

Chapter 5: Princess September

Comprehension Check

Page 38

Question 1: How many daughters did the royal couple have?

Answer: The royal couple had nine daughters.

Question 2: Why were they named after the months of the year?

Answer: The queen had expressed her inability to remember the names of her nine daughters. She thought that she would be confused to do so. That is why the king decided to name them after the months of the year starting from January. This way they could also judge as to who is the elder one and who is the younger one.

Question 3: The king had a peculiar habit. What was it? Why is it called peculiar?

Answer: The king had a strange habit of giving gifts to the people who would come to congratulate him on his birthday. This habit is called peculiar because usually people receive gifts on their birthdays instead of giving these.

Question 4:

(i) What was Princess September's reaction to the loss of her parrot?

(ii) What was her mother's reaction to it? (iii) What do the reactions indicate about the nature and temperament of each?

Answer: (i) Princess September was extremely shocked to find her parrot dead. She did not touch anything to eat. She went to bed without having supper.

(ii) The reaction of Princess September's mother was quite indifferent. She called Princess September's reaction as "stuff and nonsense." She said that the child might better go to bed without supper. Thus she was neither happy nor sad.

(iii) The reactions show that the Princess was a sensitive and kind-hearted child. She loved birds truly and intensely. She burst into tears to see her parrot lying dead. However, her mother's (or sisters') reaction was entirely different. It rather seemed to be indifferent as they did not care to be bothered about it. Her mother called it a nonsense to weep at a mere bird's death. She seemed to be insensitive to it.

Question 5: What pulled the Princess out of her gloom ?

Answer: The Princess September was greatly shocked at her parrot's death. She cried, wept and swooned. When she came to senses she found a little bird flying about in her room. The bird was singing beautifully. On hearing the song, her sadness disappeared. Thus it was the little singing bird that pulled her out of her gloom.

Question 6: How did the Maids of Honour come to know that the Princess and the bird had become intimate friends?

Answer: The Maids of Honour advised the Princess to get a new parrot and put it in a cage. But Princess September did not pay any heed to their advice. She liked the new bird, who sang sweet songs for her. She felt very sad when the little bird had gone out to his father-in-law's house. But she welcomed him when he came back. She even freed him from the cage as she loved him. This was enough for the Maids of Honour to know that the Princess and the bird had become intimate friends.

Question 7: The new bird was full of new songs but the old parrots always repeated themselves. What did they say?

Answer: The new bird sang different songs of the king's lake and goldfish etc. But the old parrots repeated the same song "God save the king" and "Pretty Polly again and again. However, the parrots could sing it in seven Asian languages.

Question 8: What is the King's opinion about his Councillors? Why did he form that opinion?

Answer: The King was fed up of hearing the same song "God save the king" because it reminded him "too much" of his Councillors. The parrots could sing this song in seven different Asian languages. The king thought that the Councillors say the same thing in seven different ways and it never means anything in any way they say it. Thus the king does not seem to have a very high opinion about his Councillors.

Question 9:

(i) The eight Princesses made an offer to Princess September. What was it?

(ii) Why, in your view, did they do it?

Answer: (i) The eight Princesses offered that they were ready to buy a red and yellow parrot with their own money collected among themselves. However, Princess September rejected their offer.

(ii) I think they did it out of jealousy for the little bird, who sang so beautifully. They did not want that she should have that bird because it was too good. Moreover, the king too have praised that bird highly.

Question 10: What did the sisters advise the Princess to do about her bird ?

Answer: The sisters wanted that Princess September should put her new bird in the cage and not let him fly with full freedom.

Page 43

Question 1: In the following sentence elaborate the parts given in bold. Under the circumstances it was a very unfortunate remark for the bird to make.

Answer: The little bird had gone to his father-in-law. In the meantime the Princess's eight sisters insisted her that the bird should be kept in the golden cage. When the bird came back he said that "I very nearly didn't come back tonight at all." So, under these remarks, the bird should not have made this remark. It made the Princess to think that she should no more take any risk. So, she confined the bird to the cage. This remark turned to be unfortunate for the little bird.

Question 2:

(i) What did Princess September do to ensure the safety of her pet ?

(ii) How did the bird react to it?

Answer:

(i) To ensure the safety of her pet little bird, Princess September put the bird in a golden cage. She told him that there was danger of cats to him at night.

(ii) The bird reacted to it very strongly. He did not want to be in cage at all. He wanted full freedom.

Question 3: Why did the bird refuse to be taken out in her cage ?

Answer: The bird refused to be taken out in the cage. He did not want to be a prisoner in the cage. He wanted full freedom. The bird felt that the rice-fields, the lake and the willow trees look quite different when you see them from the cage.

Question 4:

(i) What persuaded Princess September to give the bird its freedom again ?

(ii) How did the bird react to it ?

Answer:

(i) Princess September found the bird nearly dead in the next morning. While in cage, he had stopped taking anything. He had stopped singing at all. Compelled by the circumstances, she had to give the bird his freedom. That is why she let him go out of the cage.

(ii) The bird was overjoyed. He flew away to the far off lands promising that he would come back. He also assured her that he would sing for her whenever she wanted.

Question 5: Princess September kept her window open day and night.

(i) How did it help the bird ?

(ii) How did it help the Princess herself ?

Answer:

(i) It helped the bird because he could enter Princess September's room freely and go away as and when he wanted.

(ii) Keeping her window open day and night helped Princess September also. She grew beautiful because she could enjoy sunlight whenever she desired. So, she was married to the King of Cambodia in a royal manner.

Question 6: The eight sisters kept their windows shut. How did it affect them ?

Answer: The eight sisters kept their windows shut off. So, they did not get the required fresh air and grew extremely ugly as well as disagreeable. Consequently, they were married off to the King's Councillors in an ordinary manner.

Exercise

Discuss the following questions in small groups. Write their answers later.

Question 1: Are the sisters unkind and cruel ? Find evidence in the text to support your idea.

Answer: Of course, the sisters are unkind and cruel. They advised their sister, Princess September, to put the little bird in a cage. They also did so out of jealousy because the bird sang so well. The eight Princesses did not mind if the bird died in the cage.

Question 2: Which, to you, is the most important idea in this story, and why ?

(i) importance of music

(ii) value of freedom

(iii) beauty of nature

Answer: I think the most important idea in this story is the value of the freedom. The little bird could not even sing when he was put in a cage. Thus freedom is the fundamental need of all living creatures.