

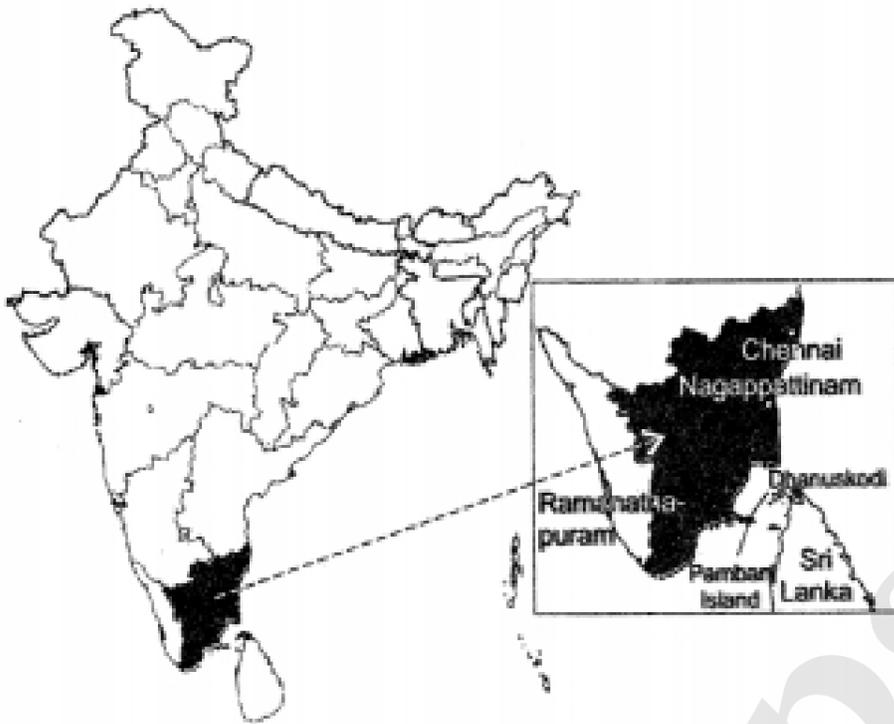
Chapter 6: My Childhood

Thinking about the Text

Activity:

Find Dhanuskodi and Rameswaram on the map. What language(s) do you think are spoken there? What languages do you think the author, his family, his friends and his teachers spoke with one another?

Answer:



For self-attempt.

(People speak Tamil here).

I. Answer these questions in one or two sentences each.

Question 1:

Where was Abdul Kalam's house?

Answer:

Abdul Kalam's house was on the Mosque Street in Rameswaram.

Question 2:

What do you think Dinamani is the name of? Give a reason for your answer.

Answer:

Dinamani is the name of a newspaper. Abdul Kalam attempts to trace the Second World War's news in the headlines of this newspaper.

Question 3:

Who were Abdul Kalam's school friends? What did they later become?

Answer:

Ramanadha Sastry, Aravindan and Sivaprakasan were his school friends. Ramanadha Sastry became a priest of the Rameswaram temple. Aravindan went into the business of arranging transport for visiting pilgrims. Sivaprakasan became a catering contractor for the Southern Railways.

Question 4:

How did Abdul Kalam earn his first wages?

Answer:

Abdul Kalam earned his first wages by distributing newspapers.

Question 5:

Had he earned any money before that? In what way?

Answer:

Yes, he earned money before also. He used to collect the tamarind seeds and sell them to a provision shop on the Mosque Street. A day's collection would fetch him the princely sum of one anna.

II. Answer each of these questions in a short paragraph (about 30 words).

Question 1:

How does the author describe:

1. his father
2. his mother
3. himself

Answer:

1. The author describes his father as a wise and generous person. He felt happy when he helped others. He did not have much formal education and riches. He was a man of confidence and great wisdom. He avoided inessential comforts and luxuries.
2. His mother was a noble and kind-hearted woman. She used to feed a large number of people. She had all the attributes of a typical Indian mother.
3. I was born into a middle-class Tamil family. I was a short boy with rather undistinguished looks, born to tall and handsome parents. I studied physics and aerospace engineering and became a scientist.

Question 2: What characteristics does he say he inherited from his parents?

Answer:

The author inherited humility and benevolence from his parents. He learnt lessons in honesty and integrity from his parents. He was self-disciplined because of his parents' exemplary life.

III. Discuss these questions in class with your teacher and then write down your answers in two or three paragraphs each.

Question 1:

"On the whole, the small society of Rameswaram was very rigid in terms of the segregation of different social groups," says the author.

1. Which social groups does he mention? Were these groups easily identifiable (for example, by the way they dressed)?
2. Were they aware only of their differences or did they also naturally share friendships and experiences? (Think of the bedtime stories in Kalam's house; of who his friends were; and of what used to take place in the pond near his house.)
3. The author speaks both of people who were very aware of the differences among them and those who tried to bridge these differences. Can you identify such people in the text?
4. Narrate two incidents that show how differences can be created, and also how they can be resolved. How can people change their attitudes?

Answer:

1. The author talks about the people who belong to various castes and follow various religious preachings. Yes, these groups were easily identifiable. Their dressing, traditions, culture and rituals were different.
2. They did share their personal experiences and friendships. Lakshmana Sastry summoned the teacher who separated the author and his friend in the class and told him that he should not spread the poison of social inequality and communal intolerance in the minds of innocent children.
3. The school teacher encouraged communal differences and Lakshmana Sastry and Sivasubramania Iyer discouraged this malpractice.
4. The influential people can do both the things. A teacher has the ability to bridge communal differences and can play with sentiments of the innocent and ignorant people. This is what the new teacher did. But the Science teacher Sivasubramania Iyer changed his wife's attitude and showed her the right path.

Question 2:

1. Why did Abdul Kalam want to leave Rameswaram?
2. What did his father say to this?
3. What do you think his words mean? Why do you think he spoke those words?

Answer:

1. Abdul Kalam wanted to leave Rameswaram to study at the district headquarters in Ramanathapuram.
2. His father said that he knew he had to go away to grow. He gave the example of a seagull and said that a seagull flies across the sun alone and without a nest.
3. He spoke these words because he intended to hone his skills. He knew the harsh reality of life that children may have to live far from their parents to make their career and earn their livelihood. So he showed his wisdom and intelligence in uttering these words.

Thinking about language

Question I:

Find the sentences in the text where these words occur:

erupt surge trace undistinguished casualty

Answer:

The sentences in the text where these words occur are the following:

1. . . . a sudden demand for tamarind seeds erupted in the market.
2. . . . I can still feel the surge of pride in earning my own money for the first time.
3. . . . I would later attempt to trace in the deadlines in Dinamani.
4. . . . a short boy with rather undistinguished looks, born to tall and handsome parents.
5. . . . The first casualty came in the form of the suspension of the train halt at Rameswaram Station.

Look these words up in a dictionary which gives examples of how they are used. Now answer the following questions.

1. What are the things that can erupt? Use examples to explain the various meanings of erupt. Now do the same for the word surge. What things can surge?

Answer:

An earthquake can erupt. Emotions can erupt. Anger can erupt.

Example: An earthquake erupted in Sicily last night.

Surge means a sudden powerful forward or upward movement. A wave surges. A crowd surges. A storm surges.

Example: Birds search for fish when waves surge towards the shore.

2. What are the meanings of the word trace and which of the meanings is closest to the word in the text?

Answer:

'Trace' means to find out, to copy, to draw an outline, etc. 'Finding out' is the closest meaning to 'trace' in the text.

3. Can you find the word undistinguished in your dictionary? (If not, look up the word distinguished and say what undistinguished must mean.)

Answer:

I can't find the word 'undistinguished' in my dictionary because it is not the root word. It is there under the word 'distinguished' because 'undistinguished' is opposite to 'distinguished'. It means: not specific, not prominent, not distinct, etc.

Question II:

1. Match the phrases in Column 'A' with their meanings in Column 'B'.

A	B
(i) broke out	(a) an attitude of kindness, a readiness to give freely
(ii) in accordance with	(b) was not able to tolerate
(iii) a helping hand	(c) began suddenly in a violent way
(iv) could not stomach	(d) assistance
(v) generosity of spirit	(e) persons with power to make decisions
(vi) figures of authority	(f) according to a particular rule, principle, or system

Answers:

- i. — (c)
- ii. — (f)
- iii. — (d)
- iv. — (b)
- v. — (a)
- vi. — (e).

2. Now form the opposites of the words below by prefixing un- or in-. The pre-fix in- can also have the forms il-, ir-, or im- (For example : illiterate—il + literate, impractical—im + practical, irrational—ir + rational). You may consult a dictionary if you wish.

___adequate	___acceptable	___regular	___tolerant
___demanding	___active	___true	___permanent
___patriotic	___disputed	___accessible	___coherent
___logical	___legal	___responsible	___possible

Answers:

- inadequate
- irregular
- undemanding
- untrue
- unpatriotic
- inaccessible
- illogical
- irresponsible

- unacceptable
- intolerant
- inactive
- impermanent
- undisputed
- incoherent
- illegal
- impossible

III. Passive voice

(See NCERT Textbook on pages 76 & 77.)

IV. Rewrite the sentences below, changing the verbs in brackets into the passive form.

Question 1:

In yesterday's competition the prizes (give away) by the Principal.

Answer:

In yesterday's competition the prizes were given away by the Principal.

Question 2:

In spite of financial difficulties, the labourers (pay) on time.

Answer:

In spite of financial difficulties, the labourers were paid on time.

Question 3:

On Republic Day, vehicles (not allow) beyond this point.

Answer:

On Republic Day, vehicles were not allowed beyond this point.

Question 4:

Second-hand books (buy and sell) on the pavement every Saturday.

Answer:

Second-hand books are bought and sold on the pavement every Saturday.

Question 5:

Elections to the Lok Sabha (hold) every five years.

Answer:

Elections to the Lok Sabha are held every five years.

Question 6:

Our National Anthem (compose) Rabindranath Tagore.

Answer:

Our National Anthem has been composed by Rabindranath Tagore.

V. Rewrite the paragraphs below, using the correct form of the verb given in brackets.

Question 1:

How Helmets Came To Be Used in Cricket

Nari Contractor was the Captain and an opening batsman for India in the 1960s. The Indian cricket team went on a tour to the West Indies in 1962. In a match against Barbados in Bridgetown, Nari Contractor (seriously injure and collapse). In those days helmets (not wear). Contractor (hit) on the head by a bouncer from Charlie Griffith. Contractor's skull (fracture). The entire team (deeply concern). The West Indies players (worry). Contractor (rush) to hospital. He (accompany) by Frank Worrell, the Captain of the West Indies Team. Blood (donate) by the West Indies players. Thanks to the timely help, Contractor (save). Nowadays helmets (routinely use) against fast bowlers.

Answer:

How Helmets Came To Be Used in Cricket

Nari Contractor was the Captain and an opening batsman for India in the 1960s. The Indian cricket team went on a tour to the West Indies in 1962. In a match against Barbados in Bridgetown Nari Contractor was seriously injured and collapsed. In those days helmets were not worn. Contractor was hit on the head by a bouncer from Charlie Griffith. Contractor's skull was fractured. The entire team was deeply concerned. The West Indies players were worried. Contractor was rushed to hospital. He was accompanied by Frank Worrell, the Captain of the West Indies Team. Blood was donated by the West Indies players. Thanks to the timely help, Contractor was saved. Nowadays helmets are routinely used against fast bowlers.

Question 2:

Oil From Seeds

Vegetable oils (make) from seeds and fruits of many plants growing all over the world, from tiny sesame seeds to big, juicy coconuts. Oil (produce) from cotton seeds, groundnuts, soya beans and sunflower seeds. Olive oil (use) for cooking, salad dressing, etc. Olives (shake) from file trees and (gather) up, usually by hand. The olives (ground) to a thick paste which is spread onto special mats. Then the mats (layer) up on the pressing machine which will gently squeeze them to produce olive oil.

Answer:

Oil From Seeds

Vegetable oils are made from seeds and fruits of many plants growing all over the world from tiny sesame seeds to big, juicy coconuts. Oil is produced from cotton seeds, groundnuts, soya beans and sunflower seeds. Olive oil is used for cooking, salad dressing, etc. Olives are shaken from the trees and gathered up, usually by hand. The olives are grounded to a thick paste which is spread onto special mats. Then the mats are layered up on the pressing machine which will gently squeeze them to produce olive oil.

Dictation

Let the class divide itself into three groups. Let each group take down one passage that the teacher dictates. Then put the passages together in the right order.

To Sir, with Love

Answer:

For attempt at class level. Paragraphs are put together as given below:

To Sir, With Love

From Rameswaram to the Rashtrapati Bhavan, it's been a long journey. Talking to Nona Walia on the eve of Teacher's Day, President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam talks about life's toughest lessons learnt, and his mission—being a teacher to the Indian Youth. “A proper education would help nurture a sense of dignity and self-respect among our youth”, says President Kalam. There's still a child in him though, he's still curious about learning new things. Life's a mission for President Kalam.

Nonetheless, he remembers his first lesson in life and how it changed his destiny. “I was studying in standard V, and must have been all of 10. My teacher, Sri Sivasubramania Iyer was telling us how birds fly. He drew a diagram of a bird on the blackboard, depicting the wings, tail and the body with the head and then explained how birds soar to the sky. At the end of the class, I said I did not understand. Then he asked the other students if they had understood, but nobody had understood how birds fly”, he recalls. “That evening, the entire class was taken to Rameswaram shore”, the President continues. “My teacher showed us sea birds. We saw marvellous formations of them flying and how their wings flapped. Then my teacher asked us, “Where is the bird's engine and how is it powered?” I knew then those birds are powered by their own life and motivation. I understood all about birds' dynamics. This was real teaching—a theoretical lesson coupled with a live practical example. Sri Sivasubramania Iyer was a great teacher. That day, my future was decided. My destiny was changed. I knew my future had to be about flight and flight systems.

Speaking

Here is a topic for you to

1. think about;
2. give your opinion on.

Find out what other people think about it. Ask your friends/seniors/parents to give you, their opinion.

‘Career Building Is the Only Goal of Education.’

Or

‘Getting a Good Job Is More Important than Being a Good Human Being.’

Career Building is the Only Goal of Education

The eminent educationists aver that education does not make a child a bookworm. It sharpens the pupils' intellect and inspires them to build their career by getting themselves enrolled in professional courses. In my opinion, the fundamental goal of education is to help a learner in opting for a perfect stream and assist him in earning his livelihood.

Answer:

Class Activity.

Writing

Think and write a short account of what life in Rameswaram in the 1940s must have been like. (Were people rich or poor? Hard working or lazy? Hopeful of change, or resistant to it?).

Answer:

The people of Rameswaram in 1940s were orthodox and tolerant. It is mentioned in the story that every child is bom into a specific socio-economic and emotional environment and trained in certain ways by figures of authority. The people of Rameswaram were not ready to allow anybody to instigate their children on the basis of communal intolerance. They were all religious people and did not like to enjoy the luxuries of life. They had pucca houses made of limestone and brick. They used to avoid all inessential comforts and were emotionally attached to the members of their family.