

talk  
to  
me!

LET'S TALK EMPOWERMENT. LET'S TALK ENGLISH

## Moments

### 8. A House Is Not a Home

by  
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#### 1. Summary

The author graduates at the top of his Class at Junior High School and goes off to High School. He feels very isolated there because his closest friends have been sent to another school. He misses them, and his old teachers. To make matters worse, his home gets burnt down shortly after he goes to his new school; he loses most of his belongings and his beloved cat goes missing. He feels a deep sense of loss. Fortunately, his schoolmates support him by collecting many of the things he needs. They also invite him to their homes. His sense of isolation vanishes and he makes new friends. The best news of all, is that a woman finds his cat and returns it to him.

Why was the cat so important to the author?

The author was already very stressed because he was in a new school. He was lonely and felt isolated. The cat made him feel loved.



Oxytocin is a chemical often referred to as the “love hormone” or the “cuddle chemical.” Oxytocin has been shown to create a sense of calm and relaxation and it helps build trust and encourages stable mental health. In addition, oxytocin

has also been shown to reduce stress and anxiety. Petting cats can help release oxytocin that makes you feel good.

Watch this video to learn how pets can reduce stress. Click on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MoRIxvRZs0>

## 2. Vocabulary

1. **Reflects** – to show or be a sign of something  
The movie **reflects** the difficult times that people go through during a war.
2. **Challenges** – things that are difficult and test someone's ability or determination  
Learning to speak Japanese posed many **challenges** to her.
3. **Overcome** – to deal with and control a problem or feeling  
She found it very difficult to **overcome** her shyness in front of strangers.
4. **Awkward** – inconvenient, difficult, uncomfortable  
I felt **awkward** going to Rita's home for dinner because she had to work really hard to give me a delicious meal.
5. **At the head of my class** – being a class topper  
Santosh was brilliant, he was always **at the head of my class**.
6. **Seniority** – the state of being older or having a more important position in an organisation  
The employees are promoted to the next position based on their **seniority**.
7. **Afford me** – give me  
My school always looked after me and gave me all the benefits they could **afford me**.
8. **Freshman** – a student who is in his first year of college or high school  
Anil found it difficult to make friends in his **freshman** year.
9. **Isolated** – alone, cut off  
I was **isolated** in another room when I got chicken pox, so that I would not infect my brothers.
10. **Encourage** – to give someone hope, courage or confidence  
My mother **encouraged** me to apply for a job with an airline.

11. **Involved** – taking an active part in something  
He was very **involved** in the college elections.
12. **Adjust** – to get used to a new situation  
Sheila **adjusted** easily to her new school because she made friends quickly.
13. **Psychology** – the way someone thinks and behaves  
To understand why a murderer kills, we must understand his **psychology**.
14. **Nonetheless** – despite what has just been said  
She understood why her parents were forbidding her to go out.  
**Nonetheless** she went out with her friends.
15. **Fall day** – a day in fall; fall is the same as autumn, this is a season between summer and winter  
On a **fall day**, there was a strong wind and all the golden yellow leaves fell at the same time.
16. **Tabby cat** – cat with brown or grey colour and dark stripes  
My **tabby cat** ran away one day and I never found her.
17. **Purring** – a soft sound made by a cat in its throat showing pleasure  
I sat by the fire, stroking my **purring** cat.
18. **Occasionally** – not happening often  
I **occasionally** go out with my friends to watch a movie.
19. **Swatting** – to hit something, specially an insect, with something flat  
During the monsoons, she goes around the house **swatting** mosquitoes.
20. **Entertainment** – activities that amuse people  
We often watched plays and dance dramas for **entertainment**.
21. **Responsible** – to be the person whose duty is to deal with something or someone  
I was **responsible** for washing the dishes after dinner.
22. **Stoking the fire** – feeding the fire; adding fuel like wood or coal to the fire to make it burn more strongly  
My aunt was **stoking the fire** in the kitchen to cook dinner.
23. **Seams** - a line where two pieces are sewn or fitted together  
The **seams** of my trousers tore because I had put on a lot of weight.

24. **Groping** – to find your way using your hands because you cannot see  
I was **groping** my way around in the dark because the light bulb was fused.
25. **Engulfed** – covered or surrounded by something or someone  
She **engulfed** her daughter in a huge hug.
26. **Crazed state** – behaving in a wild or strange way  
The animals were all in a **crazed state** when the circus tent caught fire.
27. **Fireman** – a man whose job is to stop fires burning  
The brave **fireman** climbed the ladder and entered the smoke filled room to rescue the people trapped inside.
28. **Grasp** – to hold firmly  
The child **grasped** her mother's hand in the crowded market.
29. **Firefighters** – people whose job is to stop fires burning  
Many brave **firefighters** died rescuing people, when the World Trade Towers in New York collapsed on September 9, 2001.
30. **Logically** – in a way that uses reason, good judgement  
**Logically**, she should come home from school, eat lunch, and then go for the movie.
31. **Emerged** – came out  
The sun emerged from behind the clouds.
32. **Tow** – to pull a car or a boat (with a rope or chain) using another vehicle, to carry away  
The police said they would **tow** the car away from the scene of the accident.
33. **Vanished** – disappeared  
The aeroplane **vanished** into the clouds.
34. **Inhaled** – breathed in  
It is dangerous to **inhale** smoke fumes.
35. **Dazed** – unable to think or react normally, confused  
She appeared **dazed** for days after her car accident.
36. **Horror** – a strong feeling of shock or fear  
He watched in **horror** as the car jumped the red signal and hit the oncoming bus.

37. **Suffering** – experiences such as pain or unpleasant emotions  
It was unbearable to watch the people **suffering** during the famine.
38. **Big time** – in a big way  
I owed Anita **big time** for saving me from drowning.
39. **Regardless** – paying no attention to anybody or anything  
I will go to the movie **regardless** of whether you come with me or not.
40. **Piled into the car** – got into the car in large numbers  
We have a large family but we all managed to **pile into the car** to go for a picnic.
41. **Casualty** – somebody killed or injured  
There are always a lot of **casualties** during wartime.
42. **Embarrassed** – ashamed, humiliated  
I felt **embarrassed** when my friend came over for dinner and the food was over salted.
43. **Weird** – very strange  
I had a really **weird** dream last night.
44. **Destined** – having a future that has been planned by forces outside your control  
With her brilliant mind, she is **destined** for a great career.
45. **Outcast** – a person who is not accepted by a society or a group  
Ever since she criticised the leader of the party, she has been treated like an **outcast**.
46. **Geek** – a person who is intelligent but boring, unfashionable  
The **geek** was extremely knowledgeable about the latest computer technology.
47. **Zombie** – like a robot, unable to think  
After a long day at work, I felt like a **zombie**.
48. **Surreal** – strange, bizarre  
It was **surreal** to see a cat dragging a dog.
49. **Security** – a situation in which one feels safe  
I was glad to get back to the **security** of my home after the drive through the dark city.

50. **Ripped away** – torn away quickly and suddenly  
The doctor **ripped away** the bandage and began stitching the wound.
51. **Destroyed** – damaged something so badly that it does not exist or cannot be used  
The entire town was **destroyed** by the earthquake.
52. **Heroically** – very bravely  
Pramila **heroically** jumped into the river to rescue the little child.
53. **Heart ached** – felt great sympathy  
My **heart ached** for the villagers who lost their homes during the cyclone.
54. **Grieved** – felt great sadness  
The dog **grieved** for his dead master.
55. **Identification** – an official document that shows or proves who you are  
We can now use our Aadhar card as **identification** for any government work.
56. **Rubble** – broken bits from a damaged building  
After the major earthquake, I saw **rubble** everywhere.
57. **Apartment** – a set of rooms, within a building, with at least a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen  
I stood in my **apartment** balcony and clapped for all the health workers fighting the Covid-19 pandemic.
58. **Debris** – pieces of something that has been destroyed  
The **debris** of the boat was washed ashore after the storm.
59. **Vulnerable** – easily hurt physically, mentally or emotionally  
Many charitable organisations provide safe homes for **vulnerable** orphans.
60. **Tag along** – to follow somebody, especially if not invited  
My daughter **tags along** with me wherever I go.
61. **Robe** – a long loose piece of clothing, worn over other clothes  
I wore a warm **robe** over my night dress when I went outside to collect the newspaper.

62. **Attention** – the state of watching, listening to, or thinking about something carefully or with interest  
The students were not paying **attention** when the teacher was explaining the math problem.
63. **Locker** – a small cupboard in a public area or bank where your personal things can be kept  
I have kept all my important papers in a bank **locker**.
64. **Milling around** – moving in an aimless manner  
The crowds were **milling around the** famous film star.
65. **Shove** – push  
I was standing in line for a movie ticket when somebody **shoved** me, and I fell down.
66. **Taken up a collection** – money collected from several people  
We have **taken up a collection** to buy a farewell gift for our teacher.
67. **School supplies** – things that are needed for school such as notebooks, paper, pen, pencils, etc.  
We have to buy all our **school supplies** from the stationery shop inside the school.
68. **Sweatsuit** – clothes used when exercising, or relaxing  
My **sweatsuit** was really smelly so I washed it immediately after I came back from my run.
69. **Overcome by emotion** – to feel so much emotion that it is difficult to handle, usually leads to tears  
She was **overcome by emotion** when she saw her mother lying on the hospital bed.
70. **Genuine** – real, not an imitation  
My friend only wears **genuine** Nike shoes.
71. **Outpouring of concern** – strong expression of love or interest or sympathy  
There was a nationwide **outpouring of concern** when Orissa was hit by a terrible cyclone.
72. **Instant** – happening suddenly or immediately  
The thief disappeared the **instant** he saw the policeman coming towards him.

73. **Relief** – the good feeling that you have when something unpleasant stops or does not happen  
It will be such a **relief** when this lockdown ends and we can all go out.
74. **Focusing** – directing attention towards something or someone  
We should stop **focusing** on how difficult the job is, and think of ways of getting it done as soon as possible.
75. **Insecurity** – lack of confidence, feeling unsafe  
There was a feeling of **insecurity** in the village because a leopard was seen prowling around.
76. **Curb** – edge of the pavement  
My friend and I sat on the **curb** while we ate our ice-cream.
77. **Freaked** – became very surprised, angry, confused or upset  
I **freaked** out when the school trip was cancelled.
78. **Disconnected** – separated, here the phone line was not connected  
The sudden storm **disconnected** the power supply and we were left in darkness.
79. **Sorely** – very much, truly  
Our science teacher will be **sorely** missed when he retires.
80. **Overwhelming** – extremely great or strong  
The college play got an **overwhelming** response from the audience.
81. **Tragedy** – a very sad event or situation  
It was a real **tragedy** when Shyam lost both his parents in the car accident.
82. **Diminish** – to reduce  
The heat wave **diminished** gradually.
83. **Gratitude** – feeling thankful  
I felt a lot of **gratitude** towards my aunt who took me on a holiday.

### 3. Questions

1. **What does the author notice one Sunday afternoon? What is his mother's reaction? What does she do?**
2. **Why does he break down in tears after the fire?**

3. **Why is the author deeply embarrassed the next day in school? Which words show his fear and insecurity?**
4. **The cat and the author are very fond of each other. How has this been shown in the story? Where was the cat after the fire? Who brings it back to him?**
5. **What actions of the schoolmates change the author's understanding of life and people and comfort him emotionally? How does the loneliness vanish? And how does he start participating in life?**
6. **What is the meaning of my cat was back and so am I? Has the author gone anywhere? Why does he say that he was also back?**

#### **4. Talk About It**

Have any of your classmates/schoolmates had an experience like the one described in the story where they needed help? Describe how they were helped.

#### **5. Suggested Reading**

- *Her Story So Far: Tales of the Girl Child in India* edited by Monica Das
- *Modern Hindi Stories* edited by Indu Jain
- *Malgudi Days* by R.K. Narayan