



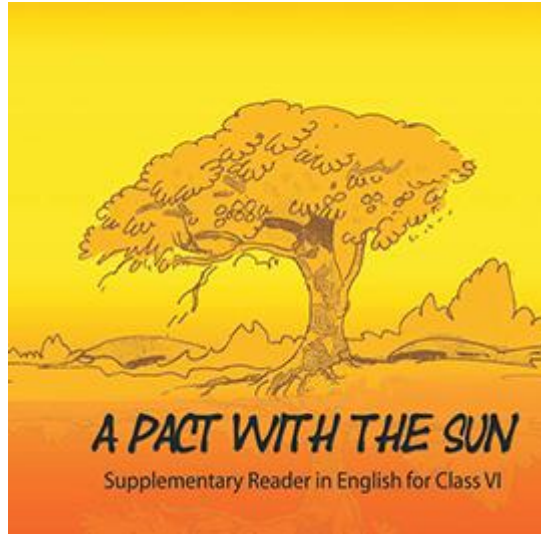
Learn English Through Stories

A1 Stories

Elementary Level

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A PACT WITH THE SUN

Supplementary Reader in English for Class VI

1. The Shepherd's Treasure



IN a village in Iran there once lived a shepherd. He was very poor. He did not have even a small cottage of his own. He had never been to school or learnt to read and write, for there were very few schools in those days.

Though poor and uneducated, this shepherd was very wise. He understood people's sorrows and troubles, and helped them face their problems with courage and common sense. Many people came to him for advice. Soon he became famous for his wisdom and friendly nature. The king of that country heard about him, and thought of meeting him.

Disguised as a shepherd and riding on a mule, one day the king came to the cave where the wise shepherd lived. As soon as the shepherd saw the traveller coming towards the cave, he rose to welcome him. He took the tired traveller inside the cave, gave him water to drink and a share of his own meagre meal. The king rested for the night in the cave and was greatly impressed by the shepherd's hospitality and wise conversation.

Though still tired, the king decided to depart the next morning. He said, "Many thanks for your kindness to a poor traveller. I have a long way to go. Permit me to leave."

Looking straight into the eyes of his guest, the shepherd replied, "Thank you, Your Majesty, for paying me the compliment of a visit."

The king was astonished as well as pleased. 'He is indeed very wise,' he thought to himself. 'I need people like him to work for me.' And the king appointed this humble shepherd the governor of a small district.

Although he rose to power and dignity, the shepherd remained as humble as ever. People loved and honoured him for his wisdom, sympathy and goodness. He was kind and just to one and all. His fame as a fair and wise governor soon spread throughout the country. Now the governors of other provinces grew terribly jealous of him and began to talk to the king against him. They said, "He is very dishonest, and keeps for himself part of the money that he collects as

tax from the people.” Why did he always carry with him, they added, an iron chest? Perhaps he carried in it the treasure that he had secretly collected. After all, they said mockingly, he was an ordinary shepherd and could behave no better.

At first the king did not pay attention to these reports, but how long could he ignore these governors and their endless stories about the shepherd? One thing was certain, the king discovered. The new governor did carry an iron chest with him all the time.

So, one day, the new governor was summoned to the palace. He came riding on his camel, and to everyone’s delight, the famous iron chest was there fastened securely behind him on the camel’s back.

Now the king was angry. He thundered, “Why do you always carry that iron chest with you? What does it contain?”



The governor smiled. He asked his servant to bring in the chest. How eagerly the people standing around waited for the shepherd to be found out! But how great was their astonishment, and even of the king himself, when the chest was opened! No gold or silver or jewels but an old blanket was all that came out. Holding it up proudly, the shepherd said, “This, my dear master, is my only treasure. I always carry it with me.”

“But why do you carry such an ordinary blanket with you? Surely, you are the governor of a district?” the king asked. To which the shepherd replied with quiet dignity, “This blanket is my oldest friend. It will still protect me if, at any time, Your Majesty should wish to take away my new cloaks.”

How pleased the king was, and how embarrassed the jealous governors became to hear the wise man’s reply! Now they knew that the shepherd was indeed the humblest and the wisest man in the land. The king made him the governor of a much bigger district that very day.

Questions and Answers

1. The shepherd hadn't been to school because:

(i) He was very poor.

(ii) There were very few schools in those days.

(iii) He wasn't interested in studies.

Choose the right answer.

Answer: The shepherd did not go to school because there were very few schools in those days.

2. Who visited the shepherd one day, and why?

Answer: The king disguised as a shepherd and riding on a mule visited the shepherd one day. Although poor and uneducated the shepherd was very wise and understood people's sorrows and troubles and helped them face them with courage and common sense. The king heard about him and therefore wanted to meet the shepherd who had become so famous for his wisdom and friendly nature among the common people.

3. Why did the other governors grow jealous of the shepherd?

Answer: The other governors grew jealous of the shepherd because although he rose to power and dignity, he remained as humble as ever. People loved and honoured him for his wisdom, sympathy and goodness and his fame as a fair and wise governor soon spread throughout the country.

4. Why was the new governor called to the palace?

Answer: The other jealous governors told the king that the new governor was very dishonest and kept for himself a part of the money that he collected as tax from the people. He stored it in an iron chest which he carried with him all the time. When the king grew tired of their stories and could not ignore them any longer and also noticed that the governor did carry with him the iron chest at all times he summoned him to the palace to find out if what they said was true.

5. Why was everyone delighted to see the iron chest on the camel's back?

Answer: Everyone was delighted to see the iron chest fastened securely behind him on the camel's back because the councillors had warned the king that he was dishonest and stored all the treasures that he collected in the iron chest. They were convinced that now that he had brought the iron chest with him it would be opened and his dishonesty would be revealed to the king.

6. (i) What did the iron chest contain?

(ii) Why did the shepherd always carry it?

(iii) Is it an example of the shepherd's humility or wisdom or both?

Answer:

(i) The iron chest did not contain gold, silver or jewels but an old blanket.

(ii) The shepherd carried the blanket with him always because it was his oldest friend and would protect him if at any time his Majesty decided to take away his new clothes.

(iii) It is an example of the shepherd's humility and wisdom as even after he was appointed as the governor, he still remained a humble and a wise man.

7. How did the king reward the new governor?

Answer: The king made him the governor of a much bigger district that very day.

2. THE OLD-CLOCK SHOP

CHRISTMAS Eve had arrived. As last-minute shoppers were going home, a thick, white sheet of snow lay over Salt Lake City, USA. Yet the lights were still burning in the old-clock shop, as Ray, its old, deaf owner, worked on a clock he had sold that day.

Having finished his work, Ray stood up and was on his way to the back room when a cold rush of air from the front door hit the back of his neck.

He turned to meet a last-minute shopper, but his old, wise eyes told him that this was not a shopper. He saw two men, one in his twenties, the other closer to fifty. The younger man remained at the door. The older man approached the counter with no sign of friendliness in his eyes. Ray was able to hide his growing fear as he slowly pushed a notepad and a pencil across the counter.

He smiled at the unfriendly face, then pointed to his ears and shook his head from side to side. A quick look of surprise changed the man's face as he studied the notepad, then turned and said something to his friend.

Ray used the chance to look closely at the man, paying attention to the shape of a gun and a restless hand in the man's right coat-pocket. Anger boiled within him, but it was kept down by an inner voice that said, "Be still." He wrote on the notepad, "May I help you?" For the first time the older man looked directly at Ray and smiled. A cruel, mocking smile. They both understood why he was there, why his friend remained at the door. They looked like men who were down on their luck, and were now ready to try something they would later be sorry about.

The clocks ticked on. Ray calmly wrote another message. "Have you come to pick up a clock or watch?" Then he pointed to the 'loan' board filled with hanging clocks and pocket watches. He was not a pawnbroker, but at the same time couldn't say 'No' to the needy people who placed their old watches or clocks before him for anything they could get. He loaned more than he should. They would be there when the owners wanted them back ... at the same price he had paid, with no interest.

Then the older man seemed to feel a little easier, took out his hand from his pocket and quickly looked at the watch on his wrist. "How much will you give me for this?" the man wrote.

Ray noticed a little shame in the grey eyes looking at him. The watch was nothing special and yet had great powers. It was something to exchange, a way out of a bad situation. Knowing that great need had brought the man to his shop in the first place, Ray asked, "How much do you need for it?" The reply came back on the notepad: "Whatever it's worth."

Ray reached into his cash-box, pulled out a fifty-dollar note and passed it into the man's hand. As they shook hands, Ray looked into the man's eyes; they seemed to say, "Thank you!" They both knew the watch wasn't worth that much. Before turning to leave, the man wrote, "I will be back to pick it up as soon as I can. Merry Christmas!"

The little story ended on the half hour with the clocks striking all together. The timepieces, which had been looking on silently all the while, rang out the time with such feeling that even Ray thought he could hear them. Their sweet, musical message was filled with hope. The timeless message of 'Peace on earth, goodwill towards all' was felt by the three men who stood in the old-clock shop.

Questions and Answers

1. What made Ray think the visitor was not really a shopper?

Answer: One of the two men who visited Ray was in his twenties, the other closer to fifty. The younger man remained at the door. The older man approached the counter with no sign of friendliness in his eyes. Ray observed the shape of a gun and a restless hand in the man's right coat-pocket. Ray's old wise eyes told him that the visitor was not really a shopper.

2. Why do you think he had come to the shop?

Answer: He had come to the shop because he was down on luck and in great need of money.

3. How did Ray communicate with him?

Answers: Ray communicated with him by slowly pushing a note pad and pencil to him across the counter. He smiled at the unfriendly face, then pointed to his ears and shook his head from side to side indicating to the visitor that he was deaf. He then wrote the words "May I help you" on the notepad.

4. What do you think the man said to his friend who waited at the door?

Answer: The man might have informed his friend that Ray was deaf and there was no need to worry about anything. He could also have discussed with him what their next plan of action was.

5. Ray was not a pawnbroker. Why then did he lend money to people in exchange for their old watches and clocks?

Answer: Ray was not a pawnbroker. He lent money to people in exchange for their old watches and clocks because he knew that they were in need of money. He loaned more money than he should have. He kept the watches till the owners wanted them back and he would return them at the same price he had paid, with no interest.

6. “The watch was nothing special and yet had great powers.” In what sense did it have ‘great powers’?

Answer: “The watch was nothing special and yet had great powers.” It had ‘great powers’ because it was something that could be exchanged for money and a way to lead people out of a bad situation. On Christmas Eve it had saved the two men who entered the shop from doing something they might later have been sorry for.

7. Do you think the man would ever come back to pick up the watch?

Answer: Although Ray had paid the man far more than what the watch was actually worth I think that the man would return. He must have been touched with Rays’ kindness towards him in spite of knowing full well the reason of their visit. He appreciated his generosity and when Ray looked into his eyes he saw gratitude and they seemed to say, “Thank you.” That is why he left a note saying that he would be back to pick up the watch as soon as he could and wishing Ray a Merry Christmas.

8. When did “the unfriendly face” of the visitor turn truly friendly?

Answer: The unfriendly face of the visitor turned truly friendly when he got the money for his watch which was not worth fifty dollars. Also by giving him the money in exchange for the watch Ray had prevented him from doing something he would be later sorry for.