

NCERT Solutions
Class 9 English Beehive
Chapter 5 - The Snake and the Mirror

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Think about the Text

I. Discuss in pairs and answer each question below in a short paragraph (30 – 40 words).

1. “The sound was familiar one.” What sound did the doctor hear? What did he think it was? How many times did he hear it? (Find the places in the text.) When and why did the sounds stop?

Answer:

The doctor heard a familiar sound which he thought to be of rats. Actually, the room in which he lived was full of rats. There was a regular traffic of rats to and from the beam.

He heard the sound thrice.

The sounds stopped suddenly after the doctor heard a dull thud as if a rubber tube had fallen to the ground. It was a snake.

2. What two “important” and “earth-shaking” decisions did the doctor take while he was looking into the mirror?

Answer:

The doctor took two "important" and "earth-shaking" decisions while he was looking into the mirror. These were:

First, he decided to shave daily and grow a thin moustache.

Second, he would always keep an attractive smile on his face.

3. “I looked into the mirror and smiled,” says the doctor. A little later he says, “I forgot my danger and smiled feebly at myself.” What is the doctor’s opinion about himself when: (i) he first smiles, and (ii) he smiles again? In what way do his thoughts change in between, and why?

Answer

(i) When the doctor first smiles, he admires his good looks and profession.

(ii) When he smiles again, he actually smiles at his stupidity and poor situation.

His thoughts changed after his encounter with the snake.

II. This story about a frightening incident is narrated in a humorous way. What makes it humorous?

(Think of the contrasts it presents between dreams and reality. Some of them are listed below.)

1. (i) The kind of person the doctor is (money, possessions)
(ii) The kind of person he wants to be (appearance, ambition)

- 2.(i) The person he wants to marry
(ii) The person he actually marries

- 3.(i) His thoughts when he looks into the mirror
(ii) His thoughts when the snake is coiled around his arm

Write short paragraphs on each of these to get your answer.

Answer:

The way in which the contrast between dreams and reality has been presented in the story makes it humorous. Some such contrasts are discussed below.

1. (i) We can clearly see the contrast between the lifestyle of the doctor and his high opinion of himself. His financial condition is not good. He lives in a small rented room with plenty of rats living in it. He has just started his medical practice. He had about sixty rupees in his suitcase. Along with some shirts and dhotis, he possessed one solitary black coat.
(ii) He wants to have an attractive appearance. He considers himself an eligible bachelor. He is full of appreciation for his looks and profession. The way he praises his looks, his smile and profession adds an element of humour in the story.

2. (i) The doctor wants to marry a woman with good medical practice and a lot of money. He wants her to be fat so that she would not be able to run after him and catch him when he will make any silly mistake.
(ii) He marries a thin reedy woman who could run like a sprinter.

3. (i) He is full of self-admiration when he looks into the mirror. He decides to grow thin moustache and keep smiling always as he finds his smile quite attractive.
(ii) When the snake coiled around his arm, he turned to a stone. He kept sitting there holding his breath. He smiled at his foolishness and stupidity, as he was a doctor but he did not have any medicines in his room to cure the snakebite.

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Thinking about Language

I. Here are some sentences from the text. Say which of them tell you, that the author: (a) was afraid of the snake, (b) was proud of his appearance, (c) had a sense of humour, (d) was no longer afraid of the snake.

1. I was turned to stone.

2. I was no mere image cut in granite.
3. The arm was beginning to be drained of strength.
4. I tried in my imagination to write in bright letters outside my little heart the words, 'O God'.
5. I didn't tremble. I didn't cry out.
6. I looked into the mirror and smiled. It was an attractive smile.
7. I was suddenly a man of flesh and blood.
8. I was after all a bachelor, and a doctor too on top of it!
9. The fellow had such a sense of cleanliness...! The rascal could have taken it and used it after washing it with soap and water.
10. Was it trying to make an important decision about growing a moustache or using eye shadow and mascara or wearing a vermilion spot on its forehead?

Answer:

(a) was afraid of the snake	(b) was proud of his appearance	(c) had a sense of humour	(d) was no longer afraid of the snake
1. I was turned to stone. 3. The arm was beginning to be drained of strength. 4. I tried in my imagination to write in bright letters outside my little heart the words, 'O God'. 5. I didn't tremble. I didn't cry out.	6. I looked into the mirror and smiled. It was an attractive smile. 8. I was after all a bachelor, and a doctor too on top of it!	9. The fellow had such a sense of cleanliness...! The rascal could have taken it and used it after washing it with soap and water. 10. Was it trying to make an important decision about growing a moustache or using eye shadow and mascara or wearing a vermilion spot on its forehead	2. I was no mere image cut in granite. 7. I was suddenly a man of flesh and blood.

II. Expressions used to show fear

Can you find the expressions in the story that tell you that the author was frightened? Read the story and complete the following sentences.

1. I was turned _____.
2. I sat there holding _____.
3. In the light of the lamp I sat there like _____.

Answer:

1. I was turned to stone.
2. I sat there holding my breath.
3. In the light of the lamp I sat there like a stone image in the flesh.

III. Match the meanings with the words/expressions in italics, and write the appropriate meaning next to the sentence. The first one has been done for you.

1. I knew a man was following me, I was *scared out of my wits*. (very frightened)
2. I *got a fright* when I realised how close I was to the cliff edge.
3. He *nearly jumped out of his skin* when he saw the bull coming towards him.
4. You really *gave me a fright* when you crept up behind me like that.
5. Wait until I tell his story — it will *make your hair stand on end*.
6. *Paralysed with fear*, the boy faced his abductors.
7. The boy hid behind the door, *not moving a muscle*.

Answer:

1. I knew a man was following me, I was *scared out of my wits*. (very frightened)
2. I *got a fright* when I realised how close I was to the cliff edge. (Too scared to move)
3. He *nearly jumped out of his skin* when he saw the bull coming towards him. (so much frightened by something that happens suddenly)
4. You really *gave me a fright* when you crept up behind me like that. (frightened by something that happens suddenly)
5. Wait until I tell his story — it will *make your hair stand on end*. (very frightened)
6. *Paralysed with fear*, the boy faced his abductors. (too scared to move)
7. The boy hid behind the door, *not moving a muscle*. (too scared to move)

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IV. Report these questions using *if/whether* or *why/when/where/how/which/what*.

Remember the italicised verbs change into the past tense.

1. Meena asked her friend, "Do you *think* your teacher will come today?"
2. David asked his colleague, "Where *will* you go this summer?"
3. He asked the little boy, "Why *are* you studying English?"
4. She asked me, "When *are* we going to leave?"
5. Pran asked me, "Have you finished reading the newspaper?"
6. Seema asked her, "How long *have* you lived here?"
7. Sheila asked the children "Are you ready to do the work?"

Answer :

1. Meena asked her friend if she thought her teacher would come that day.
2. David asked his colleague where he would go that summer.
3. He asked the little boy why he was studying English.
4. She asked me when we were going to leave.
5. Pran asked me if I had finished reading the newspaper.
6. Seema asked her how long she had lived there.
7. Sheila asked the children if they were ready to do the work.