



Grade IX

Lesson 3 - Iswaran the Storyteller

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Supplementary Reader

Soul of the Chapter

Mehendra was a junior supervisor in a firm which offered on hire supervisors at different sites. He was a bachelor. A cook, Iswaran, was attached to him. Iswaran cooked for him, washed his clothes and performed other household chores. Iswaran was a good storyteller too. Most of his stories were full of surprise and thrill. His descriptions were fine. He narrated the smallest incident in detail. He would work up in suspense and add a surprising end. He was very imaginative. Mahendra always enjoyed his stories.

Iswaran told him a story of a mad tusker. It entered a school ground. The students hid in their classrooms. The teachers climbed up the terrace. Iswaran was then a junior student. He took a stick and controlled the elephant all alone. One day Iswaran told Mahendra how he sometimes saw ghosts at night.

Mahendra called Iswaran a crazy fellow. He tried to convince Iswaran that it was his imagination and there was nothing like a ghost in his world. But he himself was afraid now.

From that day on, Mahendra went to his room with a certain unease. His mind was surrounded by fearful thoughts. One night, he was woken up by a low moan close to his window. He saw outside. There was a ghost. He was frightened. He broke into cold sweat and fell back on his pillow. However, he thought that it might be a kind of auto-suggestion, a trick.

Next morning, Iswaran reminded Mahendra that he had heard someone moaning outside the window. He told him that he had come running to his room after hearing the moans. Mahendra felt chilled and ran to his office. Now he decided to leave that haunted place immediately.



NCERT Questions

Think About It

1. In what way is Iswaran an asset to Mahendra?

Iswaran is an asset to Mahendra. He cooks for him, washes his clothes and chats away with him at night. He takes care of all needs of Mahendra. He entertains Mahendra by his stories as well.

2. How does Iswaran describe the uprooted tree on the highway? What effect does he want to create in his listeners?

Iswaran describes the uprooted tree as an enormous bushy beast lying sprawled across the road. He is influenced by Tamil stories full of suspense. He loves creating suspense before letting anything. His stories are so lovely that they leave a long lasting impact on the listeners' mind.

3. How does he narrate the story of the tusker? Does it appear to be plausible?

Iswaran is a good storyteller. He makes his stories vivid by telling them in a unique style. He narrates an incident involving a tusker. One day an elephant goes mad and becomes uncontrollable. He enters the school ground where students were playing. Iswaran was also one of them. Seeing the wild elephant, all the children ran into their classrooms.

Iswaran takes courage and decide to control the animal. He takes a cane and moves towards the elephant. He hits the elephant on his third toenail. He collapses. This is how Iswaran tackles the wild, mad elephant.

This incident does not appear to be plausible. It is difficult to believe that a student of junior class can control a wild, mad elephant.

4. Why does the author say that Iswaran seemed to more than make up for the absence of a TV in Mahendra's living quarters?

Mahendra does not have a TV in his quarters but Iswaran is more than a TV. He is a good storyteller. He entertains Mahendra by telling him thrilling and mysterious. He creates suspense in everything. His stories are full of suspense, horror and



adventure. Mahendra always enjoys his stories and never feels the absence of a TV in his quarters.

5. Mahendra calls ghosts or spirits a figment of the imagination. What happens to him on a full-moon night?

Mahendra calls ghosts or spirits a figment of the imagination. He is a rational thinker. But the story of Iswaran leaves a mark on his mind. On a full-moon night, he hears a low cry and sees a dark, cloudy from which matches Iswaran's description. He is terrified and falls back on the pillow, panting.

6. Can you think of some other ending for the story?

Mahendra was upset. He was an educated, rational man. He did not want to believe in a ghost but he could not forget what he had seen the previous night. He could not work in his office. He felt sick. He decided to take a short leave and go for a rest. He came back home early. He did not find Iswaran at the door. He entered the house and heard a cry. It was the same sound. He became suspicious. He came to the kitchen and saw stealthily that Iswaran was wearing a mask and making the sound. Now Mahendra had understood everything. He was not happy with him. He said nothing but decided to leave both, the place and Iswaran.

Solved Question Bank

Short Answer Questions

1. What was the routine of Iswaran?

Iswaran was a cook. He was attached to Mahendra. He cooked food, washed clothes and did other household works. After completing his work, he used to take bath and read some books. He was an asset to Mahendra.

2. What happened when the wild elephant entered the school playground?

When the wild elephant entered the school playground, there was chaos. The boys ran into their classrooms and shut the doors. The elephant pulled out the football goalpost, flattened the drum and uprooted the shrubs.



3. How did Iswaran control the wild elephant?

Iswaran controlled the wild elephant. He took a stick in his hand, moved forward and with all his might, whacked the elephant's third toenail. The elephant looked stunned for a minute. Finally, it shivered and collapsed.

4. How did Mahendra see the female ghost?

One full-moon night, Mahendra heard the sound of moaning and wailing near the window. He looked out of his window. He saw a dark cloudy form clutching a bundle. He thought it to be a female ghost. He sweated and fell back on the pillow.

5. How did Iswaran describe the female ghost?

One day, Iswaran told Mahendra that he had seen a female ghost appearing off and on at midnight during the full-moon. It was an ugly creature with matted hair and shrivelled face. It could be seen moving around with a foetus in its arms.

6. How did Iswaran entertain Mahendra?

Iswaran was a good storyteller. He was fond of reading books on thrill and mystery. He used to tell various stories to Mahendra. His stories were full of suspense, horror and adventure. He compared things with extraordinary imagination.

7. Why did Mahendra expect Iswaran to be angry?

One day, Mahendra interrupted Iswaran from telling a useless story. He scolded him badly. So, he expected him to be angry for some days. But Iswaran did not mind that and was before him as usual.

8. "Iswaran used to read Tamil Thriller". Do you think affected his behaviour in any way?

Iswaran used to read Tamil thrillers. Yes, it affected his behaviour. He used to narrate a small incident in a detailed way. He created suspense in small things and gave surprise endings.

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9. Do you think the story of a wild elephant in the school was also a figment of imagination of Iswaran?

Yes, I think this story was also a figment of his imagination. He was in the habit of telling stories out of nothing. A small event of elephant's entry in the school might have been narrated in such an elaborate way.

10. "One day Mahendra went to his bed with a certain unease." Do you think it was the influence of Iswaran's constant mention of ghosts?

Yes, I think he was also influenced by Iswaran's constant mention of ghosts. He felt the presence of some spirits around him. He saw a woman ghost outside the window of his bedroom. This scared him and he ultimately left the place.

11. Mahendra resigned from his post and left the place. What do you think, could be the reason?

Mahendra did not believe in supernatural powers. But one day, being influenced by Iswaran, he saw a woman ghost outside his window. This scared him. He decided to leave the place immediately. He resigned from his post and went away.

12. What were the elements of Iswaran's story?

The elements of Iswaran's story were a tusker and a woman ghost. The story was narrated to Ganesh by Mahendra, a supervisor in a firm.

Long Answer Questions

1. How did Iswaran manage to make even the simplest incident interesting? Give an example. Do you think one should be imaginative like him?

Instead of saying that he had seen an uprooted tree on the highway, he would say, "The road was deserted and I was alone. Suddenly I spotted something that looked like an enormous beast lying sprawled across the road. I was half inclined to turn and go back. But as I came closer, I saw that it was a fallen tree." Iswaran was very imaginative. This is how he managed to make even the simplest incident interesting. I think one should be realistic instead of being too imaginative. If one is like Iswaran he is never trusted. His factual information is not accepted.





- 2. How did Iswaran tackle the elephant in the school building? Does it appear to be likely? Do you think this is a positive trait of one's personality?**

The elephant created chaos in the school. All the boys ran into the classrooms and shut the doors tight. Iswaran grabbed a cane from the hands of one of the teachers and ran downstairs. With the stick in his hand, Iswaran moved slowly towards the elephant. He whacked third toenail of the beast. The beast collapsed. This is how Iswaran tackled the mad elephant.

This incident does not appear to be plausible. It is difficult to believe that a child of a junior class can control a wild, mad elephant. No, it is not a desirable trait of one's personality. Nobody believes such persons who are in the habit of boasting about things.

- 3. Mahendra did not believe in ghosts. What happened to him on the last full moon night? Do you think ghosts exist?**

One day Iswaran told Mahendra about a female ghost. It made him uneasy. He did not have the courage to look out of the window on a full moon night. He was woken up by a low moan close to his window. He did not want to see what there was. But out of curiosity, he looked outside the window. He was shocked to see the ghost of a woman. The female ghost seemed to be an ugly creature with thick hair and a shrivelled face. It gave the impression of a skeleton holding a foetus in its arms. He was frightened. He broke into a cold sweat and fell back on the pillow, panting. No, I don't think ghosts exist. It is only a figment of imagination.

- 4. Give a brief character sketch of Iswaran the storyteller. Do you think he is superstitious?**

Iswaran, a cook, was a perfect storyteller. He was greatly influenced by the Tamil authors. He always tried to introduce suspense and surprised in the narration of even the simplest incident. He usually left his story in the middle and would not take up again quickly. He had an amazing capacity to make stories. He was boastful too. He boasted of his bravery in the school where he controlled a wild elephant. His stories were so lively that they used to leave a long lasting impact on the listener's mind. No





he was not a superstitious person. He was only a good story teller. He did not believe in any rituals or supernatural powers.

5. Who was Mahendra? How was Iswaran helpful to him?

Mahendra was a junior supervisor in a firm. Iswaran was quite attached to him and remained with him uncomplainingly wherever he was posted. Iswaran was very helpful to Mahendra. He cooked for him, washed his clothes and told him endless stories. He had an amazing capacity to produce vegetables and cooking ingredients anywhere. Mahendra's trust in Iswaran is appreciable. He always praises him for his talent as a cook. He respects his feelings. Whenever Iswaran tells him any story, Mahendra knows that it is not true but he never scolds him.

6. 'Ghosts are a figment of our imagination.' Discuss.

Ghosts exist only in stories. According to some people, ghosts are the unsatisfied souls of the dead people. It is not scientific. After one's death, it is not possible for one to come back in the shape of human being. Some people love mystery for their own sake. Iswaran read thrillers which made him see the ghosts. Mahendra was an educated person but he was told about the female ghost only after Iswaran told him about it. It was a case of hallucination.

7. If you were Mahendra, what decision would you take at the end of the story?

Thought I would have reacted the same way after seeing the ghost, yet I would have gone into the depth of the mystery instead of leaving. Being educated, I would not believe it blindly. I would have taken the help of Iswaran and tried to follow the image. I would have tried to find out footprints the next morning. Even Iswaran would be in my suspicion. I would have searched the area around my house and looked for some clues. I would not leave the mystery unresolved. Courageously I would have discussed it with Iswaran whether he had created any mischief in the guise of a woman ghost. I would also have tried to find any other things kept in the room that creates this riddle. It would have been my priority to know the fact.



8. Describe Iswaran as a cook. What are his qualities that attract you the most?

Iswaran was a middle-aged man with a multifaceted personality. He belonged to South India and was literate. He worked as a cook for Mahendra. He was an expert cook. He would produce vegetables and cooking ingredients, seemingly out of nowhere. Without any shops for miles around, he would arrange fresh vegetables in to time. He was an asset for Mahendra. He was a very obedient person. He obeyed his master Mahendra with full dedication. He was like a magician in the art of cooking. Iswaran is also a good storyteller. He makes his stories vivid by telling in a unique style. He made use of gestures and dramatic skills to give a sound effect. He told stories with action. Suspense and surprise were the chief qualities of his stories that attracted us the most.

9. If you were Mahendra, would you expect Iswaran to be angry? Give reasons.

One day, Mahendra interrupted Iswaran from telling a useless story. He felt unrest and asked him to stop telling such stories. He scolded him badly. So, he expected him to be angry for some days. But Iswaran did not mind that, and he was before him as usual. If I were Mahendra, I would have not expected Iswaran to be angry. He knew that he was wrong. It was really unfair on his part to create unnecessary sensation in people's hearts and minds by his stories which were really beyond imagination. I was surprised at his cheerful and talkative behaviour next day because he was a cheerful person, and so had never felt insulted.



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