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to
me!

LET'S TALK EMPOWERMENT. LET'S TALK ENGLISH

Beehive

5. The Snake and the Mirror

by
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1. Summary

The Snake and the Mirror is a story about a young doctor's meeting with a snake. He was sitting in his room at night, admiring himself in the mirror, and making plans for his future. Suddenly, a cobra fell from the ceiling, coiled itself around his arm and squeezed hard. The Doctor was so frightened he could not move! The snake suddenly saw its own reflection in the mirror, let go of the Doctor's arm, slipped off his lap and settled itself in front of the mirror. It looked as if it too was admiring itself! The Doctor ran to his friend's house without locking his own house! He came back the next morning to find that although the snake had left, a thief had come and stolen all his belongings.

Watch this YouTube video about a snake looking at itself in a mirror: Click on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TP3YBFebx78>

2. Vocabulary

1. **Humorous** – something that makes you laugh
The Kapil Sharma show on television is **humorous**.
2. **Coiled** – arranged in a series of circles
She **coiled** the piece of wool around the pencil.
3. **Full-blooded** - having parents, grandparents, and earlier relations all belonging to the same race; absolutely pure; full of energy
Dara Singh was a **full-blooded** wrestler and his father, grandfather and great grandfather were wrestlers. So we were sure he would win a gold medal.

4. **Fell silent** -to stop talking or not make any noise
When Ram saw that his wife was not listening to him, he **fell silent**.
5. **Attentively** - to listen with great care
I listened **attentively** to the teacher and so I was able to solve the problems in the first attempt.
6. **Tale** – a story
I love listening to **tales** about fairies and giants.
7. **Meagre** – very little, in small quantity
The family was so poor that their **meagre** meals did not fill anyone's stomach.
8. **Solitary** – alone, single
There was a **solitary** bottle of oil on the shelf at the back of the shop.
9. **Supporting** – to take all the weight on itself or to help someone especially with money
The pillar **supporting** the flyover broke and so the flyover was closed to traffic.
10. **Gable** - the triangular part of a house's exterior wall that supports a sloping roof
The **gable** was above the narrow wall of the house.
11. **Beam** – a long piece of strong wood or metal that holds up the roof or a floor
The wooden **beam** was so strong that it supported the roof for over a hundred years.
12. **Ceiling** – a ceiling is the horizontal surface that forms the top part or roof inside a room. Ceiling also means upper limit
I was lying on the floor and looking at the fan hanging from the **ceiling**.
The Government put a **ceiling** on how much land could be sold to outsiders.
13. **Veranda** – a veranda is a covered area along the outside of a house
I park my cycle in the **veranda** so that it does not get wet in the rain
14. **Wind God** – the power that controls the wind
There was a hot wind blowing so we thought that the **Wind God** was angry.

15. **Taken time off** – a period of time when you do not work because of illness or holidays or other commitments
I have decided to **take time off** from karate classes in July because my uncle is coming from the USA.
16. **Materia Medica** – book containing all information about substances used in the preparation of medicinal drugs
The book, **Materia Medica**, provides all the information on Homeopathic medicines.
17. **Tempted** - to want to do something that one likes, but knows is wrong
I was **tempted** to eat the fifth rasgulla but I knew I would get an upset stomach.
18. **Admirer** – a person who likes somebody or something very much
I am a great **admirer** of Gulzar's ghazals.
19. **Handsome** – good looking man, or a large amount
My sister has married a very **handsome** boy.
Krishna was getting a **handsome** salary so he did not want to leave the job.
20. **Make my presence felt** – to make people notice you
The children were making so much noise that the teacher had to stand up on the chair to **make her presence felt**.
21. **Bachelor** – a man who is not married
The young **bachelor** was very keen to get married.
22. **Attractive** – something or someone that is very pleasing to look at
The girl looked very **attractive** in a saree.
23. **Earth-shaking** – important, something that will have great impact
The Principal told us that she was going to make an **earth-shaking** announcement, so we were all tense!
24. **Paced up and down** - to walk with regular steps around a small area, because you are worried, nervous, or impatient
She **paced up and down** in the veranda waiting for her husband to come home and take her to the movie.

25. **Valid** – something that is reasonable or is logical; something that is officially acceptable
Surekha did not have a **valid** reason for skipping school.
Chetan's admission card for the examination was not **valid** since his name was spelt wrong.
26. **Thud** - when something heavy falls with a dull sound
The huge mango fell with a loud **thud** onto the table under the tree.
27. **Wriggled** - to move the body with small quick movements
The puppy **wriggled** out of my arms and ran to drink his milk.
28. **Simultaneous** - happening or being done at exactly the same time
The explosion was almost **simultaneous** with the announcement, so we did not hear what the announcer said.
29. **Tremble** - shake slightly, usually because you are cold, frightened, or very emotional
As a child, I would **tremble** every time I saw the big dog.
30. **Slithered** - to slide down unsteadily along a surface, moving from side to side
His foot slipped on the ice and he **slithered** all the way down the mountain.
31. **Hood** – a covering for the head and neck with an opening for the face
I was wearing the jacket with a **hood** and so my hair did not get wet in the rain.
32. **Merely** – only or just, nothing more than
I was **merely** advising him to buy the book; I did not force him to buy it.
33. **Turned to stone** – to become very still, not move, like a stone
I was so frightened when I saw the angry bull, I just stood still as if I had **turned to stone**.
34. **Like a stone image in the flesh** – not to move, to look like a statue
Rakesh looked like a **stone image in the flesh** when he saw the tiger; he was not even breathing.

35. **Universe** – the stars and the planets, space and all of creation
The **universe** is so large, and we have only explored a very small portion of it.
36. **Leaden**– lead is a soft, silvery white or greyish metal which is dense and heavy. Leaden means to become dull and heavy
He walked into the examination hall with **leaden** feet, since he had not studied at all.
37. **Molten** – something solid that becomes liquid when heated
One drop of **molten** iron fell on his shoe and his foot got burnt.
38. **Crushing** - to press something very hard so that it is broken or its shape is destroyed
The machine is **crushing** the sugar cane to press all the juice out of it.
39. **Drained** – to remove all energy; to remove all liquid from something and leave it dry
When I walked 5 km. on a hot day, I was **drained** of all my energy.
They **drained** all the water from the swimming pool because they wanted to clean it.
40. **Lurked** - to wait or move in a secret way so that you cannot be seen, especially because you are about to attack someone or do something wrong
I was scared to go out in the dark because I knew that a jackal was **lurking** in the bushes.
41. **Feebly** - weak and without energy, strength, or power
She was just recovering from a surgery, which is why she walked so **feebly** to the car.
42. **Appreciated** – to understand the full value of something or someone
I **appreciated** everything that my Math teacher had done to help me to do well in my exams.
43. **Reflection** - the image of something in a mirror or on any surface like a mirror e.g. pool of water
I could see my **reflection** more clearly after I cleaned the mirror.
44. **Admiring** – to show that you like something or someone
I was **admiring** my friend's beautiful dress.

45. **Eye Shadow** – colour that is put on the eyelids to make the eyes look more attractive
She used pink **eye shadow** to match her pink dress.
46. **Mascara** – it is a liquid applied on eyelashes to make them appear thick
She cried so much that all her **mascara** came off her eye lashes.
47. **Vermilion** – bright red
Married women in India put a **vermilion** dot on their foreheads - this is called a bindi.
48. **Unwound** – opposite of coiled - to open out the rings or spirals
I **unwound** the roll of rope to tie the box.
49. **Closer quarters** - seeing or doing something from very near
I ran on to the street to see Shah Rukh Khan at **closer quarters**.
50. **No mere image cut in granite** – not just a lifeless statue cut in granite, which is a very hard stone
I started crying when my friend was very rude to me; I was **no mere image cut in granite**, I was a person with a heart and feelings.
51. **Ran for all I was worth** – to run as fast as possible
I **ran for all I was worth** to catch the chain snatcher.
52. **Companion** - a person or thing you spend a lot of time with, like a husband or wife, a partner, a close friend or a book
The book that I got as a gift from my father, has been my **companion** for many years.
53. **Reedy** – to look like a reed - a reed is a tall, thin grass that grows near ponds or rivers
I was on such a strict diet for so long, that instead of looking slim I began to look **reedy**.
54. **Gift of a sprinter** – to be able to run like a sprinter – a sprinter is person who runs very fast over short distances
Hemant has **the gift of a sprinter** and has broken many records in competitions.
55. **Smear** – to apply or spread a thick liquid or soft substance over something
My mother **smear**ed my roti with lots of ghee.

56. **Cleaned out** – to empty completely
The thief **cleaned out** my bank locker and I was left with nothing.
57. **Insult** - to behave with or speak to someone without respect or unkindly
Rita insulted her best friend, Seeta, by ignoring her in class.
58. **Such a sense of cleanliness** - to be very clean yourself and keep your surroundings clean
She had **such a sense of cleanliness** that she would wash her hands and feet every time she entered the house.
59. **Rascal** – a naughty person but someone you like
My son is a little **rascal** - he saw a plate of chips lying on the table, and ran off with the entire plate!
60. **Taken with** - highly attracted by someone or something
She was **taken with** the puppy and wanted to keep him with her.
61. **Venomous** - venom is a poisonous liquid that some snakes, insects, etc. produce; anything producing venom is called venomous
People living near the forest know which snake is **venomous** and which is not; that is why they are not afraid of all snakes.
62. **Intimidating** – someone or something that makes you feel frightened or nervous
The Principal's presence was so **intimidating**, that I forgot what I wanted to say.
63. **Flare** – to gradually become wider or to burn brightly for a short time.
The angry horse **flared** his nostrils and stamped his legs
I saw **flaring** fires, so I knew the village was close by.
64. **Extension** – a part that is added to something to make it bigger or longer
I needed an **extension** cord so that my computer wire could reach the socket.
65. **Prevention** – to stop something from happening
Vaccines have been developed for the **prevention** of infectious diseases.

66. **Facilitated** – to make easy
The ramp will **facilitate** the entry of wheel chairs into the building.
67. **No means** – not to have any support or help
The girl had **no means** of travelling to school so early in the morning.
68. **Defending** - to guard or protect against danger or harm
Our soldiers stand along the borders of our country, defending us day and night against the enemy.

3. Questions

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

1. “The sound was a familiar one.” What sound did the doctor hear? What did he think it was? How many times did he hear it? (Find the places in the text.) When and why did the sounds stop?
2. What two “important” and “earth-shaking” decisions did the doctor take while he was looking into the mirror?
3. “I looked into the mirror and smiled,” says the doctor. A little later he says, “I forgot my danger and smiled feebly at myself.” What is the doctor’s opinion about himself when: (i) he first smiles, and (ii) he smiles again? In what way do his thoughts change in between, and why?

II. This story about a frightening incident is narrated in a humorous way. What makes it humorous? (Think of the contrasts it presents between dreams and reality. Some of them are listed below.)

1.
 - (i) The kind of person the doctor is (money, possessions)
 - (ii) The kind of person he wants to be (appearance, ambition)
2.
 - (i) The person he wants to marry
 - (ii) The person he actually marries
3.
 - (i) His thoughts when he looks into the mirror
 - (ii) His thoughts when the snake is coiled around his arm

Write short paragraphs on each of these to get your answer.

4. Grammar

- I. Here are some sentences from the text. Say which of them tell you, that the author: (a) was afraid of the snake, (b) was proud of his appearance, (c) had a sense of humour, (d) was no longer afraid of the snake.

1. I was turned to stone.
2. I was no mere image cut in granite.
3. The arm was beginning to be drained of strength.
4. I tried in my imagination to write in bright letters outside my little heart the words, 'O God'.
5. I didn't tremble. I didn't cry out.
6. I looked into the mirror and smiled. It was an attractive smile.
7. I was suddenly a man of flesh and blood.
8. I was after all a bachelor, and a doctor too on top of it!
9. The fellow had such a sense of cleanliness...! The rascal could have taken it and used it after washing it with soap and water.
10. Was it trying to make an important decision about growing a moustache or using eye shadow and mascara or wearing a vermilion spot on its forehead?

II. Expressions used to show fear

Can you find the expressions in the story that tell you that the author was frightened? Read the story and complete the following sentences.

1. I was turned to _____.
2. I sat there holding _____.
3. In the light of the lamp I sat there like _____.

III. In the sentences given below some words and expressions are italicised. They are variously mean that one

- is very frightened.
- is too scared to move.
- is frightened by something that happens suddenly.
- makes another feel frightened.

Match the meanings with the words/ expressions in italics, and write the appropriate meaning next to the sentence. The first one has been done for you.

1. I knew a man was following me, I was *scared out of my wits*.
(very frightened)
2. I *got a fright* when I realised how close I was to the cliff edge.
3. He *nearly jumped out of his skin* when he saw the bull running towards him.
4. You really *gave me a fright* when you crept up behind me like that.
5. Wait until he tells his story—it will *make your hair stand on end*.
6. *Paralysed with fear*, the boy faced his abductors.
7. The boy hid behind the door, *not moving a muscle*.

IV. Reported questions

Study these sentences:

- His friend *asked*, “Did you see the snake the next day, doctor?”
His friend *asked* the doctor *whether /if* he had seen the snake the next day.
- The little girl *wondered*, “Will I be home before the TV show begins?”
The little girl *wondered if/ whether* she would be home before the TV show began.
- Someone *asked*, “Why has the thief left the vest behind?”
Someone *asked why* the thief had left the vest behind.

The words *if/ whether* are used to report questions which begin with: *do, will, can, have, are* etc. These questions can be answered ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

Questions beginning with *why/ when/ where/ how/ which/ what* are reported using these same words.

The reporting verbs we use in questions with *if/ whether/ why/ when* etc. are: *ask, inquire* and *wonder*.

Remember that in reported speech,

- the present tense changes to past tense
- *here, today, tomorrow, yesterday* etc. change to *there, that day, the next day, the day before*, etc.
- *I* you change to *me / him / her*, etc., as necessary.

Example:

- He said to me, "*I don't believe you.*"
He said *he* did not believe *me*.
- She said to him, '*I don't believe you.*'
She told him that *she* did not believe *him*.

1. Report these questions using *if/whether* or *why/ when/ where/ how/ which/ what*.

Remember the italicised verbs change into the past tense.

1. Meena asked her friend, "*Do you think* your teacher will come today?"
2. David asked his colleague, "*Where* will you go this summer?"
3. He asked the little boy, "*Why* are you studying English?"
4. She asked me, "*When* are we going to leave?"
5. Pran asked me, "*Have* you finished reading the newspaper?"
6. Seema asked her, "*How long* have you lived here?"
7. Sheila asked the children, "*Are* you ready to do the work?"

2. For more exercises on Reported Speech click on the link below.

<https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/reported-speech-exercise-1.html>

5. Speaking

Using some of the expressions given above in exercise III, talk about an incident when you were very scared. You may have a competition to decide whose story was the most frightening.

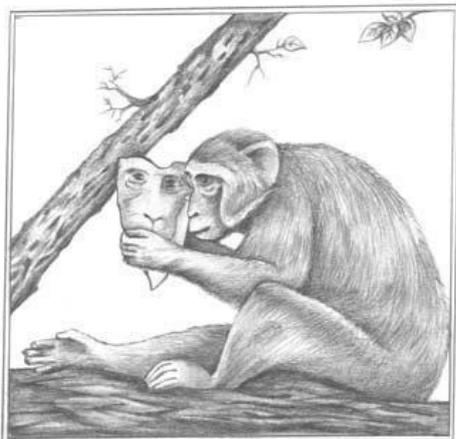
6. Dictation

The following paragraph is about the Indian cobra. Read it twice and close your book. Your teacher will then dictate the paragraph to you. Write it down with appropriate punctuation marks.

The Indian cobra is the common name for members of the family of **venomous** snakes, known for the **intimidating** looks and deadly bite. Cobras are recognised by the hoods that they **flare** when angry or disturbed; the hoods are created by the **extension** of the ribs behind the cobras' heads. Obviously the best **prevention** is to avoid getting bitten. This is **facilitated** by the fact that humans are not the natural prey of any venomous snake. We are a bit large for them to swallow whole and they have **no means** of chopping us up into bite-size pieces. Nearly all snake bites in humans are the result of a snake **defending** itself when it feels threatened. In general snakes are shy and will simply leave if you give them a chance.

7. Writing

1. Try to rewrite the story without its humour, merely as a frightening incident. What details or parts of the story would you leave out?
2. Read the description given alongside this sketch from a photograph in a newspaper (*Times of India*, 4 September 1999). Make up a story about what the monkey is thinking, or why it is looking into a mirror. Write a paragraph about it.



THE FAIREST OF THEM ALL

A monkey preens itself using a piece of mirror, in the Delhi ridge.

(‘To preen oneself’ means to spend a lot of time making oneself look attractive, and then admiring one’s appearance. The word is used in disapproval.)

Watch this YouTube video of a monkey preening itself in front of a mirror:
Click on the link below.

<https://www.newsflare.com/video/259073/animals/hes-so-vain-preening-monkey-checks-himself-out-in-motorcycle-wing-mirror>

3. Practice

Develop a story from given outlines. Remember to give the moral of the story in the end.

An old lady becomes blind calls in a doctor agrees to pay large fees if cured doctor comes daily..... Starts stealing one piece of furniture daily delays the cure at last cures her..... demands his fees..... lady refuses to pay, saying cure is not complete..... doctor objects lady says sight not restored as she cannot see all her furniture moral.

4. Format and marks for story writing

- Title - 1 mark
- Fluency - 2 marks
- Accuracy - 2 marks
- Content - 5 marks

8. Translation

The text you read is a translation of a story by a well-known Malayalam writer, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer.

In translating a story from one language to another, a translator must keep the content intact. However, the language and the style differ in different translations of the same text.

Here are two translations of the opening paragraphs of a novel by the Japanese writer, Haruki Murakami. Read them and answer the questions given below.

A

I'm in the kitchen cooking spaghetti when the woman calls. Another moment until the spaghetti is done; there I am, whistling the prelude to Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra* along with the FM radio. Perfect spaghetti-cooking music!

I hear the telephone ring but tell myself, ignore it. Let the spaghetti finish cooking. It's almost done, and besides, Claudio Abbado and the London Symphony Orchestra are coming to a crescendo.

B

When the phone rang I was in the kitchen, boiling a potful of spaghetti and whistling along with an FM broadcast of the overture to Rossini's *The Thieving Magpie*, which has to be the perfect music for cooking pasta.

I wanted to ignore the phone, not only because the spaghetti was nearly done, but because Claudio Abbado was bringing the London Symphony to its musical climax.

Compare the two translations on the basis of the following points.

- the tense of narration (past and present tense)
- short, incomplete sentences
- sentence length

Which of these translations do you like? Give reasons for your choice.