Bryson rubbed his glasses and smiled. And when he smiled Gillian knew that he was going to be more offensive than ever.

“A thousand dollars,” he said, “means much or little. One may buy a happy home with it. A thousand dollars would buy pure milk for one hundred babies during June, July and August and save fifty of their lives. You could have half an hour fun in one of the art galleries. It will provide an education to an ambitious boy. You could move to a New Hampshire town and live respectably for two years on it.”

“People might like you if you won’t moralize. I asked you to tell me what I could do with the one thousand dollars,” said Gillian.

“You?” said Old Bryson; with a gentle laugh, “Why Bobby Gillian, there is only one sensible thing that you can do. You can buy Miss Lotta Lauriere a diamond pendant and spend the rest of your time in a ranch.”

“Thanks,” said Gillian rising, “I thought I could depend on you, Old Bryson. You gave me the right idea. I wanted to spend the money in a lump. No need to keep a big account then. I hate that.”

Gillian phoned for a cab, and asked the driver to take him to the Columbine Theatre. Miss Lotta Lauriere was almost ready for the show when her dresser mentioned Mr Gillian’s name. “Let him in,” said Miss Lauriere. “Now what is it, Bobby?” she said looking quite bored, “I’m going to perform in two minutes.” “I won’t take two minutes,” said Gillian. “What about a pendant? I can spend three ciphers with a figure in front of them?”

“Oh just as you say, Bobby, did you see the necklace Della Stacey was wearing the other night? Two thousand two hundred dollars it cost,” she said. And she left for her performance.

Gillian went to the cab. “What would you do if you had a thousand dollars?” He asked the driver. “Open a saloon,” answered the driver at once. “I would make money with both hands. Are you thinking of.....”

“Oh, no,” said Gillian, “merely asked for curiosity. Drive on till I ask you to stop.”

Eight blocks down the Broadway, Gillian saw a blind man selling pencils on the sidewalk. Gillian got out of the cab and stood before him.

“Excuse me,” he said, “but, tell me what you would do if you had a thousand dollars?”

“You have got down the cab just now? Take a look at this, if you like,” said the blind man and took out a small book from his pocket. Gillian opened it and saw it was a bank deposit book. It showed a balance of \$1,785 to the blind man’s credit. Gillian returned the book and got into the cab.

“Tolman & Sharp, at-, Broadway,” he told the driver.

“I beg your pardon,” said Gillian cheerfully, “but may I ask one question? Hope you won’t mind. Was Miss Hayden left anything by my uncle’s will besides the ring and \$10?”

“Nothing,” said Mr. Tolman.

“I thank you very much, sir,” said Gillian and out he went into his cab.

When Gillian reached his uncle’s house, Miss Hayden was writing letters in the library. She was small and slender and dressed in black. “I’ve just come from Tolman’s office,” he explained. “They found a post-script to the will. It seemed that uncle on second thoughts loosened a bit and willed you a thousand dollars. As I was driving this way, Tolman asked me to bring the money. Here it is.” Gillian laid the money on the table.

Miss Hayden turned white. “Oh! I am sorry,” said Miss Hayden, taking up her money. “I am sorry,” she said again. “There is no use?” said Gillian, almost light-heartedly. “May I write a note?” asked Gillian, with a smile. She gave him the paper and then went back to her work. Gillian made an account of his expenditure of the thousand dollars in these words:

“Paid by the black sheep, Robert Gillian, \$1,000 on the account of eternal happiness, to the best and dearest woman on earth.”

Gillian slipped his writing into an envelope, bowed and went his way.

His cab stopped at the office of Tolman & Sharp.

“I have spent the thousand dollars,” he said cheerfully to Mr Tolman, “and I have come to give you the account.” He tossed the envelope on the table. Without touching the envelope, Mr Tolman went to the door and called his partner, Sharp. Together they discussed something. Finally Mr Tolman said, “Mr Gillian, your uncle had left another envelope which was to be opened after you had submitted an account of spending the \$1,000 bequest in the will. As you have given the account, my partner and I read the content of the envelope. We will not give you the details. But the gist is that if you have spent the hundred dollars wisely, we have the power to release you \$5,000 kept for you. But if you spent the money the same way as you did in the past, the \$5,000 will be paid to Miriam Hayden, the ward of the late Mr Gillian. Now, Mr Gillian, we will examine your account in regard to \$1,000.” Mr Tolman reached for the envelope. Gillian was a little quicker in taking it up. He tore the account and its cover and dropped them into his pocket.

“It’s all right,” he said smiling. There is no need to bother you with this. Anyhow, I lost the thousand dollars on the races. Good-day to you, gentlemen.”

Tolman & Sharp shook their heads in disgust and looked at each other, and they heard Gillian leave the room whistling.

A. GLOSSARY

<i>solemnly</i>	: seriously
<i>severely</i>	: harshly
<i>account</i>	: record
<i>comply</i>	: obey the order
<i>billiard</i>	: a game played on a table with a stick and balls
<i>microbe</i>	: a small living thing that can be seen only under a microscope
<i>do away with</i>	: end, terminate
<i>ward</i>	: a child (mostly an orphan) looked after by another grown-up person
<i>offensive</i>	: rude words said to someone to make him angry
<i>ambitious</i>	: making a lot of effort to be successful
<i>moralize</i>	: tell people what is wrong or right (normally not liked by them)
<i>ranch</i>	: a big farm where cattle, sheep, etc are bred
<i>lump</i>	: at one time, not in parts
<i>saloon</i>	: a place where alcohol is sold
<i>credit</i>	: money in one's account in the bank
<i>post-script</i>	: message added after one's signature or end of a writing
<i>black sheep</i>	: a person different from others in a group or a family
<i>tossed</i>	: threw it with force
<i>bequest</i>	: money / property given to someone by a person after his death
<i>disgust</i>	: dislike

B. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Who gave \$1,000 to Robert Gillian? Who did the money belong to? Why was it given to him?
2. Why was Bobby Gillian not happy with the money given to him?
3. What was the condition laid down by the lawyer?
4. Who else got the money and how much?
5. Why was Old Bryson not serious in giving suggestions to Gillian? What were the suggestions given?

6. Which one did Gillian accept? What did he do then?
7. Who was Miss Lotta Lauriere? Did she welcome Gillian's coming? Was she happy with his offer? Give reasons for your answer.
8. What did Gillian ask the driver of the cab? Did he like his answer? How do you know?
9. Who did Gillian talk to next? Why?
10. Which is the correct answer?
After talking to the blind man Gillian went to
 - (a) Miss Hayden
 - (b) the lawyers
 - (c) Miss Lauriere
11. Why did Gillian give his money to Miss Hayden? What did he ask her to give him and why?
12. What did Robert Gillian write in his note?
13. Why did Robert Gillian go to the lawyers again?
14. What had Robert Gillian's uncle written in the post-script of his will?
15. Why did Gillian not get the rest of the money? Was he sorry for his action?

C. DISCUSSION

1. Did Gillian do the right thing by forgoing \$5,000? Discuss.
2. "A bird in hand is better than two in a bush." Do you agree with this statement? Discuss the above statement in the light of Gillian's character.

D. SUGGESTED READING

1. 'The Lost Inheritance' by H. G. Wells
2. 'The Bet' by Anton Chekov



THE DYING DETECTIVE

Arthur Conan Doyle

The detective Sherlock Holmes was seriously ill. So he asked his landlady to get his assistant Watson. Watson accompanied the landlady to his house. Was he able to save his master? Read on to find out.

Mrs Hudson, the landlady of Sherlock Holmes, came to me and said, “Mr Holmes is dying, Mr Watson. For three days he has been sinking, and I doubt if he will last another day. He would not let me get a doctor. I told him I could not stand it any more and would get a doctor he replied, “Let it be Watson then.”

I was horrified for I had not heard about his illness before. I rushed for my hat and coat. As we drove back, I asked her about the details.

“There is little I can tell you, sir. He has been working on a case down at Rotherhithe, near the river, and has brought this illness back with him. He took to bed on Wednesday afternoon and has never moved since. For three days neither food nor drink has passed his lips.”

“Why did you not call a doctor?” I asked.

“He wouldn’t have it, sir. I didn’t dare to disobey him.”

He was indeed a sad sight. In the dim light of a foggy November day, the sick-room was a gloomy spot, but it was the gaunt face staring from the bed that brought chill to my heart. His eyes had the brightness of fever, his cheeks were flushed, his hand twitched all the time. He lay listless.

“My dear fellow!” I cried approaching him.

“Stand back! Stand right back!” he cried.

“But why? I want to help you,” I said.

“Certainly, Watson, but it is for your own sake.”

“For my sake?” I was surprised.

“I know what is the matter with me. It is the disease from Sumatra. It is deadly and contagious, Watson- that’s it, by touch.”

“Good heavens, Holmes! Do you think this can stop me?” I said advancing towards him.

“If you stand there, I will talk. If you don’t, you must leave the room,” said my master.

I have always given in to Holmes’ wishes. But now my feelings as a doctor were aroused. I was at least his master in the sick-room.

“Holmes,” I said, “you are not yourself whether you like it or not. I will examine your symptoms and treat you.”

“If I am to have a doctor,” said he, “let me at least have someone in whom I have confidence.”

“Then you have none in me?”

“In your friendship, certainly. But facts are facts, Watson. You are a general practitioner, not a specialist of this disease.”

“If so, let me bring Sir Jasper Meek or Penrose Fisher, or any other best man in London.”

“How ignorant you are! Watson!” he said with a groan. “What do you know about Tarpaunli fever or the black Formosa plague?”

“I have never heard of them,” I admitted.

“There are many problems of the disease in the East. I have learnt that much during my recent researches. And during this course I caught this illness,” he said.

“I will bring Dr Ainstree then,” I said going towards the door. Never have I had such a shock when the dying man bolted the door and locked it, holding the key in his hand. The next moment he was back in his bed.

“You won’t have the key by force from me, Watson. Be here till 6 o’clock. It is four now”

“This is madness, Holmes,” I said.

“Only two hours, Watson. Then you can get a doctor of my choice. You can read some books, over there. At six we will talk again.”

Unable to settle down to reading, I walked slowly round and round, looking at the pictures. Finally I came to the mantelpiece, where among other things I saw a small black and white ivory box with sliding lid. As I held it in my hand to examine it, I heard a dreadful cry. “Put it down! Down at once, Watson,” he said. “I hate to have my things touched.”

I thought how ill he was in his mind and sat silently until the time passed.

“Now Watson,” he said, “have you any change?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“How many half-crowns? Put them in your watch-pocket. And all the rest in your trouser pocket. You will light the gas-lamp, but it must be half on. You will have the kindness to place some letters and paper on the table within my reach. Now place the ivory box on the table. Slide the lid a bit with tongs. Put the tongs on the table. Good! Now you can go and fetch Mr Culverton Smith, of 13 Lower Burke Street.”

I was hesitant to leave him now. He was delirious.

“I have never heard of the name,” I said.

“Well, he is the man who has the knowledge of this disease – but he is not a medical man. He is a planter. He lives in Sumatra, now visiting London. I didn’t want you to go before six, because you wouldn’t have found him in his study. I hope you will be able to persuade him to come. You will tell him exactly how you have left me.” He said, “You must tell him that I’m dying-plead with him, Watson.”

“I’ll bring him in a cab,” I said.

“No. You will persuade him to come and return before him. Make any excuse. Remember this, Watson.”

I saw Mrs Hudson was waiting outside, trembling and crying. Below, as I waited for the cab, I met Inspector Morton of the Scotland Yard. He was not in his uniform.

“How is he?” he asked.

“He is very ill,” I answered.

I reached Mr Culverton Smith’s house. The butler appeared at the doorway. Through the half-open door I heard a man’s voice telling the butler, “I am not at home, say so.” I pushed past the butler and entered the room. I saw a frail man with bald head sitting. “I am sorry,” I said, “but the matter cannot be delayed. Mr Sherlock Holmes.....”

The mere mention of his name had a different effect on the man.

“Have you come from Holmes? How is he?” he asked.

“He is very ill. That is why I have come. Mr Holmes has a high opinion of you and thought you are the only man in London who can help him.”

The little man was startled.

“Why? He asked.

“Because of your knowledge of the Eastern diseases,” I replied.

“How did he get it?” he asked.

I told him everything. He smiled and agreed to come. Pretending that I had some other appointment, I left him. With a sinking heart I reached Holmes’ room. I told him that Mr Smith was coming.

“Well done! Watson!” he said. “You have done everything that a good friend could do. Now you disappear to the next room. And don’t speak, or come here.”

I heard the footsteps. I heard a voice say, “Holmes! Holmes! Can you hear me?”

“Is that you Mr Smith?” Holmes whispered. “You know what is wrong with me. You are the only one in London who can cure me.”

“Do you know the symptoms?” asked Smith.

“Only too well, Mr Smith,” and he described the symptoms.

“They are the same, Holmes,” Smith said. “Poor Victor was a dead man on the fourth day—a strong and healthy young man. What a coincidence indeed!”

“I know that you did it,” said Holmes.

“Well, you can’t prove it.”

“Give me water, please,” Holmes groaned.

“Here” I heard Smith’s voice.

“Cure me, please. Well, about Victor Smith’s death. You did it. I’ll forget everything, but cure me. I’ll forget about it.”

“You can forget or remember, just as you like. It doesn’t matter to me how my nephew died. Watson said you got it from the Chinese sailors. Could there be any other reason?”

“I can’t think. My mind is gone, help me,” pleaded Holmes.

“Did anything come by post? A box by chance? On Wednesday?”

“Yes I opened it and there was a sharp spring inside it. A joke perhaps. It drew blood,” said Holmes.

“No, it was not a joke, you fool,” you’ve got it. Who asked you to cross my path? You knew too much about Victor’s death. Your end is near, Holmes. I’ll carry this box in my pocket. The last piece of evidence!”

“Turn up the gas, Smith,” said Holmes in his natural voice.

“Yes I will, so that I can see you better.” There was silence. Then I heard Smith say, “What’s all this?”

“Successful acting,” said Holmes, “for three days I didn’t taste anything – neither food nor drink.”

There were footsteps outside. The door opened and I heard Inspector Morton’s voice. “I arrest you on charge of murder,” he said.

“An attempt of murder of Sherlock Holmes, too,” laughed Holmes.

There was a sudden rush and scuffle, followed by the clash of iron and sudden cry of pain. There was a click of handcuffs. Holmes asked me to come in.

“Sorry, Watson, I was rude to you. I undermined your capability as a doctor. It was just to get Smith here. And I didn’t want you to know that I was not ill.”

“But your appearance – – ?” I said.

“Three days, fasting and the make-up did the trick. And the gas was turned up to give a signal to Morton to come.”

“The coins?”

“Oh! That was only to prove that I was delirious,” he laughed. “I need to eat now, Watson. Mr Smith killed his nephew and he wanted to kill me the same way to avoid imprisonment. I need to eat now, Watson, And thank you, Watson,” he said.

[simplified]

A. GLOSSARY

<i>horrified</i>	: shocked
<i>gaunt</i>	: very thin (usually because of illness)
<i>flushed</i>	: red
<i>twitch</i>	: sudden quick movement
<i>croaking</i>	: low, harsh sound, like the sound frogs make
<i>contagious</i>	: spreading quickly to others
<i>advancing</i>	: moving forward
<i>bolted</i>	: suddenly rushed forward
<i>half-crown</i>	: an old British coin
<i>tongs</i>	: a tool (like scissors) used for picking or holding things
<i>delirious</i>	: a state in which a person is not able to think or speak clearly
<i>Eastern</i>	: from Eastern countries <i>e.g.</i> China, Cambodia
<i>coincidence</i>	: two things happening at the same time by chance
<i>natural</i>	: normal
<i>appearance</i>	: look

B. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Who was Mrs Hudson? Why did she go to Watson’s house?
2. Where did Holmes get the illness from? When did he get it?
3. What was Holmes’ condition when Watson saw him?
4. Why did he not let Watson examine him?
5. Till when was Watson asked to stay in Holmes house?
6. Why did Holmes not let Watson touch his things? What did Watson think about Holmes then?
7. What did Holmes ask Watson to do before leaving his room?
8. Who was Culverton Smith? Why did Holmes want him for the treatment of his disease?
9. What did Holmes ask Watson to say to Mr Smith?
10. Did Smith welcome Watson calling on him? How do you know?

11. Why did Watson not come back with Smith?
12. Why did Smith ask Watson when he finally met him ?
13. Did Smith go near Holmes to examine him? How do you know?
14. Who was Victor Smith? What had happened to him and how?
15. “You did it. I’ll forget everything,” Holmes said to Smith. What did Smith do and how? Did Holmes really mean what he said? Give examples in support of your answer.
16. Why did Smith send infected sharp spring in an ivory box?
17. Why did Holmes ask Smith to turn up the gas?
18. Who arrested Smith? What were the charges against him?
19. Why did Holmes pretend to be ill? What did he do and say to appear ill?
20. Should Holmes have spoken so rudely to Watson? Why?

C. DISCUSSION

Holmes did not disclose his plan to Watson though he was his assistant. Was it justified? Discuss.

D. SUGGESTED READING

‘The Midnight Visitor’ by Robert Arthur



HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN NEED?

Leo Tolstoy

*Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) is one of the best known of Russian writers. He wrote many novels, short stories and an autobiography called **My Confessions**. He is primarily famous for classics like **War and Peace** (1869) and **Anna Karenina** (1877).*

How Much Land Does a Man Need ? illustrates the emptiness that lies beneath the growing material ambition of man. The ironical and inevitable fate that awaits material pursuit is underscored with the concluding line, ‘Six feet from his head to his heels was all he needed.’

I

An elder sister came to visit her younger sister in the country. The elder was married to a tradesman in town, the younger to a peasant in the village. As the sisters sat over their tea talking, the elder began to boast of the advantages of town life : saying how comfortably they lived there, how well they dressed, what fine clothes her children wore, and what good things they ate and drank. The younger sister was piqued.

“I would not change my way of life for yours,’ said she, “We may live roughly, but at least we are free from anxiety. You live in better style than we do, but though you often earn more than you need, you are very likely to lose all you have. You know the proverb, “Loss and gain are brothers twain.” It often happens that people who are wealthy one day, are begging their bread the next. Our way is safer. Though a peasant’s life is not a fat one, it is a long one. We shall never grow rich, but we shall always have enough to eat.”

Pakhom, the master of the house, was listening to the women’s chatter.

“It is perfectly true,” thought he. “Busy as we are from childhood tilling mother earth, we peasants have no time to let any nonsense settle in our heads. Our only trouble is that we haven’t land enough. If I had plenty of land, I shouldn’t fear the Devil himself!”

The women finished their tea, chatted a while about dress, and then cleared away the tea-things and lay down to sleep.

But the Devil had been sitting behind the store, and had heard all that was said. He was pleased that the peasant’s wife had led her husband into boasting, and that he had said that if he had plenty of land, he would not fear the Devil himself.

“All right,” thought the Devil. “We will have a tussle. I’ll give you land enough; and by means of that land I will get you into my power.”

II

Close to the village there lived a lady, a small landowner who had an estate of about three hundred acres. In the winter the news got about that the lady was going to sell her land. Pakhom heard that a neighbour of his was buying fifty acres, and that the lady had consented to accept one half in cash and to wait a year for the other half. Pakhom felt envious.

“Look at that,” thought he “the land is all being sold, and I shall get none of it.” So he spoke to his wife. “Other people are buying,” said he, “and we must also buy twenty acres, or so. Life is becoming impossible.”

So they put their heads together and considered how they could manage to buy it. They had one hundred roubles laid by. They sold a colt, and one half of their bees, hired out one of their sons as a labourer and took his wages in advance; borrowed the rest from a brother-in-law, and so scraped together half the purchase money.

Having done this, Pakhom chose out a farm of forty acres, some of it wooded, and went to the lady to bargain for it. They came to an agreement, and he shook hands with her upon it and paid her a deposit in advance. Then they went to town and signed the deeds; he paying half the price down, and undertaking to pay the remainder within two years.

So now Pakhom had land of his own. He borrowed seeds, and sowed them on the land he had bought. The harvest was a good one, and within a year he had managed to pay off his debts both to the lady and to his brother-in-law. So he became a landowner, ploughing and sowing his own land, making hay on his own land, cutting his own trees, and feeding his cattle on his own pasture.

III

One day Pakhom was sitting at home when a peasant, passing through the village, happened to call in. He was allowed to stay during the night, and supper was given to him. Pakhom had a talk with this peasant and asked him where he came from. The stranger answered that he came from beyond the Volga, where he had been working. One word led to another, and the man went on to say that many people were settling in those parts. The land was so good, he said, that the rye sown on it grew as high as a horse, and so thick that five cuts of a sickle made a sheaf. One peasant, he said, had brought nothing with him but his bare hands, and now he had six horses and two cows of his own.

Pakhom’s heart kindled with desire. He thought : “Why should I suffer in this narrow hole, if one can live so well elsewhere? I will sell my land and my homestead here, and with the money I will start afresh over there and get everything new. In this crowded place one is always having trouble. But I must first go and find out all about it myself.”

Towards summer he got ready and started. He went down the Volga on a steamer to Samara, then walked another three hundred miles on foot, and at last reached the place. It was just as the stranger had said. The peasants had plenty of land. Anyone who had money could buy land at two shillings an acre as much good freehold land as he wanted.

Having found out all he wished to know, Pakhom returned home. As autumn came on, he began selling off his belongings. He sold his land at a profit, sold his homestead and all his cattle. He only waited till the spring, and then started with his family for the new settlement.

IV

As soon as Pakhom and his family reached their new abode, he put up the buildings he needed, and bought cattle. He now had three times as much as at his former home, and the land was good cornland. He was ten times better off than he had been. He had plenty of land, and could keep as many heads of cattle as he liked.

Pakhom was pleased with it all, but when he got used to it he began to think that even here he had not enough land. The first year, he sowed wheat on his land and had a good crop. After a time Pakhom noticed that some peasant-dealers were living on separate farms and were growing wealthy; and he thought: "If I were to buy some more land it would be different thing altogether." The question of buying more land recurred to him again and again.

So Pakhom began looking out for land which he could buy; and he came across a peasant who had bought thirteen hundred acres, but having got into difficulties was willing to sell again cheap. Pakhom bargained and haggled with him, and at last they settled the price at 1,500 roubles, part in cash and part to be paid later. They had all but clinched the matter when a passing dealer happened to stop at Pakhom's one day to get a feed for his horses. He drank tea with Pakhom and they had a talk. The dealer said that he was just returning from the land of the Bashkirs, far away, where he had bought thirteen thousand acres of land, all for 1,000 roubles. Pakhom questioned him further, and the tradesman said :

"All one needs do is to make friends with the chiefs. I gave away about one hundred roubles worth of silk robes and carpets, besides a case of tea, and I gave wine to those who would drink it; and I got the land for less than a penny an acre." And he showed Pakhom the title-deeds, saying :

"The land lies near a river , and the whole prairie is virgin soil."

Pakhom plied him with questions, and the tradesman said:

"There is more land there than you could cover if you walked a year, and it all belongs to the Bashkirs. They are as simple as sheep, and land can be got almost for nothing."

"There is more land," thought Pakhom, "with my one thousand roubles, why should I get only thirteen hundred acres, and saddle myself with a debt besides? If I take it out there, I can get more than ten times as much for the money."

V

Pakhom left his wife to look after the homestead, and started on his journey taking the tradesman with him. On and on they went, until they had gone more than three hundred miles, and on the seventh day they came to a place where the Bashkirs had pitched their tents. It was all just as the tradesman had said.

As soon as they saw Pakhom, they came out of their tents and gathered round their visitor. An interpreter was found and Pakhom told them that he had come about to have some land. The Bashkirs seemed very glad; they took Pakhom and led him into one of the best tents, where they made him sit on some down cushions placed on a carpet, while they sat around him. They gave him some tea and *kumiss* and had a sheep killed, and gave him mutton to eat. Pakhom took presents out of his cart and distributed them among the Bashkirs, and divided the tea amongst them. The Bashkirs were delighted. They talked a great deal among themselves, and then told the interpreter to translate.

“They wish to tell you”, said the interpreter, “that they like you, and that it is our custom to do all we can to please a guest and to repay him for his gifts. You have given us presents, now tell us which of the things we possess please you best, that we may present them to you”.

“What pleases me best, here,” answered Pakhom, “is your land. Our land is crowded and the soil is exhausted; but you have plenty of land and it is good land. I never saw the like of it.”

Pakhom immediately fetched the best dressing-gown and five pounds of tea, and offered these to the chief. The chief accepted them, and seated himself in the place of honour. The Bashkirs at once began telling him something. The chief listened for a while, then made a sign with his head for them to be silent, and addressing himself to Pakhom, said in Russian : “Well, let it be so. Choose whatever piece of land you like; we have plenty of it.”

“And what will be the price?” asked Pakhom.

‘Our price is always the same: one thousand roubles a day.’

Pakhom did not understand.

“A day? What measure is that? How many acres would that be?”

“We do not know how to reckon it out,” said the chief. “We sell it by the day. As much as you can go round on your feet in a day is yours, and the price is one thousand roubles a day.”

Pakhom was surprised.

“But in a day you can get round a large tract of land,” he said.

The chief laughed.

“It will all be yours!” said he. “But there is one condition; if you don’t return on the same day to the spot whence you started, your money is lost.”

Pakhom was delighted. It was decided to start early next morning. They gave Pakhom a feather-bed to sleep on, and the Bashkirs dispersed for the night.

VI

Pakhom lay on the feather-bed, but could not sleep. He kept thinking about the land. "What a large tract I will mark off!" thought he. "I can easily do thirty-five miles in a day."

In the morning, he got up, roused his man (who was sleeping in his cart), bade him harness; and went to call the Bashkirs.

"It's time to go to the steppe to measure the land," he said.

The Bashkirs rose and assembled, and the chief came too. They ascended a hillock (called by the Bashkirs a *shikhan*) and dismounting from their carts and their horses, gathered in one spot. The chief came up to Pakhom and stretching out his arm towards the plain.

"See," said he, "all this, as far as your eye can reach, is ours. You may have any part of it you like."

Pakhom's eyes glistened : it was all virgin soil.

The chief took off his fox-fur cap, placed it on the ground and said : "This will be the mark. Start from here, and return here again. All the land you go round shall be yours."

Pakhom took out his money and put it on the cap. Then he took off his outer coat, remaining in his sleeveless undercoat. He unfastened his girdle and tied it tight below his stomach, put a little bag of bread into the breast of his coat, and tying a flask of water to his girdle, he drew up the tops of his boots, took the spade from his man, and stood ready to start. He considered for some moments which way he had better go-it was tempting everywhere.

"No matter," he concluded, "I will go towards the rising sun."

Pakhom started walking neither slowly nor quickly. After having gone a thousand yards he stopped, dug a hole, and placed pieces of turf one on another to make it more visible. Then he went on; and now that he had walked off his stiffness he quickened his pace. After a while he dug another hole.

"I will go on for another three miles," thought he, "and then turn to the left. This spot is so fine, that it would be a pity to lose it. The further one goes, the better the land seems."

He went straight on for a while and when he looked round, the hillock was scarcely visible and the people on it looked like black ants, and he would just see something glistening there in the sun.

"Ah," thought Pakhom, "I have gone far enough in this direction, it is time to turn. Besides I am in a regular sweat, and very thirsty."

He stopped, dug a large hole, and heaped up pieces of turf. Next he untied his flask, had a drink and then turned sharply to the left. He went on and on; the grass was high, and it was very hot.

Pakhom began to grow tired: he looked at the sun and saw that it was noon.

“Well,” he thought, “I must have rest.”

It had become terribly hot and he felt sleepy, still he went on and on, thinking : “An hour to suffer, a lifetime to live.”

Late in the afternoon, Pakhom thought of turning back. So he hurriedly dug a hole, and turned straight towards the hillock.

VII

Pakhom went straight towards the hillock, but he now walked with difficulty. He was done up with the heat, his bare feet were cut and bruised, and his legs began to fail. He longed to rest, but it was impossible if he meant to get back before sunset. The sun waits for no man, and it was sinking lower and lower.

He looked towards the hillock and at the sun. He was still far from his goal, and the sun was already near the rim.

Pakhom walked on and on; it was very hard walking but he went quicker and quicker. He pressed on, but was still far from the place. He began running, threw away his coat, his boots, his flask and his cap, and kept only the spade which he used as a support.

“What shall I do?” he thought again, “I have grasped too much and ruined the whole affair. I can’t get there before the sun sets.”

And this fear made him still more breathless. Pakhom went on running, his soaking shirt and trousers stuck to him and his mouth was parched. His breast was working like a blacksmith’s bellows, his heart was beating like hammer, and his legs were giving way as if they did not belong to him. Pakhom was seized with terror lest he should die of the strain.

Though afraid of death, he could not stop. He gathered his last strength and ran on.

The sun was quite low, but he was also quite near his aim. Pakhom could already see the people on the hillock waving their arms to hurry him up.

Pakhom looked at the sun, which had reached the earth: one side of it had already disappeared. With all his remaining strength he rushed on, bending his body forward so that his legs could hardly follow fast enough to keep him from falling. He took a long breath and ran up the hillock. It was still light there. He reached the top and saw the cap. Before it sat the chief laughing and holding his sides. Again Pakhom uttered a cry: his legs gave way beneath him, he fell forward and reached the cap with his hands.

“Ah, that’s a fine fellow!” exclaimed the chief. “He has gained much land!”

Pakhom’s servant came running up and tried to raise him, but he saw that blood was flowing from his mouth. Pakhom was dead!

The Bashkirs clicked their tongues to show their pity.

His servant picked up the spade and dug a grave long enough for Pakhom to lie in, and buried him in it. Six feet from his head to his heels was all he needed.

A. GLOSSARY

<i>piqued</i>	: wounded in pride
<i>sneeringly</i>	: with contempt
<i>chatter</i>	: speak rapidly
<i>grumbled</i>	: complained or protested
<i>fallow land</i>	: land left uncultivated to allow it to regain fertility
<i>prairie</i>	: level land overgrown with grass
<i>scramble</i>	: struggle to get
<i>tethered</i>	: fastened with a chain or rope
<i>chuckle</i>	: low, quiet laugh
<i>dozed off</i>	: fell asleep
<i>glistened</i>	: shone brightly; sparkled
<i>prostrate</i>	: (here) lying with front of body towards ground from utter tiredness
<i>quivering</i>	: trembling or vibrating
<i>parched</i>	: made dry by heat

B. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What did the two women discuss? Were they related to each other?
2. What did one woman say in defence of rural life? What was the counter-argument?
3. Pakhom listened to the women's chatter. He started brooding and reached a conclusion. What was the conclusion?
4. When the Devil heard Pakhom's musings, what did he decide?
5. The estate-owner on whose land Pakhom was tenant sold her land. Who bought the land?
6. How did Pakhom manage to put together the money for buying the land?
7. Pakhom met a stranger one day. Who was this stranger? What information did he give to Pakhom?
8. A trader told Pakhom something about the land of Bashkirs. What was it?
9. Who were the Bashkirs? How did Pakhom make friends with them?
10. Bashkirs wanted to repay Pakhom for his gifts. What did Pakhom want from them?
11. 'Our price is always the same : One thousand roubles a day,' the chief said. What did he mean?
12. On what condition did the chief agree to sell land to Pakhom?
13. What is the moral of the story?



RETURN TO AIR

Philippa A Pearce

The boy could swim well, but he had never tried duck-diving. His friend wanted him to learn it. What happened when he tried to duck-dive the first time?

The ponds are very big, so that at one end people bathe and at the other end they fish. Old men with bald heads sit on folding stools and fish with rods and lines, and little kids squeeze through the railings and wade up into the water to fish with nets. But the water is much deeper at our end of the pond, and that's where we bathe. You are not allowed to bathe unless you can swim, but I've always been able to swim. They say I could swim because I am fat, and I float. Well, I don't mind. They call me Sausage.

Only I don't dive – not from the diving-board. I have to take my glasses off to go into the water.

Then this summer they all wanted me to learn duck-diving. You are swimming on the surface of water and suddenly you up – end yourself just like a duck and dive down deep into the water and perhaps you swim about a bit underwater, and then come up again. I know ducks can do this soon after they are born. It's different for them.

So I was learning to duck-dive-to swim to the bottom of the pond and pick up a brick they'd thrown in, and bring it up again. You practise this in case you have to rescue anyone from drowning – gone down to the bottom. Of course, they are bigger and heavier than a brick. I suppose you have to work on bricks and then gradually work up to people.

The swimming instructor said, "Sausage, I'm going to throw the brick." It was a brick with a bit of old white flannel round it, to make it show up underwater – "Sausage I'm going to throw it – go after it and get it before it reaches the bottom and settles in the mud, or you'll never get it."

He'd made everyone come out of the water to give me a chance and they were standing and watching. I had removed my glasses, so I could only see the blurred figures. I could hear them talking and laughing, but there wasn't a sound in the water except the sound made by me. And then I saw the brick go over my head and there was a splash as it went into the water. I thought I can't do it – my legs won't move fast – they feel just flabby – it's different for ducks. But while I was thinking this, I'd taken a deep breath, and then my head really went down and my legs went up in the air. I could feel them there, just air around them, and then there was water around them, because I was going down into the water, after all right down into the water; straight down

At first my eyes were shut, I forced my eyelids up against the water to see. Because, although I can't see much without my glasses, I don't believe anyone can see much underwater.

The water was like a thick green – brown lemonade, with some fish moving around. I could see some whitish glimmer that must be the flannel round the brick, it was ahead of me, fading away into the lower water, as I moved after it. Down we went, and the lemonade–look quite went away, and became just a dark blackish–brown, and I couldn't see much. The brick looked different from here, maybe the flannel had come off. It had settled right into the mud. There was only one corner left sticking up. I dug into the mud with my fingers and got hold of the thing, and then I didn't think of anything except getting up again with it into the air.

Touching the bottom like that had stirred up the mud, so I began to go up through a cloud of it. I felt I would get lost. Perhaps I had swum underwater too far – perhaps I would be drifted towards the place where people were fishing and get a fish-hook caught into the flesh of my cheek or perhaps I just wasn't going to find the top and the air again...

I was quite afraid, although I was going up quite quickly, and the water was already changing from brown-black to green- brown and then to bright lemonade; I could also see the sun shining through the water, I was getting near the surface. I was moving too slowly; I knew I would never reach the air again in time.

Never the air again....

Then suddenly I was at the surface – I'd exploded back from the water into the air. For a while I couldn't think of anything; and I couldn't do anything except let out the old breath I'd been holding and take a couple of fresh, quick ones, and hold the brick.

Pond water was trickling down inside my nose and into my mouth, which I hate, but there was air all around and above for me to breathe and to live. I might live to be hundred now, and keep a sweet-shop of my own and walk on the Moon and breed mastiffs, and rescue someone from drowning and be awarded a medal for it and be interviewed on TV.

And then I noticed they were shouting from the bank. They were cheering and shouting, "Sausage, Sausage!" The instructor was saying with his hands round his mouth, "What on earth have you got there, Sausage?"

So then I realised I had come almost at the other end of the pond.

I turned round and swam to the bank. They gave me my glasses to see what I had brought up from the bottom. Because it wasn't a brick; same size but a tin – an old tin - box with no paint left on it and all brown-black slime from the bottom of the pond. It was as heavy as brick, because it was full of mud - nothing but mud. It must have been there for years.

I've cleaned the tin up and kept on the mantelpiece at home with my coin-collection in it. I had to duck-dive later for another brick, and I got it all right, without being frightened at all. I shall keep the tin as long as I live, and I might live to be hundred.

A. GLOSSARY

<i>squeeze</i>	: to pass forcefully through a small space
<i>sausage</i>	: a meat preparation made into a long round shape
<i>diving</i>	: jumping into the water with head or arms first
<i>work on</i>	: do a job/work
<i>flannel</i>	: a type of soft woollen cloth
<i>blurred</i>	: became less clear
<i>splash</i>	: sound of water hitting something
<i>flabby</i>	: fat
<i>lemonade</i>	: a sweet drink made of lemon
<i>glimmer</i>	: a weak, unsteady light
<i>fading away</i>	: disappearing slowly
<i>sticking up</i>	: pointing upwards
<i>stirred</i>	: moved slightly
<i>drifted</i>	: carried along by water/wind
<i>exploded</i>	: came up fast with a loud noise
<i>trickling</i>	: flowing down in a thin line
<i>mastiff</i>	: a big dog with short hair
<i>what on earth</i>	: an expression used to make a statement more forceful
<i>slime</i>	: mud which gives foul smell

B. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Why was the boy called 'Sausage' ?
2. Why did Sausage not like diving?
3. Choose the correct answer :
They all wanted me to learn duck-diving. Who were 'they'?
(a) his friends
(b) his friends and the instructor
(c) his parents
4. What is duck-diving? How is it taught ?
5. What happened to Sausage when he tried duck-diving the first time?
6. Why couldn't Sausage see inside the water?
7. Why did the water change colours? How did it change colours?
8. Was Sausage sure that he would not come out alive? Give examples to support your answer.

9. What did Sausage dig out? Did he know what he had caught hold of when he was inside the water? Why?
10. Where did Sausage reach while swimming ?
11. What did Sausage do with the tin?

C. DISCUSSION

1. Swimming is a good exercise. Discuss.
2. Why is it not possible for every school to have a swimming pool? Discuss what amenities should every school have?

D. SUGGESTED READING

1. 'A High Dive' by L. P. Hartley
2. 'Out of the Blue' by Bethany Hamilton; Reader's Digest Sep. 2005



GLOSSARY (NEW)

1. Bed Number 29

Glossary

depression	:	a state of feeling sad
minutely	:	detailedly
pleaded	:	requested
persuade	:	convince
regained	:	got back
masses	:	a large number

2. Half a Rupee Worth

Glossary

flourished	:	to be very successful
apprentice	:	one who is learning a trade under an expert
steadfastness	:	dedication/devotion
groaned	:	to complain about something
surrender	:	hand over
considerable	:	large in size/amount
exhausted	:	to consume entirely
contempt	:	a feeling of dislike
enraged	:	to make someone very angry
mutter	:	to complain in a quiet way

3. The Dying Detective

Glossary

listless	:	lacking energy or spirit
symptoms	:	a change in the body which indicates that a disease is present
dreadful	:	very bad or unpleasant

4. How Much Land does a Man Need

Glossary

inevitable	:	sure to happen
boasting	:	self praising
supper	:	light evening meal served before dinner
interpreter	:	someone who mediates between speakers of different languages
dispersed	:	move away from each other
ruined	:	caused failure