

## TEXTBOOK EXERCISES

### Read & Reflect

- ◆ **Why was the narrator's attention drawn to the English girl?**

The narrator's attention was drawn to the English girl because he noticed that the girl had been watching him with interested surprise.

- ◆ **What is your impression of the girl?**

The girl was a teenager, may be thirteen or fourteen years old. She was poorly dressed. Her large eyes had a sad expression.

- ◆ **How do you know that the girl was interested in knowing the identity of the narrator?**

As the girl was paying her bill, she asked the cashier in a low voice whether the narrator was an Indian and wanted to know if he had been a regular customer of that hotel. This proves that the girl was interested in knowing the identity of the narrator.

- ◆ **What do you understand about the probable financial condition of the girl?**

The girl was a financially challenged person. She used to visit the hotel only on Saturdays, for Saturday is the payday in England. On the other days, she could not afford to have sumptuous meals. This proved that she did not earn much.

- ◆ **Why was the narrator curious about the girl? What did he do to meet her?**

The narrator was curious to know more about the girl. He was interested to know why she had inquired about him, whether there was any mystery that made her take interest in him.

In order to meet the girl, the narrator set out to look for her after his breakfast on the following Monday morning. He looked into the shops on the streets near St. Martin's Lane, and especially, the shops on the Strand, but he found no trace of the girl.

- ◆ **Why did the narrator go to the restaurant again?**

Since the narrator was eager to meet the girl again, he visited the restaurant again on the following Saturday.

- ◆ **What impression did the girl have about India?**

The girl believed that most Indians are vegetarians. She had also heard that India is full of tigers and snakes and fevers.

- ◆ **Was Maggie satisfied with her job? If not, why?**

Maggie worked as a typist, but she was not satisfied with her job, because it was very mechanical. She wanted a work that would

make her use her head, like the work of a secretary.

◆ **What do you understand by 'brain work'?**

By 'brain work', it is meant that the worker has to use his head or brain to do his task. For example, the work of a secretary requires 'brain work'.

◆ **Why did Maggie ask the narrator whether he was a vegetarian?**

Maggie had heard that the 'yogis' of India possessed occult powers, and the yogis did not eat meat. Maggie asked the narrator about his food habits in order to verify whether he was a yogi.

◆ **Why did Mr Gupta go to Maggie's house?**

Mr. Gupta went to Maggie's house as her mother had wanted to speak to an Indian. He also took it as an opportunity to visit an impoverished English home. He wished to see how the poor lived in England and to know what they thought.

◆ **What do you understand about the living conditions of Maggie and her mother?**

Maggie and her mother lived in the poor quarters of the city. The mother used to make cakes personally and sell them on the streets in the evenings. She struggled a lot to make their living.

◆ **Why is Saturday special to Maggie and her mother?**

Saturday night is a time of festivity in their neighbourhood. The streets are more crowded than on any other day. On Saturdays, workers receive their weekly wages, and they are in a position to spend a little. For this reason, Saturday is special to Maggie and her mother as they would be able to sell cakes in large numbers.

◆ **How did Mr Gupta describe India to Mrs Clifford?** (Board Exam 2015)

Mr Gupta described India as a beautiful country, despite its hot climate. He pacified Mrs Clifford's fear about India being a land of snakes and tigers by saying that such creatures keep to the jungles, and that they would get killed if they were to come near the human habitats. Similarly, he quietened her fears about India being a land of fevers. He assured her that fevers occurred only in

certain areas and not round the year.

- ◆ **Who is Francis? What do you know about him?**

Francis was the son of Mrs Clifford. His pet name was Frank. He was serving as a soldier in the Punjab. He seemed to be very fond of his family. He had sent them pictures of India and a magic ring given to him by a yogi.

- ◆ **What is your opinion about superstitions? Do you believe in any?**

Superstitions are false beliefs entertained by many people. They influence their lives a lot. Although there is no logic in such beliefs, some of them appear to be true. In my opinion, it is better to be free from such false beliefs. You would enjoy peace of mind if you are free from such superstitions. I, personally, don't believe in any superstition.

- ◆ **Describe the incident which touched the narrator deeply.**

When the narrator heard from Mrs Clifford that Maggie could play violin quite well, he persuaded her to play the music for the song 'The Blue Bells of Scotland'. When the song was over, he praised her lavishly. Then Mrs Clifford remarked that Maggie had never had the opportunity to study music. She had learned what she knew all by herself. If their circumstances ever improved, then she would arrange for her to have music lessons. This was the incident which touched the narrator deeply.

- ◆ **Why was Maggie unable to go to work?**

Mrs Clifford was very ill. As Maggie had to look after her, she was unable to go to work for a week.

- ◆ **Why did Mr Gupta take some money with him when he went to see Mrs Clifford?**

When Mr Gupta spoke to his hostess about the letter written by Maggie, the hostess suggested that he should carry some money with him when he went to meet her. The girl had not been able to go to work for a week and that she might be hard up for money. This was the reason why he carried some money with him while going to visit Mrs Clifford.

◆ **Why did Mr Gupta and Maggie tiptoe into the sitting room?**

They tiptoed into the sitting room because they did not wish to disturb the sick woman with the sound of their footsteps.

◆ **What request did Maggie make to Mr Gupta?**

Maggie requested Mr Gupta to gaze into the crystal on the ring and tell her mother that her son Frank was alive and all right. Mrs Clifford believed that Mr Gupta, being a Hindu, could do that task.

◆ **Why was the crystal ring so special to Mrs Clifford?**

The crystal ring was sent to Mrs Clifford by her son Frank from India. A yogi had assured him that if a person were to concentrate on a distant person while gazing on the ring, he would be able to see the latter and know what he was doing. Mrs Clifford was too much worried about her son Frank and became very ill. She believed that a Hindu would be able to gaze at the crystal and give her some information regarding her son.

◆ **What made Mrs Clifford recover?**

When Mrs Clifford heard from Mr Gupta that he had looked at the crystal and had come to know that her son was alive and keeping fine, she was overwhelmed with joy. Soon, she recovered from her illness.

◆ **Why was Mr Gupta ashamed to face Mrs Clifford?**

Mr Gupta came to know from a letter sent by Maggie that Frank died while fighting on the Frontier. Calculating from the date of her letter, Mr Gupta discovered that Frank had been dead some days when he told Mrs Clifford that her son was alive and well. For this reason, he felt ashamed to face Mrs Clifford once again.

◆ **What was the promise given to Maggie?**

Mr Gupta promised to visit the grave of

Frank at Fort Monroe near Dera-Ghazi-Khan and write to her about his visit.

◆ **Why did Maggie give a shilling to Mr Gupta?**

Maggie gave a shilling to Mr Gupta requesting him to buy flowers and place them over her brother's grave for her.

◆ **Explain the reason why Mr Gupta accepted the shilling.**

Maggie had earned the shilling with much toil. Mr Gupta did not wish to deprive her of the joy of sacrificing that hard-earned money for placing flowers on her brother's grave. By doing so, the grief in her heart would be eased a little. For this reason, Mr Gupta accepted the shilling offered by Maggie.

## ■ Activity I (Read and Respond)

1. **'It is neither the same everywhere nor the same all the year round in India.' Why?**

When Mrs Clifford wanted to know whether India was a land of fevers, Mr Gupta explained that different types of fevers occurred at different places, and that the fevers didn't last round the year.

2. **Why did the narrator decide to take the shilling given by Maggie?**

When Maggie offered a shilling to Mr Gupta for buying flowers to be laid on the grave of her brother, he was tempted to return it saying that flowers were available in India free of cost. But then, he considered the joy she would be experiencing by sacrificing her hard-earned money for buying flowers. That sacrifice would ease her grief at the loss of her brother. Hence, the narrator decided to take the shilling given by Maggie.

3. **What is the role of faith in the story?**

Mrs Clifford and her daughter blindly believed the words of the yogi who had given the crystal ring to Frank. The yogi claimed that if you concentrated on a distant person as you gaze into the ring, you would be able to see him and know what he was doing. When the mother was sick, Mr Gupta connived with Maggie and told the mother that he had gazed at the crystal and come to know that Frank was alive and well. Due to her faith in the crystal, the mother recovered soon.