

9. The Bishop's Candlesticks

WORKSHEET

1

COMPREHENSION

Read the following passage and answer the questions below:

My uncle was heavily addicted to letter writing. He was the role model in our extended family. He lived in a village and often judged people on the basis of how quickly his letters were replied to. Having retired from service, he posed a challenge to all relatives who knew the consequences of delayed replies. He became a treasure of family news in the process.

Every morning he used to spend an hour in writing detailed letters. He took the window sill and used it as a desk, sitting cross-legged on a long wooden bench. He would be greeted loudly by his friends who walked past the gate to the bus stop. He kept a small aluminium box next to him. It contained the postal stationery, pens and an old paling dog-eared address book. This book had numerous arrows and crosses to show changes in addresses.

While my uncle wrote letters, Aunt would be sitting on the straw mat with knives, vegetables and some old newspapers, preparing for the next meal. After writing the main news, he would read it aloud to Aunt and relied on her remarkable memory to add important details like birth stars, offerings at the local temple or marriage proposals for someone in the family. He was adept at using the card and the inland letter to their fullest potential. After writing the main story which covered news from all family nooks, he would add information of lesser significance in very small characters and utilise every millimetre of available space. In fact, the letter had to be turned in different directions for all the news to be read.

After the day's quota of letter writing was over, Uncle would walk down to the post office to post the letters. The postmaster knew my uncle very well. He would fold his hands and rise from his chair and gently extend both hands in Uncle's direction for the letters, treating them like a gift of a sacred text. Letter writing was a very important duty in those days and it was one of the traits all responsible men possessed and were regularly called upon to demonstrate.

Gone are those days! After my uncle's death his sons who live in Mumbai could not maintain his routine. 'Who writes letter nowadays?' was the defence proffered by my jet-setting cousins to my father when he complained of not getting any news about their family. In the last two years, my father's twenty-odd letters have been answered by three letters and four STD calls. There were six sentences in each of the letters and the STD calls lasted couple of minutes at the most.

Two of my cousins are business executives. They come home to sleep in the wee hours of the morning leaving little scope for headline news, leave alone details. The third cousin is a software professional. He writes only short e-mails once a month, something that starts like, 'Hi, how're u? I'm OK,' and ends there!

Modified and adapted from: No News is Good News – K. S. Raman

A Tick the right option below each question:

1. Who was addicted to letter writing?
(a) The narrator (b) the narrator's uncle (c) the narrator's aunt
2. A small aluminium box was used as a
(a) first-aid box (b) cash box (c) postal stationery box
3. The letter had to be turned in different directions to read because
(a) a word-puzzle was given on it
(b) every millimetre of space was used
(c) direction was given to turn the letter
4. 'Gone are those days!' referred to the days
(a) when the uncle of the narrator lived
(b) of letter writing
(c) of uncle's retirement

B Answer the following questions:

1. Describe the scene of Uncle writing a letter.

2. Why don't people write letters nowadays?

GRAMMAR

A Fill in the blanks with appropriate auxiliaries:

1. I _____ join the office next week.
2. Ashish _____ working in a multinational company.
3. He _____ visit Jaipur next week.
4. He was not writing a letter, _____ he?
5. I _____ given my book to Garima.

B Fill in the blanks with suitable modals:

1. _____ you please come up to receive the award?
2. It's late so I'm afraid I _____ go now.
3. You _____ speak politely to your parents.
4. We _____ hurry if we are not to miss the flight.
5. If you are feeling ill, you _____ see a doctor.
6. She _____ come with us when we go to Mumbai.
7. How soon _____ you repair the watch?
8. If we had a telescope, we _____ see the stars better.

VOCABULARY AND WRITING

A Use the dictionary to find the meanings of the following words:

1. extremely: _____
2. fascinated: _____
3. impressed: _____
4. persistent: _____
5. coveted: _____
6. frustration: _____

B Select a word from the brackets to complete the sentences below:

1. Teacher gave me some good _____. [advice/advise]
2. The police was looking for _____ of his travel. [prove/proof]
3. _____ in and out slowly. [breath/breathe]
4. We must be careful of _____ diseases. [waterborne/waterborn]
5. Do you _____ what I am saying? [believe/belief]
6. There was a _____ in the factory. [strike/stroke]
7. He rented a _____ for his office at the hotel. [suite/suit]
8. Which dress would you _____? [choose/choice]

C Edit the following sentences, correcting punctuation, capital letters, grammar, etc.

1. i asked don't you know the way home
2. the man at new delhi railway station was reading a book
3. he said wow that was a terrific shot
4. this house was built by john last October
5. he wrote i am unable to come as i am ill i hope you will understand