

Oral Comprehension Check

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

Answer

Maxwell thought that he would keep an otter instead of a dog. Camusfearna, ringed by water a very short distance from its door, would be an eminently suitable spot for the experiment.

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

Answer

He went to Basra, to the Consultate-General, to collect and answer his mail from Europe. He had had to wait there for five days. To start with his mail didn't reach on time. Then he tried to make a telephone call. This incident is of those days when one had to book an international call 24 hrs in advance. The telephone line was not working properly on the first day. Next day it was some public holiday so it was not working. Finally after a tortuous wait of five days his mail arrived.

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

Answer

When he received his mail, he carried it to his bedroom to read. There, he saw two Arabs and beside them was a sack that twisted from time to time. They handed him a note from his friend saying that he had sent him an otter.

Yes, he liked it. We know this because he uses the term 'otter fixation' to refer to his feeling towards the otter. He felt that this otter fixation or this strong attachment towards otters was something that was shared by most other people who had ever owned one.

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

Answer

The otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli* or Maxwell's otter.

5. Tick the right answer. In the beginning, the otter was
aloof and indifferent

friendly

hostile

Answer

In the beginning, the otter was aloof and indifferent.

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

Answer

When Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom, it went wild with joy in the water for half an hour. It was plunging and rolling in it, shooting up and down the length of the bathtub underwater, and making enough slosh and splash for a hippo.

Two days after that, it escaped from his bedroom to the bathroom. By the time he got there, Mijbil was up on the end of the bathtub and fumbling at the chromium taps with its

paws. In less than a minute, it had turned the tap far enough to produce some water and after a moment, achieved the full flow.

Oral Comprehension Check

1. How was Mij to be transported to England?

Answer

Maxwell booked a flight to Paris and from there he would go on to London. The airline insisted that Mij should be packed in a box (not more than eighteen inches square) that was to be placed on the floor, near his feet.

2. What did Mij do to the box?

Answer

The box was lined with metal sheet. Mij didn't find it comfortable to be there so tried to escape. In its attempt to escape Mij tore into the metal lining of the box. As a result it hurt itself and started bleeding.

Oral Comprehension Check

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 so the author had put it back into the box. He must have felt pity on the way the otter had hurt itself. Moreover, he must be worried as well.

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

Answer

Maxwell said that the airhostess was "the very queen of her kind" because she was extremely friendly and helpful. He took her into his confidence about the incident with the box. She suggested that he might prefer to have his pet on his knee. Hearing this, he developed a profound admiration for her, for she understood the pain of both the otter and its owner.

5. What happened when the box was opened?

Answer

When the box was opened, Mij went out of the box. He disappeared at a high speed down the aircraft. There were cries all around. A woman stood up on her seat screaming that there was a rat. He saw Mij's tail disappearing beneath the legs of an Indian passenger. He dived for it, but missed. The airhostess suggested him to be seated and that she would find the otter. After a while, Mij had returned to him. It climbed on his knee and began to rub its nose on his face and neck.

Oral Comprehension Check

1. What game had Mij invented?

Answer

Mij had invented a game with ping-pong ball. He would put the ball at one end of a sloping lid and then grab it as it ran to the other end.

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.

On their way to and from school, children make it a habit to place their feet exactly on the centre of each paving block. Similarly, Mij had made it a habit to jump on to the school wall and go galloping all along its length of thirty yards.

3. What group of animals do otters belong to?

Answer

Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called Mustellines, shared by the badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink and others.

4. What guesses did the Londoners make about what Mij was?

Answer

According to Maxwell, the average Londoner does not recognize an otter. The Londoners who saw Mij made different guesses about who Mij was. They guessed, among other things, that it was a baby seal, a squirrel, a walrus, a hippo, a beaver, a bear cub, a leopard and a brontosaurus.

Thinking about the Text

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

Answer

Mij was an intelligent animal. It invented its own game out of the ping-pong balls. It screwed the tap till water began to flow and then it would play and splash in the water. Though it was aloof and indifferent in the beginning, it soon became very friendly. It formed a special attachment with Maxwell. It responded when Maxwell called out his name. It grew desperate when Maxwell left it in a box and it got hurt while trying to come out of it. After Maxwell took it out, it clung to his feet. It was a fun-loving animal. It enjoyed playing all kinds of games. It would play with a selection of toys, ping-pong balls, marbles, rubber fruit, and a terrapin shell. It required love and affection from Maxwell and it got that readily.

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 the badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink and others. Maxwell's otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli* or Maxwell's otter. They are found in large numbers in marshes. They are often tamed by the Arabs. It is characteristic of otters that every drop of water must be extended and spread about the place; a bowl must at once be overturned, or, if it would not be overturned, be sat in and splashed in until it overflowed. For them, water must be kept on the move. Otters love playing various games, especially with a ball.

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* or Maxwell's otter.

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.

What Mij does	How Mij feels or thinks
Plunges, rolls in the water and makes the water splosh and splash	–
Screws the tap in the wrong way	–
Nuzzles Maxwell's face and neck in the aeroplane	–

Answer

What Mij does	How Mij feels or thinks
Plunges, rolls in the water and makes the water splosh and splash	went wild with joy
Screws the tap in the wrong way	irritated and disappointed
Nuzzles Maxwell's face and neck in the aeroplane	distressed chitter of recognition and welcome

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) He spent most of his time in play.

(iii) I watched, amazed; in less than a minute he had turned the tap far enough to produce a trickle of water, and after a moment or two achieved the full flow.

(v) A suitcase that I had taken to Iraq had become damaged on the journey home, so that the lid, when closed, remained at a slope from one end to the other. Mij discovered that if he placed the ball on the high end it would run down the length of the suitcase. He would dash around to the other end to ambush its arrival, hide from it, crouching, to spring up and take it by surprise, grab it and trot off with it to the high end once more.

(vii) It is not, I suppose, in any way strange that the average Londoner should not recognize an otter, but the variety of guesses as to what kind of animal this might be came as a surprise to me. Mij was anything but an otter.

Thinking about the Language

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

Answer

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 would spend his holidays by the sea.
6. My uncle used to take long walks on the beach.
7. My uncle used to be fond of musical evenings.

II. Noun Modifiers

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 <i>otter</i> fixation	(iv)	The <i>London</i> streets
(ii)	The <i>iron</i> railings	(v)	<i>soft velvet</i> fur
(iii)	The <i>Tigris</i> marshes	(vi)	A <i>four-footed</i> soccer player

Answer

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

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 this book.)

temple	three girls	triangle	dresses
person	thoughts	boys	roar
gifts	scream	farewell	expression
time	subject	landscape	handkerchief
crossing	flight	chatterbox	profession
physique	coffee	view	celebration

college	rough	hundred	stone	ordinary
love	uncomfortable	white	slang	slack
bare	railroad	tremendous	family	marriage
plump	invigorating	panoramic	heartbreaking	birthday
incorrigible	ridiculous	loud	first	

Answer

Temple – white temple, stone temple, first temple

Person – incorrigible person, ridiculous person

Gifts – hundred gifts, ordinary gifts, birthday gifts

Time – college time, rough time, first time

Crossing – railroad crossing, first crossing

Physique – plump physique, ordinary physique

Three girls – first three girls, incorrigible three girls

Thoughts – incorrigible thoughts, uncomfortable thoughts, ridiculous thoughts, heartbreaking thoughts, first thoughts, ordinary thoughts

Scream – tremendous scream, loud scream

Subject – college subject, ordinary subject

Flight – rough flight, first flight

Coffee – invigorating coffee, ordinary coffee

Triangle – love triangle

Boys – college boys, incorrigible boys, rough boys, hundred boys

Farewell – college farewell, heartbreaking farewell

Landscape – bare landscape, rough landscape, white landscape

Chatterbox – incorrigible chatterbox

View – tremendous view, panoramic view, ordinary view

Dresses – hundred dresses, ordinary dresses, birthday dresses, marriage dresses

Roar – tremendous roar, loud roar

Expression – bare expression, slang expression, slack expression

Handkerchief – white handkerchief, ordinary handkerchief

Profession – family profession, first profession, ordinary profession

Celebration – tremendous celebration, family celebration, birthday celebration

III.

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	–	blood
(iii)	flakes of	–	snow
(iv)	a huge heap of	–	stones
(v)	a gust of	–	wind
(vi)	little drops of	–	water
(vii)	a piece of	–	cotton
(viii)	a pot of	–	gold

2. Use a bit of/a piece of/a bunch of/a cloud of/a lump 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*. **My teacher gave me a bit of 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 some *advice*.** **My teacher gave me a bit of advice.**

(ii) Can you give me some *clay*, please. Can you give me a lump of clay, please.

(iii) The *information* you gave was very useful. The piece of information you gave was very useful.

(iv) Because of these factories, *smoke* hangs over the city. Because of these factories, a cloud of smoke hangs over the city.

(v) Two *stones* rubbed together can produce sparks of fire. Two pieces of stones rubbed together can produce sparks of fire.

(vi) He gave me some *flowers* on my birthday. He gave me a bunch of flowers on my birthday.