

Grade IX

Lesson 7. Packing

- Jerome K. Jerome

Prose

Soul of the Chapter

Preparing for a trip is sometimes more fun than the trip itself. In this story, the author and his friends, George and Harris, are packing for a trip. It is a humorous story. The humour lies in the funny actions of the author and his friends.

The author felt proud of his packing skills. He offered to do the packing. His friends allowed him to do so and they relaxed. The author was not happy. He never meant this. He wanted them to pack under his supervision. But his offer was misunderstood and they made him pack the things all by himself. When they relaxed, he got irritated.

The author started packing. When the packing was over, George asked if the soap was packed. The author refused to reopen the bag. But he realised that the tobacco pouch was left inside the bag. So, he had to reopen it. George and Harris offered to do the rest. They were not good packers. They messed up everything. They stepped on things and broke them. Everything was upset. Then, Montmorency, the dog, came and added to the confusion. He sat down on the things which were to be packed. He put his legs into the jam. He pretended that lemons were rats. There was again a question of finding beds. Harris and the author shared a bed while George slept alone. They argued when they should get up. Finally, they decided to get up at 6.30 a.m. and slept.

NCERT Questions

Thinking About the Text

I. Discuss in pairs and answer each question below in a short paragraph (30-40 words).

1. How many characters are there in the narrative? Name them. (Don't forget the dog!)

There are four characters in the narrative. They are Jerome (the narrator), George, Harris and Montmorency (the dog).



2. Why did the narrator (Jerome) volunteer to do packing?

Jerome thought that he was the best packer in the world. Nobody could compete with him. He was proud of his ability and wanted to show it. So, he volunteered to do the packing for his friends.

3. How did George and Harris react to this? Did Jerome like their reaction?

Jerome offered his ability to pack with an intention to superintend his friends. But George and Harris thought that Jerome would do the entire job. They sat idle. It irritated the narrator.

4. What was Jerome's real intention when he offered to pack?

When Jerome offered to pack, his real intention was to supervise their work. He wanted to act as a boss only. But his offer was misused by his friends who did nothing but spoilt the things in the name of packing.

5. What did Harris say after the bag was shut and strapped? Why do you think he waited till then to ask?

After the bag was shut and strapped, Harris pointed out that Jerome had not packed the boots. He had waited till then to ask because he wanted him to realise his mistake and ridicule Jerome for his packing skills.

6. What "horrible idea" occurred to Jerome a little later?

The "horrible idea" that occurred to Jerome a little later was whether he had packed his toothbrush or not. Whenever he travelled he always forgot to pack his toothbrush. This thought haunted him and made his life miserable.

7. Where did Jerome finally find the toothbrush?

Jerome finally found the toothbrush inside a boot.

8. Why did Jerome have to reopen the packed bag?

Jerome had to reopen the packed bag twice because of his forgetfulness. Once he had to reopen the bag as he had forgotten to pack the boots. The next time, he unpacked when he realised that he had packed his tobacco-pouch in.

9. What did George and Harris offer to pack and why?

George and Harris offered to pack the hampers because they thought that Jerome had taken too much of time. They also wanted to show their skill to Jerome and prove themselves to be better packer than Jerome.





10. While packing the hamper, George and Harris do a number of foolish and funny things.

Tick the statements that are true.

(i) They started with breaking a cup.

(ii) They also broke a plate.

(iii) They squashed a tomato.

(iv) They trod on the butter.

(v) They stepped on a banana.

(vi) They put things behind them, and couldn't find them.

(vii) They stepped on things.

(viii) They packed the pictures at the bottom and put heavy things on top.

(ix) They upset almost everything.

(x) They were very good at packing.

Statement (i), (iii), (iv), (vi) and (vii) are true.

II. What does Jerome say was Montmorency's ambition in life? What do you think of Montmorency and why?

Jerome says Montmorency's ambition in life was to get in the way and be sworn at. Montmorency was a mischievous little dog who loved creating trouble for others. I think that Montmorency was a perfect nuisance because whenever he found people busy with their work, he might feel bored and wanted to get involved. He meant no trouble intentionally. But when people shouted at him or threw things at his head, he got discouraged and then went away to sit silently, which the narrator called the fulfilment of his conceit.

III. Discuss in groups and answer the following questions in two or three paragraphs (100-150 words)

1. Of the three, Jerome, George and Harries, who do you think is the best or worst packer? Support your answer with details from the text.

In my opinion, the narrator Jerome is the best packer. George and Harris are not only lazy but worst packers. Jerome makes a few minor mistakes while packing. This is the reason why he liked to pack and repack many times. But ultimately he finished packing in a better way. The way they behaved during packing irritated the narrator.





Hence, out of the three, Jerome is the best packer. He is a person who wants every task to be completed with perfection. Although he is bossy at times yet his patience and helpful nature impresses the reader. We should also try to imbibe his sense of perfection and responsibility.

2. How did Montmorency 'contribute' to the packing?

The packing escapade was already a messy job and Montmorency's contribution to it made it even more tiresome. He did his level best to be a "perfect nuisance".

He came and sat down on things, just when they were wanted to be packed. He put his leg into the jam and worried the teaspoons. He also pretended that the lemons were rats. So he got into the hamper and killed three of them before Harris could land him with the frying-pan.

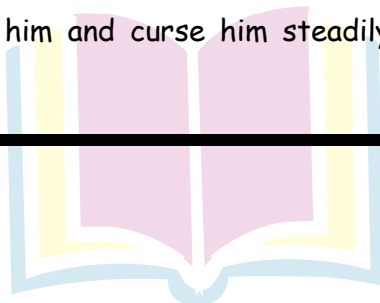
3. Do you find this story funny? What are the humorous elements in it?

Yes, this story is definitely funny. Not only is the way in which the three friends pack for their trip quite mirthfully, but the way the author narrates all the incidents is also entertaining.

The first humorous element is that he offered to pack, George and Harris leave the whole matter to him. Consequently, he has to do packing though his real intention was to boss the job.

The second humorous element is that George placed the butter on the chair and Harris sat on it and it stuck at his back. When they searched it for packing it was missing. They walked and walked round the room. At last, George saw it at Harris's back.

The third humorous element is that Montmorency squirms in where he is not wanted. He wants somebody stumble over him and curse him steadily for an hour. He pretends that lemons were rats.



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Thinking About Language

I. Match the words/phrases in Column A with their meanings in Column B.

A		B	
1. slaving		i. a quarrel or an argument	
2. chaos		ii. remove something from inside another thing using a sharp tool	
3. rummage		iii. strange, mysterious, difficult to explain	
4. scrape out		iv. finish successfully, achieve	
5. stumble over, tumble into		v. search for something by moving things around hurriedly or carelessly	
6. accomplish		vi. complete confusion and disorder	
7. uncanny		vii. fall, or step awkwardly while walking	
8. (to have or get into) a row		viii. working hard	

1. (viii)	2. (vi)	3. (v)	4. (ii)	5. (vii)	6. (iv)	7. (iii)	8. (i)
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II. Use suitable words or phrases from Column A above to complete the paragraph given below.

A Traffic Jam

During power cuts, when traffic lights go off, there is utter _____ at crossroads. Drivers add to the confusion by _____ over their right of way, and nearly come to blows. Sometimes passers-by, seeing a few policemen _____ at regulating traffic, step in to help. This gives them a feeling of having _____ something.

During power cuts, when traffic lights go off, there is utter chaos at crossroads. Drivers add to the confusion by getting into a row over their right of way, and nearly come to blows. Sometimes passers-by, seeing a few policemen slaving at regulating traffic, step in to help. This gives them a feeling of having accomplished something.

III. Look at the sentence below. Notice that the verbs (italicised) are all in their bare form.

- Simple commands:
 - Stand up!
 - Put it here!

- Directions: (to reach your home)

Board Bus No. 121 and get down at Sagar Restaurant. From there turn right and walk till you reach a book shop. My home is just behind the shop.

- Dos and don'ts:

- Always get up for your elders.
- Don't shout in class.

- Instructions for making a fruit salad:

Ingredients

Oranges - 2

Pineapple - one large piece

Cherries - 250 grams

Bananas - 2

Any other fruit you like

Wash the fruit. Cut them into small pieces. Mix them well. Add a few drops of lime juice. Add sugar to taste. Now add some cream (or ice cream if you wish to make fruit salad with ice cream.)

1. Now work in pairs. Give

- Two commands to your partner.
- Two do's and don'ts to a new student in your class.
- Directions to get to each other's houses.
- Instructions for moving the body in an exercise or a dance, or for cooking something.

2. The table below has some proverbs telling you what to do and what not to do. Fill in the blanks and add a few more such proverbs to the table.

Positive	Negative
i. Save for a rainy day.	i. Don't cry over spilt milk.
ii. Make hay while the sun shines.	ii. Don't put the cart before the horse.
iii. _____ before you leap.	iii. _____ a mountain out of a mole hill.
iv. _____ and let live.	iv. _____ all your eggs in one basket.

Positive	Negative
iii. Look	Don't make
iv. Live	Don't put

Solved Question Bank

Reference-to-Context Questions

Q. Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

1. I impressed the fact upon George and Harris and told them that they had better leave the whole matter entirely to me. They fell into the suggestion with a readiness that had something uncanny about it. George put on a pipe and spread himself over the easy-chair, and Harris cocked his legs on the table and lit a cigar. This was hardly what I intended.

a. The 'whole matter' was related to the issue of _____.

Packing

b. _____ sat comfortably on the chair.

George

c. Harris bent the legs on the knees as he sat.

True/False

True

d. The word that means the same as 'something mysterious' is _____.

Uncanny

2. However, I did not say anything, but started the packing. It seemed a longer job than I had thought it was going to be; but I got the bag finished at last, and I sat on it and strapped it.

"Ain't you going to put the boots in?" said Harris.

And I looked round, and found I had forgotten them. That's just like Harris. He couldn't have said a word until I'd got the bag shut and strapped, of course. And George laughed at one of these irritating, senseless laughs of his.

a. 'I' in the above passage refers to _____.

Jerome, the author

b. The author didn't say anything to _____ and started packing.

His friends

c. The writer felt that Harris could have reminded him about the boots before he had closed _____.

The bag

d. The synonym of the word 'futile or aimless' in the passage is _____.

'Senseless'

3. Of course, I had to turn every mortal thing out now, and of course, I could not find it. I rummaged the things up into much the same state that they must have been before the world was created, and when chaos reigned. Of course, I found George's and Harris's eighteen times over, but I couldn't find my won. I put the things back one by one, and held everything up and shook it. Then I found it inside a boot. I repacked once more.

a. The author in the above passage was busy finding his _____.

Toothbrush

b. His toothbrush was found _____.

Inside a boot

c. This time the author had given up and didn't repack. True/False

False

d. The phrase 'every mortal thing' in the above line means _____.

Each and every common or ordinary thing.

4. When I had finished, George asked if the soap was in. I said I didn't care a hang whether the soap was in or whether it wasn't and I slammed the bag shut and strapped it, and found that I had packed my spectacles in it, and had to reopen it.

a. The author completely forgot to pack _____ in the bag.

The soap

b. Instead of the soap he had packed up _____.

His spectacles

c. The author reopened the bag to search for his spectacles. True/False

False

d. The phrase in the passage that means the same as 'show no interest or concern' is _____.

Didn't care a hang.



5. And then it was *George's* turn, and he trod on the butter. I didn't say anything, but I came over and sat on the edge of the table and watched them. It irritated them more than anything I could have said. I felt that. It made them nervous and excited, and they stepped on things, and put things behind them, and then couldn't find them when they wanted the; and they packed the pies at the bottom, and put heavy things on top, and smashed the pies in.

a. _____ stepped on the butter.

George

b. 'Them' in the second line refers to _____.

George and Harris

c. They placed the pies at the bottom and then placed other lighter things on them

True/False

True

d. Find a synonym of 'collided' from the passage.

'Smashed'

6. "Most extraordinary thing I ever heard of" said *George*. "So mysterious!" said *Harris*. Then *George* got round at the back of *Harris* and saw it.

a. *George* said that the disappearance of the _____ was the most amazing thing he had known.

Butter

b. According to *Harris*, disappearance of the butter was a _____.

Mystery

c. The disappeared butter was found sticking onto *George's* back. True/False

False

d. The word in the above lines that means the same as 'remarkable' is _____.

Extraordinary.

7. He came and sat down on things, just when they wanted to be packed; and he laboured under the fixed belief that, whenever *Harris* or *George* reached out their hand for anything, it was his cold damp nose that they wanted. He put his leg into the jam, and he worried the teaspoons, and he pretended that the lemons were rats, and got into the hamper and killed three of them before *Harris* could land him with the frying-pan.

a. 'He' in the passage refers to _____.

Montmorency





b. According to the dog, _____ looked like rats.

Lemons

c. 'Land him' in the above line means _____.

Hit or punch someone.

d. Harris had put his leg in to the jam.

True/False

False

Short Answer Type Questions

1. The author remarks, "It's my energetic nature, I can't help it." What did he mean by it?

The author remarks that he can't sit idle and see other people slaving and working. He wanted to get up and supervise his friends in packing. But his offer was taken otherwise and his friends left the entire work of packing to him.

2. How did George and Harris feel while packing?

George and Harris were not good packers. They were nervous and excited. In excitement, they stepped on the things and messed up everything. They were in utter confusion. Jerome tried to help them when they got irritated.

3. What happened when George and Harris tried to pack the butter?

George and Harris were nervous and excited while packing. They tried to pack the butter in the kettle. It would not go in and what was in the kettle, would not come out. They looked for butter everywhere and it was finally found stuck on the back of Harris.

4. How did Montmorency add to the confusion and chaos?

Montmorency, the dog, added to the confusion. He sat on the small things which were to be packed. George and Harris were already nervous. The acts of Montmorency confused and irritated them more.

5. What did the narrator and his friends do after the packing was over?

All the three, Jerome, Harris and George, finished the packing by 12:15 in the night. It was a very big task for them. Their bags were opened and reopened many a time due to confusion. Ultimately they went to sleep to get up at 6:30 in the morning.





6. What happened to pies while packing?

George and Harris were nervous and irritated while packing. They packed the pies at the bottom. They put heavy things on the top. It was a big mistake. All the pies were smashed to crumbs.

Long Answer Type Questions

1. What did the author want to do when he offered his help? How was he misunderstood?

Do you think Jerome was a show-off while offering his help? What would you have done if you were Jerome?

The author Jerome volunteered his expertise in packing. He just wanted to act as a boss and superintend them. But they misunderstood him and made him do the entire packing. Yes, I think Jerome accepted the work of packing just to show off his skill. His intention was not to pack the things voluntarily, it was an intention to superintend his friends. He wanted to act as their boss. It is human nature. But his friends were smarter. They sat leisurely and watched him doing the packing. It irritated Jerome. If I had been in place of Jerome, I would not have accepted the work just to boss over them or just to show off my skill. I would have accepted the work to help them without any expectations.

2. Why did the writer get irritated? Do you think that volunteering sometimes becomes a headache? Was it the expectation of Jerome that became a cause of his headache?

Jerome gets irritated when he was misunderstood by his friends. His intention was not to do packing for them. He volunteered just because he wanted to act as a boss and superintend them. But his volunteering became a headache for him. I don't agree that volunteering becomes headache. It becomes headache only when we have expectations from it. We, as human beings expect appreciation or reward for everything that we do. And if we don't get it, we become irritated, and take the work as a burden. In the story, Jerome's voluntary work becomes a headache for him because he had expectations from his friends. He wanted to satisfy himself by becoming their boss. When he didn't get the expected response, it became a cause of headache for him.

3. Lazy friends sometimes become a burden. Do you agree? How should we respond to someone's help?

It's true that lazy friends often become a burden. In this context, "a wise enemy is better than a foolish friend" is an apt saying. Lazy friends most often remain burden because they





do not want to do any work and one has to do the whole work for the sake of one's friendship. In the story, the author has two friends, Harris and George. Both of them are lazy. They irritate the author who had volunteered to pack for them. This service becomes a headache for him. As a friend, we should be considerate to our friends who offer their help. We should accept their help with humility and a sense of gratefulness. We should not take undue advantage of their help and become a burden. Cooperation and mutual understanding are essential for a friendship to sustain.



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