

Grade VII

Lesson 10. An Alien Hand

Supplementary

Soul of the Chapter

Tilloo Steals the Opportunity to Go “That Way”

While Tilloo's father was enjoying an afternoon nap at home, Tilloo quietly stole his father's security card and decided to escape his mother's watchful eye and go 'that way.' He had observed his father using the security card to open the metal door. In the same way as his father did, he slipped the card in one slot and waited for it to come out from the other. As the door opened, Tilloo started his march along a gently upward slope. The passage led from the underground habitat to the surface of the planet. Tilloo was eager to see the Sun or the stars, depending if it was day or night.

'That way' was an underground passage, along which Tilloo's father went everyday for work. Tilloo was very curious to go 'That way' and find out what lay at the end of the forbidden route. Tilloo's father was among the selected few who had the permission to go 'that way'.

The Security Mechanism and the Secret Passage

However, the security mechanism was not as simple as Tilloo had thought it to be. Invisible mechanical devices had detected the presence of an intruder and his picture was sent to the Central Bureau. And before Tilloo could advance any further, he was escorted by the security staff back home. While Tilloo's mother scolded him for his disobedience, his father tried to explain him the gravity of the matter. Tilloo's father tried to explain him that the secret passage/ surface where he worked was not meant for ordinary people because they would not be able to survive because of the low temperature and thin air. Tilloo's father managed to survive because he went accordingly equipped, in a special suit and a reservoir of oxygen. His father also told him that he was trained for this purpose.

The Hostile Environment

Tilloo's father, further informed him, that their forefathers had lived in such conditions for millions of year. But, now the times had changed. The Sun had changed and with it the balance of nature got changed too. This affected the birds, the animals and the fish, all of whom became gradually extinct. Their team is, however, managing to survive through superior

technology. At the same time, they are forced to live underground under artificial conditions. Tilloo's father tells him the importance of solar energy and about his job, that is to make sure that machines that generate solar power function properly.

The Alien Spacecraft and the Discussion

The next day when Tilloo's father went for work, his entire team was full of excitement. They were observing a big dot on the big TV screen. It was surely not a star and Tilloo's father and others believed it to be a spacecraft, as it was constantly changing position. They were, however, rather astonished because the solar system did not have life anywhere except on their planet. The big question then was the source or point of origin of the spacecraft, 'where from?'

Tilloo's father, recalled that according to the ancient archives recorded at the Central Bureau, it was possible for their ancestors to find out the manned and unmanned spacecrafts through a well-developed space programme. However, in the current scenario of energy shortage and life underground, it was impossible to visualise any such programme. They had no option, but to passively watch these spacecraft's. Nobody had an answer to supply. Nobody knew who these strangers were.

The President addressed the issue with facts and details that he had. He told everyone that there were two spacecraft's that were moving towards us. One was orbiting our planet while the other was a little far away. It was guessed that these spacecraft's came from the neighbouring planet.

Tilloo Witnessed the Dealings of the Mysterious Activities

The President seemed the suggestions of the members regarding these mysterious activities. Number one suggested that they could render these spacecraft's ineffective once they land. Number two suggested passive observance.. Since the power of the sender of these spacecraft's was not known, it was wise to not reveal their presence. Number Three agreed to Number Two's suggestion and went on to say that their surface activities should be kept to bare minimum. Before President could suggest anything, he got a call and got the news of the first spacecraft's landing.

It was a very important day in Tilloo's life as his father had taken him to the Control Room. From here he could see the alien spacecraft on the TV screen. Tilloo found the spacecraft quite funny. His father showed him the panel through which the spacecraft could be controlled in case it was up to any mischief. The colourful buttons on the panel caught Tilloo's

attention. Tilloo observed some movement in the spacecraft. Immediately all eyes in the room turned to the screen. They saw a mechanical hand that emerged from the spacecraft. It reached the surface of the planet, bent down and touched the soil. The telescopic lens of the TV camera was zoomed on get a better view of the mechanical hand. It was difficult to understand what was it up to.

The Red Button

Tilloo's eyes were fixed on the control. He could resist his desire no more and pressed a red button. There was a shrill whistle and everybody turned to Tilloo. Tilloo's father pulled him away and restored the red button to its neutral position. But, the mechanical hand ceased to work.

The Press Conference

At a press conference held by NASA, a scientist talked about the Viking Mission, that was going on smoothly till the mechanical hand stopped working and could not dig out the Martian soil for examination. The scientist, however, failed to understand the nature of the malfunction. A little later, there was another press release from NASA, informing the restoration of the mechanical hand. Soil samples were collected from the planet surface for examination. Out of all the physical conditions to the Earth. Therefore, scientists were hopeful to find some signs of life on Mars. However, the Viking Mission found no signs of life on Mars.

NCERT Folder

Check I

1. How does Tilloo manage to find his way to the 'forbidden passage'?

Tilloo uses the time of his father's afternoon siesta as an opportunity to steal the security card and manage his way to the 'forbidden passage.'

2. What did Tilloo hope to see once he emerged from his underground home?

Tilloo hoped to see the Sun or the stars, depending on whether it was day or night. Tilloo had heard a lot about the Sun and the stars, but had never seen them.

3. Why did Tilloo's father advise him not to try to reach the surface of the planet?

Tilloo's father advised him not to try to reach the surface of the planet for several reasons. There was a very thin layer of air on the surface of the planet. Breathing was difficult, if one did not carry an extra reservoir of oxygen. The low temperature on the surface also made survival difficult. A special suit and training was required to survive on the surface of the planet.

4. What changes had occurred, which forced people to live in underground homes?

The Sun, which was significant for sustenance had turned hostile. Though Sun had changed only slightly, the change had led to drastic changes, upsetting the balance of nature.

Check 2

1. Why was everyone in the Control Room greatly excited?

People in the Control Room were excited because of the appearance of a dot on the otherwise clear background. People in the Control Room believed it to be a spacecraft.

2. Was the spacecraft manned or unmanned? How do you know it?

For the people in the Control Room it was almost impossible to find out if the spacecraft was manned or unmanned. However, soon they got reports that said that the spacecraft contained no living being but only instruments.

3. What did Number One and Number Two suggest should be done about the alien spacecraft?

Number One suggested that the spacecraft should be rendered ineffective once it land on the surface of the planet. Number Two, however, recommended a passive observation, since the power of the sender of the spacecraft was not known.

Check 3

1. What do you think the mechanical hand was trying to do?

The mechanical hand was trying to collect the samples of the Martian soil that could be examined by the scientists at NASA.

2. Tilloo pressed the red button and “the damage was done”. What was the damage?

Tilloo pressing the red button resulted in the mechanical hand ceasing to work.

3. Where had the spacecraft come from?

The spacecraft had come from the Earth. It was sent by a team of scientists at NASA.

4. On which planet do Tilloo and parents live?

Tilloo and his parents lived on Mars. However, due to hostile conditions they lived underground.

Exercises

Discuss the following topics in groups.

1. If you had live in a home like Tilloo’s what parts of life would you find most difficult? What compensations might there be?

Since, Tilloo and his family lived underground, their house had no exposure to natural light of the Sun. They sustained themselves through the solar energy they were able to generate. Also, being able to roam around freely would be difficult. The only compensation for this kind of a life would be a good understanding of science and technology, since there life is governed by such advancements.

2. What, if anything, might drive mankind to make their homes underground?

Tilloo’s father recalled how their ancestors lived naturally on the surface of the planet. A change in Sun, however, led to drastic changes. It is possible that our planet, too, encounters such changes.

3. Do you think there is life on other planets? Can you guess what kind of people there may be on them? In what ways are they likely to be different from us?

Yes, It is quite possible that there is life on other planets too. The chapter very ironically showcases this perspective.

The team of scientists working on the Martian soil samples failed to find life on Mars, while Tilloo and his family existed.

Our solar system is just one of the solar systems. It is possible that life on other planets exists, but we have not been successful in getting any knowledge about it.

People living on other planets could be different because of the distance and physical differences from the Sun.

Chapter Practice

Very Short Answer Type Questions

How did the metal door open?

The metal door opened by inserting the security card in one of the slots. The card came out from another slot and the door opened noiselessly.

1. Which two spaces were connected through the forbidden passage?

The forbidden passage led from the under-ground habitat to the surface of the planet.

2. What facilitated a comfortable living for Tilloo's father's generation?

Superior technology, especially solar energy was responsible for comfortable living in the present times.

3. What work did Tilloo's father do?

Tilloo's father was part of a team that was responsible to keep a watch on the machines that generated solar energy the team was also responsible to service these machines.

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Short Answer Type Questions

1. What happened as Tilloo proceeded on the forbidden passage?

Tilloo had underestimated the security arrangements. As Tilloo proceeded on the forbidden passage, his picture was captured by the camera and sent to the Central Bureau. Soon, he was prevented by the security staff and led back home.

2. Why did Tilloo's father say that ordinary people could not survive on the surface?

The ordinary people could not survive on the surface because the air was too thin to breathe and the temperature was so low that one could freeze to death. Tilloo's father had a special suit, a reservoir of oxygen and training to be able to survive in those conditions.

3. Why was a well-developed space programme difficult to sustain in the present times?

Unlike in the ancient times, there was an extreme energy shortage in the present times, furthermore, underground living made it difficult to sustain a well-developed space programme that required quite a few resources.

4. What report did the President of Central Committee receive?

The President of the Central Committee received a report on the two spacecraft's. From the report, he got to know that there were two spacecraft's. One of them was orbiting around their planet, while the other was approaching the surface of the planet, probably to land.

5. Why did the Number One feel that it was foolish to destroy the spacecraft in the space?

Number One felt it was foolish to destroy the spacecraft in the space because that required a lot of resources. He, therefore, suggested that it would be better to render the spacecraft unoperational once it landed on the surface of the planet.

Long Answer Type Questions

1. What happened when the Sun changed?

The Sun was the main reason of sustenance on the planet where Tilloo's fathers' ancestors had lived. When the Sun turned hostile by changing slightly, drastic changes in the nature were experienced. Unable to co-op with the changed times, first the birds became extinct, then the animals and finally the fish. Humans were able to survive only with the help of superior technology.

2. What do you think whose advice did the President of the Central Committee finally accept?

In all likelihood, the recommendations of Number Two and Number Three must have been followed. Both of them recommended passive observation and non-interference. Number Three also suggested the surface activities to be reduced to bare minimum so that the sender of the spacecraft's does not get to know about their existence. The failure of the NASA scientists to find signs of life on Mars is a clear indication of that.



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