

## Chapter 8: Mijbil the Otter

## Oral Comprehension Check

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## Question: 1

What 'experiment' did Maxwell think Camusfearna would be suitable for?

## Answer:

The writer had gone to Southern Iraq in the year 1956. He took a fancy to the idea that instead of keeping a dog as a pet, he would go for an otter. Camusfearna was surrounded by water, so it would be an eminently suitable spot for this experiment.

## Question: 2

Why does he go to Basra? How long does he wait there, and why?

## Answer:

The writer went to Basra to collect and answer his mail from Europe.

He had to wait there for 5 days as his mail did not arrive.

## Question: 3

How does he get the otter? Does he like it? Pick out the words that tell you this.

## Answer:

His friend bought the otter for him and sent it to the place where he was staying.

The author liked it. This is seen in "The second night Mijbil came on to my bed in the small hours and remained asleep in the crook of my knees..." "I made a body-belt for him..."

## Question: 4

Why was the otter named 'Maxwell's otter'?

## Answer:

The otter was named by zoologists as *Lutrogale Perspicillata Maxwelli*. Hence, it was called Maxwell's otter in short.

## Question: 5

Tick the right answer. In the beginning, the otter was

1. aloof and indifferent
2. friendly
3. hostile

## Answer:

In the beginning, the otter was aloof and indifferent.

## Question: 6

What happened when Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom? What did it do two days after that?

## Answer:

When the author first took Mijbil to the bathroom, the otter first went wild with joy in the water. He plunged and rolled in it. He jumped up and down the length of the bathtub. He made enough slosh and splash. After two days, the otter suddenly disappeared and went to the bathroom to play in the water and opened the tap on his own.

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### Question: 1

**How was Mijbil transported to England?**

#### Answer:

Mijbil was packed in a box as the airlines had directed the author. As British airlines did not allow pets on board the author had to book a ticket on a different airline from Iraq to Paris and then Paris to London.

### Question: 2

**What did Mij do to the box?**

#### Answer:

The box was lined with a metal sheet. Mij didn't feel comfortable in the box and tried to escape. In his attempt to escape, Mij tore into the metal lining of the box and in the process hurt himself.

### Question: 3

**Why did Maxwell put the otter back in the box? How do you think he felt when he did this?**

#### Answer:

As there was no other way to carry Mij to London, Maxwell put in the box again. He must have felt pity on the way the otter hurt himself. Moreover, he must be worried as well.

### Question: 4

**Why does Maxwell say the airhostess was "the very queen of her kind"?**

#### Answer:

The airhostess was very sympathetic after listening to Maxwell's story. She understood how he might be feeling and then gave him permission to take the otter out of the box. Due to all this, Maxwell referred her as "the very queen of her kind".

### Question: 5

**What happened when the box was opened?**

#### Answer:

As soon as the box was opened, Mij ran out. Then it ran all over the place scaring all the passengers. It created a chaos and most of the people in the plane got scared.

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### Question: 1

**What game had Mij invented?**

#### Answer:

Mij invented a game of playing with the ball in a unique way. One of the author's suitcase was damaged and had a slope on the top part. Mij would put the ball on the high end and run to catch it as it slid to the lower end.

### Question: 2

**What are 'compulsive habits'? What does Maxwell say are the compulsive habits of**

- i. school children
- ii. Mij?

#### Answer:

Compulsive habits are usually strange act or behaviour which a person does without clear reason. For example a cricket player may put on his right shoes first as he believes it would bring him good luck or a kid jumping over a fence, instead of going through the passage way. Usually compulsive behaviour of children are full of childhood mischief and those of adults are of incorrigible type.

1. As per this story, children must place their feet squarely on the centre of each paving block; must touch every seventh upright of the iron railings, or pass to the outside of every second lamp post.
2. Mijbil while on its way to home would jump over the boundary wall railing and run at full speed throughout its length.

### Question: 3

**What group of animals do otters belong to?**

#### Answer:

Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called Mustellines. The other animals of this group are badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink and others.

### Question: 4

**What guesses did the Londoners make about what Mij was?**

#### Answer:

As otters are not found in England so Londoners made the wildest possible guesses about Mij. Their guesses ranged from a baby seal, a squirrel, a hippo to a brontosaurus.

### Thinking about the Text

#### Question: 1

**What things does Mij do which tell you that he is an intelligent, friendly and fun-loving animal who needs love?**

#### Answer:

Mij invented his own game out of ping-pong ball and a worn down suitcase. He loved water, and once he understood that on opening the tap water came out of it, he would get into the tub and played with water.

He had gradually formed a special attachment with Maxwell. It grew desperate when Maxwell left it in a box and wanted to come out as soon as possible.

#### Question: 2

**What are some of the things we come to know about otters from this text?**

#### Answer:

Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called Mustellines, shared by badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink and others. They are found in large numbers in marshes. Arabs keep them as pets and tame them. Otters love to spread water and splash in it. Maxwell's otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists *Lutrogale Perspicillata Maxwelli*.

#### Question: 3

**Why is Mij's species now known to the world as Maxwell's otter?**

#### Answer:

Maxwell's otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists *Lutrogale Perspicillata Maxwelli*, hence, it is known as Maxwell's otter in short.

#### Question: 4

Maxwell in the story speaks for the otter, Mij. He tells us what the otter feels and thinks on different occasions. Given below are some things the otter does. Complete the column on the right to say what Maxwell says about what Mij feels and thinks.

#### Answer:

What Mij Does	How Mij Feels or Thinks
Plunges, rolls in the water and makes the water splosh and splash	He thinks it is a hippo and is very happy.
Screws the tap in the wrong way	He chitters with irritation and disappointment.

What Mij Does	How Mij Feels or Thinks
Nuzzles Maxwell's face and neck in the aeroplane	He feels much comfort and content after its distressed chitter.

### Question: 5

Read the story and find the sentences where Maxwell describes his pet otter.

Then choose and arrange your sentences to illustrate those statements below that you think are true.

Maxwell's description

- i. makes Mij seem almost human, like a small boy.
- ii. shows that he is often irritated with what Mij does.
- iii. shows that he is often surprised by what Mij does.
- iv. of Mij's antics is comical.
- v. shows that he observes the antics of Mij very carefully.
- vi. shows that he thinks Mij is a very ordinary otter.
- vii. shows that he thinks the otter is very unusual.

### Answer:

- i. True
- ii. False
- iii. True
- iv. True
- v. True
- vi. False
- vii. True

## Thinking about the Language

### I. Describing a Repeated Action in the Past

From the table below, make as many correct sentences as you can using *would* and/or *used to*, as appropriate. (Hint: First decide whether the words in italics show an action, or a state or situation, in the past.) Then add two or three sentences of your own to it.

Emperor Akbar	<i>would</i>	<i>be fond of musical evenings.</i>
Every evening we		<i>take long walks on the beach.</i>
Fifty years ago, very few people	<i>used to</i>	<i>own cars.</i>
Till the 1980s, Shanghai		<i>have very dirty streets.</i>
My uncle		<i>spend his holidays by the sea.</i>

1. Emperor Akbar used to be fond of musical evenings.
2. Every evening we used to take long walks on the beach.
3. Fifty years ago, very few people used to own cars.
4. Till the 1980s, Shanghai used to have very dirty streets.
5. My uncle used to be fond of musical evenings.
6. My uncle used to take long walks on the beach.
7. My uncle would spend his holidays by the sea.

### II. Noun Modifiers

#### Question: 1

Look at these examples from the text, and say whether the modifiers (in italics) are nouns, proper nouns or adjective plus noun

- i. An offer fixation
- ii. The iron railings
- iii. The Tigris marshes
- iv. The London streets
- v. iSoft velvet fur

vi. A four- footed soccer player

**Answer:**

- i. Noun
- ii. Noun
- iii. Proper noun
- iv. Proper noun
- v. Adjective plus noun
- vi. Adjective plus noun

**Question: 2**

Given below are some nouns and a set of modifiers (in the box). Combine the nouns and modifiers to make as many appropriate phrases as you can. (Hint: The nouns and modifiers are all from the texts in the book.)

**Answer:**

1.	Temple	Stone temple
2.	Gifts	Ordinary gift, birthday gift.
3.	Time	First time, family time, college time
4.	Crossing	Railroad crossing
5.	Physique	Plump physique, ordinary physique
6.	Girls	Incorrigible girls, plump girls, college girls
7.	Thoughts	Uncomfortable thoughts, ridiculous thoughts, ordinary thoughts, good thoughts, invigorating thoughts
8.	Scream	Loud scream, heartbreaking scream
9.	Subject	Uncomfortable subject
10.	Flight-	First flight, ordinary flight, uncomfortable flight
11.	Coffee	Black coffee, ordinary coffee
12.	Farewell	Tremendous farewell, college farewell
13.	Landscape	Rough landscape,
14.	Chatterbox	Incorrigible chatterbox, ridiculous chatterbox
15.	View	Panoramic view, ordinary view
16.	Dresses	Ordinary dresses, birthday dresses, marriage dresses
17.	Handkerchief	White handkerchief, clean handkerchief
18.	Profession	Family profession
19.	Celebration	Birthday celebration, tremendous celebration
20.	Roar	Loud roar

**III. Read the sentence:**

**Question: 1** Match the words on the left with a word on the right. Some words on the left can go with more than one word on the right.

- i. A portion of — blood
- ii. A pool of — cotton
- iii. Flakes of — stones
- iv. A huge heap of — gold
- v. A gust of — fried fish
- vi. Little drops of — snow
- vii. A piece of — water
- viii. A pot of — wind

**Answer:**

- i. A portion of fried fish
- ii. A pool of water
- iii. Flakes of snow
- iv. A huge heap of stones,
- v. A gust of wind
- vi. Little drops of blood, Little drop of water
- vii. A piece of cotton, A piece of fried fish
- viii. A pot of gold

## Question: 2

Use a bit of/a piece of/a bunch of/a lump of/a cloud of with the italicised nouns in the following sentences. The first has been done for you as an example.

- i. My teacher gave me some advice.
- ii. Can you give me some clay please?
- iii. The information you gave was very useful.
- iv. Because of these factories, smoke hangs over the city.
- v. Two stones rubbed together can produce sparks of fire.
- vi. He gave me some flowers on my birthday.

## Answer:

- i. My teacher gave me a bit of advice.
- ii. Can you give me a lump of clay please?
- iii. The bit of information you gave was very useful.
- iv. Because of, these factories, a cloud of smoke hangs over the city.
- v. Two pieces of stone rubbed together can produce sparks of fire.
- vi. He gave me a bunch of flowers on my birthday.

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