

Grade VIII

Lesson 3. The Selfish Giant

Supplementary Reader

Soul of the Chapter

The Giant's Garden

After their school, every afternoon the children used to go to play in the giant's garden. It was a large garden and lovely too. Over the soft green grass, could be seen innumerable beautiful flowers. During spring, the peach trees that stood in the garden blossomed into pink and pearl and bore rich fruit. The birds used to chirp and sing sweet songs, that even children used to stop to listen to them.

The giant had been away for seven years, He had gone to be with his friend, the Cornish ogre. When he came back, he saw the children playing in his garden. He ordered them, in a rough voice to go away and never come back. He then built a high wall around his garden and put up a notice board. "Trespassers will be prosecuted."

The children became sad. They used to wander around the garden, after their school got over. They used to keep gazing at the high wall and kept talking to each other about the beautiful garden. The Giant was a very selfish Giant.

Spring Doesn't Come to the Selfish Giant's Garden

Soon the Spring came all over the country, except in the Selfish Giant's garden. There were little blossoms everywhere and chirping birds. The birds, the trees, the flowers: none of them cared to blossom or celebrate spring as there were no children in the Giant's garden. The only happy people on the garden were the snow and the frost. The snow and the frost realise that Spring had not come to his garden. So, they decide to stay in the garden for the entire year. They also invited the North wind and the hail to stay with them. The hail came and kept rattling on the roof till it broke most of the slates.

Finally the Spring came to Giant's Garden

The Giant was unable to understand as to why spring had reached everywhere except for in his garden. He kept waiting but the spring never came, nor did the summer or the Autumn.

One morning, while the Giant lay awake in his bed, he heard lovely music. He thought that the music was being produced by the King's musicians, who must be passing by. As he saw outside the window, he saw that there were no king's musicians but a linnet singing. Then, he saw that hail, the snow and the winter were all gone. He could also smell a delicious perfume. The Giant saw that through a little hole in the wall, the children had crept in. In every tree, he saw a child sitting and the trees were so happy to have the children around that they covered themselves with blossoms. The birds and the flowers, likewise, added to the beauty of the scene and the garden.

One Corner Continued to have Winter

The Giant saw that there continued to be one corner in the garden where spring hadn't yet arrived. The Giant saw that a little boy was standing there, unable to climb the tree. The Giant realised that he had been selfish and therefore the spring had stayed away. He decided to help the little boy climb the tree and to knock down the wall he had built.

Seeing the Giant, the Children Ran Away from the Garden

When the Giant entered the garden, all the children ran away seeing the Giant. They were very frightened of him. Only the little boy doesn't run for he hadn't seen the Giant coming. The Giant gently took the little boy in his arms and put him on the tree. The tree immediately broke into a blossom. The little boy embraced and kissed the Giant and thanked him. The other children seeing all this came running into the garden.

The Giant announced to the children that his garden was now the garden of the children. The children used to come every day to play. The Giant used to be happy seeing the children play, but he could not find the little boy. His eyes used to search every day for the little boy. But years went by, the Giant grew old, but the little boy was never seen again.

One Day he Saw the Little Boy Again

With the movement in nature, the spring had again been replaced by winter. The Giant, however, was shocked one morning to see spring in one of the farthest corners of his garden.

He was surprised to see the little boy again. He ran to meet him, but as he came close to the boy he saw the prints of two nails on his hands and feet. The Giant became red with anger. He wanted to know who had wounded the little boy. He wanted to kill the one who had hurt the boy.

Giant's Death

At the point, the child answered that these wound are 'The wounds of love.' The Giant was filled with awe and knelt before the little boy. The little boy smiled at the Giant and told him that he wanted to take the Giant to his garden, the Paradise. The next day, when the children came to play in the garden, they saw the Giant lying dead under the tree.

NCERT Corner

Comprehension Check - Check 1

1. Why is the Giant called selfish?

The Giant is called selfish because he doesn't allow the children to play in his garden.

2. On one occasion the children said "How happy we are here! Later they said:" How happy we are there!"

What are they referring to in both the cases?

In both the cases, the children are referring to the Giant's beautiful garden, which was a perfect play ground for them.

3. (i) When spring came, it was still winter in the garden. What does winter stand for or indicate here?

The winter, in the story, stands for lack of joy and activity. It stands dead in contrast to the blossoms of the spring, the sound of birds singing and the perfumed fragrances of the flowers.

(i) Winter has been presented like a story with its own characters and their activities. Describe the story in your own words.

Winter had permanently come to reside in the selfish Giant's garden. Winter, then, called its kith and kin. It called snow, frost, hail and the North wind. The snow put its layer on the grass.

The Frost painted the trees silver. The hail rattled till it broke the slates and the North wind broke the chimney pots. Winter along with its companions proved to be destructive.

4. Was the Giant happy or sad over the state of the garden?

The Giant was not happy looking at the state of his garden. He worried with astonishment as to why the change in seasons didn't change the condition of his garden.

5. What effect did the linnet's song have over hail and the North wind?

The linnet's song made the rattling hail and the roaring wind stop.

Check 2

1. (i) The Giant saw a most wonderful sight. What did he see?

The Giant saw his lifeless garden regain its beauty. He saw children sitting in the branches of every tree, the tree laid with fruit and blossoms. He could smell the perfumed fragrance of the flowers and hear the birds singing.

(ii) What did he realise on seeing it?

He realised his mistake. He realised that the real beauty was to be found in children.

2. Why was it still winter in one corner of the garden?

In one corner of the garden, there continued to be winter because a little boy was unable to climb the tree.

3. Describe the first meeting of the little boy and the Giant.

The first meeting between the little boy and the Giant takes place when the Giant had realised his mistake. The Giant picks up the little boy in his arms and helps him to climb the tree. The boy was surprised at the Giant's act of kindness and hugged and kissed him, in return.

4. Describe their second meeting after a long interval.

The second meeting between the Giant and the boy takes place many years later when the Giant had grown old. The Giant runs with joy to meet the little boy, when he sees him. The little boy smiles at the Giant.

Despite winter, the Giant sees white flower blossoms at the place where the boy stood. The boy informs the Giant that he had come to take the Giant with him, to his garden, the Paradise.

5. **The Giant lay dead, all covered with white blossoms. What does this sentence indicate about the once selfish Giant?**

This sentence indicates that the Giant had been blessed with Christ's love and mercy. White flowers are indicative of peace and compassion, something that the Giant had learnt from the children in his garden.

Check 3

Discuss the following topics in groups.

1. **The little child's hands and feet had marks of nails. Who does the child remind you of?**

Give a reason for your answer.

The little child reminds us of Lord Christ. Christ was crucified on a cross, nailed on his hands and feet, the impressions of which the child had on his hands and feet.

2. **Is there something like this garden near where you live? Would you like one (without the Giant perhaps) and why? What would you do to keep it in good shape?**

Yes, I have a beautiful garden in front of my house. It has many colourful flowers and swings to play on. The garden is loved by all the people who stay there.

The elders use it for exercise and the children use it to play. To maintain it properly, we should make sure that more and more plants are planted and nobody litters the place.

Chapter Practice

Very Short Answer Type Questions

1. **How many peach trees stood in the garden of the Giant?**

There were twelve peach trees in the Giant's garden.

2. **Where had the Giant gone?**

The Giant had gone to his friend's place for seven years.

3. **What effect did the songs of the birds have on the children?**

The children used to get spellbound by the songs that the birds sang. They would stop playing to listen to the birds singing.

4. Where did the children play after the Giant pushed them out of his garden?

On being pushed out of the garden, the children tried to play on the road. It was, however, difficult to play on the road because the road was dusty and had hard stones.

5. Choose the odd one out.

(a) Snow, Hail, Winter, Summer, Frost.

Summer

6. How many seasons passed before the spring came in the Giant's garden?

After winter, the summer and the autumn also went by before spring came to the Giant's garden.

7. What did the children say when the Giant questions them about the little boy?

On being questioned about the little boy, the children told the Giant that they didn't know where the little boy lived, nor had they seen him before.

8. Why did the Giant get red with anger on seeing the little boy?

Years later when the Giant saw the little boy, he rushed to him to meet him. His joy, however, turned to anger when he saw the little boy wounded.

9. Who did the Giant credit to the source of the sweet music?

After a very long time, when sweet music reached the Giant's ears, he thought that the king's musicians must have been passing by.

10. Where did the music come from?

The music was not produced by the king's musicians but it was a linnet singing. The spring had finally come to the Giant's garden and with it sweet music.

Short Answer Type Questions

1. Why did the Giant knock down the wall that he himself had built?

The Giant knocked down the wall when he realised that he was being selfish. He realised that the change in seasons rendered no change in his garden because of his attitude.

He understood that he was deprived of the joy of spring because the real source of joy was to be found in the children.

2. Why did the Giant not allow the children to his garden?

The Giant was a selfish Giant He believed that his garden belonged only to him and should be used only by him. For this reason, he banned the entry of children from his garden and put up a notice board stating, " Trespassers will be prosecuted."

3. What were the differences between the Giant's garden and the other gardens during the spring season?

During spring, the trees in all other gardens were filled with golden fruits except for the Giant's garden.

All other gardens had little blossoms and little birds. The Giant's garden had none. The Giants garden was white and cold during this time. Winter and snow became the permanent residents in his garden.

4. Why was the Giant sad, despite spring having had come to his garden?

The giant was sad because he missed his dear little friend, the little boy whom he had helped climb the tree.

He asked the other children to tell the little boy to come and play in his garden. The children, however, informed him that they didn't know the boy nor did they know where he lived.

5. Describe the Giant during his old age.

Many years had passed and the Giant grew old. He had become very weak and feeble. He could no longer play with the children who came to play in his garden.

He could merely see them playing while sitting on a huge arm chair and admire the beauty of the children and his garden.

6. Why was the Giant filled with a 'strange awe' on meeting the little boy?

When the Giant meets the little boy for the second time, he was filled with a strange sense of awe because the little boy revealed himself to be the Christ.

On seeing Christ stand before him and having come to take him to Paradise, the Giant was overwhelmed with strange emotions.

Long Answer Type Questions

1. The line, " My own garden is my own garden" gets transformed in the course of the story. Explain why?

The line, " My own garden is my own garden" gets transformed into "it is your garden now, dear children." The giant kept waiting for the spring to come. The spring, however, comes only when the children come back.

The Giant is quick to realise that the real flowers to be found in the trees are the children. Therefore, through these lines the Giant Welcomes back the children into his garden.

2. What were the reason behind the changes that were seen in the Giant?

The Giant was able to see that the spring had reached every other garden except for his. He, however, failed to understand why spring was getting so late in reaching his garden.

In other gardens, the winter was replaced by spring, then summer and also autumn. In his garden winter had permanently resided.

Soon he saw that as soon as the children entered his garden, the spring came following too. He realised that the real beauty was to be found in children who played in his garden.

3. Discuss the theme of change in heart as illustrated through the story.

The story puts a lot of emphasis on the theme of change in heart as illustrated through the central protagonist, the Giant.

The Giant, though hefty and strong, had almost been rendered incapable of receiving any joy because he was a selfish Giant.

The moment he changes his attitude and becomes more sensitive, he experiences the utmost bliss of nature.

His change in heart facilitates him to receive many rewards: a beautiful garden, the joy that the children spread and the mercy of Christ himself.

4. Explain in the line, " but these are the wounds of love."

The little boy utters these lines, "but these are the wounds of love", when the Giant sees him wounded with the prints of nails on his hands and feet. Through these lines the little boy reveals himself to be the Christ himself. He calls these wounds the 'wounds of love' because he chose to die and sacrifice his life for the sake of his love for man and mankind. These wounds were Christ's loved and ultimate sacrifice for humanity.

Value Based Questions

1. What does the arrival of the little boy for the second time indicate?

The little boy informs the Giant that he had come to take the Giant his garden, which is Paradise. The little boy is emblematic of Christ and his love and mercy. The Christ comes to deliver the Giant from life and take him into the lap of love. The Giant had cast away his selfishness; therefore, the Christ himself comes for the Giant's deliverance. The coming of the Christ in the form of the little boy also emphasises the importance of forgiveness.

2. Which value does the chapter strongly condemn?

The chapter strongly condemn the idea of being 'selfish'. Till the point the Giant was selfish he fails to enjoy the gifts of nature and God. Despite having a big garden, the garden remained barren. The moment he realised his mistakes the Giant's garden began to bloom. The chapter critiques a man considering himself as the supreme ruler of the benefits of nature.
