

# Mijbil the Otter

## TEXTUAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### Oral communication check- I

**1. What 'experiment' did maxwell think camusfearna would be suitable for?**

**Ans:** maxwell thought that camusfearna would be suitable for finding an otter as it was surrounded by water.

**2. Why does he go to basra? How long does he wait there and why?**

**Ans:** The author went to basra to the consulate – General to collect his mail and answers. He waited there five days because his mail did not come from Europe in time.

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

**Ans:** Two Arabs brought the otter in a sack to him. Yes, he liked it. The words are: an otter fixation.

**4. Why was the otter named 'maxwell' s otter'?**

**Ans:** The otter was named 'maxwell' s otter' after the author 's name because it was previously unknown to science. It was made a pet by maxwell himself.

**5. Tick the right answer. In the beginning, the otter was**

(i) Aloof and indifferent

(ii) Friendly

(iii) Hostile.

**Ans:** Aloof and indifferent.

**6. What happened when maxwell took mijbil to the bathroom? What did it do two days after that?**

**Ans:** when maxwell took mijbil to the bathroom, the otter went wild with joy. It plunged and splashed water happily.

After two days, mijbil alone entered the bathroom and screwed the and water came out in full flow.

### **Oral comprehension check – II**

**1. How was mij to be transported to England?**

**Ans:** Mij was to be transported to England by air. The British Airlines would not carry it. So the author booked a flight to Paris. He had to put mij in a box.

**2. What did nij do to the box?**

**Ans:** mij tore the lining of the box to pieces.

**3. Why did maxwell put the otter back in the box? How do you think he felt when he did this?**

**Ans:** maxwell had to put mij, the otter in the box again because the flight would not carry it without a box.

He was a bit puzzled because he had only ten minutes in his hand for the flight.

**4. Why does maxwell say the air hostess was the very queen of her kind'?**

**Ans:** maxwell says so because the air hostess was amiable in nature. She showed kindness to him and helped him much.

**5. What happened when the box was opened?**

**Ans:** when the box was opened, exhausted mij came

out, blood spattered, whimpered and caught the author's leg.

## Oral comprehension check – III

### 1. What game had mij invented?

**Ans:** mij had invented the game of rolling a ball on the lid of the suitcase. He would put the ball on the upper end and run to catch the ball under the down end.

### 2. What are ‘compulsive habits’? What does maxwell say are the compulsive habits of

i) School children.

ii) Mij.

**Ans:** i) Compulsive habits are those innate habits that are impossible to control.

Maxwell says that school children place their feet on the centre of each paving block, touch every seventh upright of the iron railings or pass to the outside of every second lamp post and

ii) mij would tug him to the boundary wall of the school, jump on it and walk on the full length of it.

### 3. What group of animals do otters belong to?

Ans : otters belong to the small group of animals called mustellines.

### 4. What guesses did the londoners make about mij was?

**Ans:** The londoners made guesses about mij that it was ‘a baby seal’, ‘a squirrel’, ‘a walrus’, ‘a beaver’, ‘a bear cub’, ‘a leopard’ and ‘a brontosaur’.

## 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?

**Ans:** Mij turns the water tap and gets full flow of water, it plays surprisingly with small objects between paws lying on its back and invents some new games. All these shows that mij was intelligent. Mij nuzzles the author's face. It shows that mij is friendly and needs love.

**2. What are some of the things we come to know about otters from this text?**

**Ans:** We know some of the things about otters. Otters are found in the marshes. They need plenty of water. They can be kept as pets. They can play with fun. They are friendly.

**3. Why is mij's species now known to the world as maxwells otters?**

**Ans:** mij's race was previously unknown to science. It came to be known to the world when Maxwell adopted it as his pet. Hence, it is known as maxwell's otter.

**4. Maxwell in the story speaks for the otter. 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 splash Ans splash	
Screws the tap in the wrong way	
Nuzzles maxwell's face and neck in the Aeroplane	

**Ans:** i) Mij feels home and is very happy.

ii) Mij chitters with irritation and disappointment.

iii) He feels comfort and needs affection.

**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.**

i) Makes mij seem almost human, like a small boy.

**Ans:** True.

ii) Shows that he is often irritated with what mij does.

**Ans:** False.

iii) Shows that he is often surprised by what mij does.

**Ans:** True.

iv) Of mij's antics is comical

**Ans:** True.

v) Shows that he observes the antics of mij very carefully.

**Ans:** True.

vi) Shows that he thinks mij is a very ordinary otter.

**Ans:** False.

vii) Shows that he thinks the otter is very unusual.

**Ans:** True.

## **Thinking about language**

### **1. Describing a repeated action in the past**

To talk about something that happened regu in the past, but does not happen any longer, we use would or used to. Both would and used to can describe repeated actions in the past.

a) Mij would follow me without a lead and come to me when I called his name.

- b) He would play for hours with a selection of toys.
- c) On his way home..... Mij would tug me to this wall.
- d) When I was five year old, I used to follow my brother all over the place.
- e) He used to tease me when mother was not around.

To describe repeated state or situations in the past, however, we use only used to. (We cannot use would for states or situations in the past.) so we do not use would with verbs like be, have, believe etc.

**Look at the following sentences.**

- a) When we were young, we used to believe there were ghosts in school. [note : believe shows a state of mind.]
- b) Thirty years ago, more women used to be house wives than now. [note :be here describes a situation.]

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 as action, or a state or situation, in the past.) then add two or three sentences or your own to it.

Emperor Akbar be found of musical evening.

Emperor Akbar		Be found of musical evenings.
Every evening we	Would	Take long walks on the beach.
Fifty years ago, very Few people.		Own cars.
Till the 1980s, Shanghai	used to	Have very dirty streets.
My uncle.		Spend his holidays by the sea.

**Ans:** 1. Emperor Akbar used to be fond of musical evenings.

2. Every evening we used to take long walks on the beach.

3. Every evening we would take long walks on the beach
4. Fifty years ago, very few people used to own cars.
5. Fifty years ago, very few people used to take long walks on the beach.
6. Till the 1980s, shanghai used to have very dirty streets.
7. My uncle would take long walks on the beach.
8. My uncle used to take long walks on the beach.
9. My uncle used to spend his holidays by the sea.
10. My uncle used to be fond of musical evenings.
11. My uncle used to own cars.

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1. I used to go to school on foot.
  2. My grandfather used to carry an umbrella.
  3. They would play football after school hours.

## **II. Noun modifiers :**

To describe or give more information about a noun (or to modify a noun), we use adjectives or adjectival phrases, look at these examples from the text.

- a) An eminently suitable – spot
- b) His wide, flat belly
- c) Symmetrical pointed scales
- d) A ricocheting bullet.

Nouns can also be used as modifiers:

- a) The dinner party
- b) A designer dress
- c) The car keys

We can use more than one noun as modifier. Proper nouns can also be used :

- a) The Christmas Dinner party
- b) A silk designer dress
- c) The Maruti car keys

In the examples below, there is an adjectival phrase in front of a noun modifier:

- a) The lovely Christmas party
- b) A Trendy silk designer dress
- c) the frightfully expensive golden Maruti car keys.

**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 otter fixation.

**Ans:** Noun.

- ii) The iron railings.

**Ans:** Noun.

- iii) The tigris marshes.

**Ans:** Proper noun.

iv) The London streets.

**Ans:** Proper noun.

v) Soft velvet fur.

**Ans:** Adjective plus noun.

vi) A four- footed soccer player

**Ans:** Adjective plus noun.

**2. Given below are some nouns, and a set of modifiers to make as many appropriate phrases as you can. ( Hint: The nouns and modifiers are all from the texts in this box.)**

Temple	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

**Ans:** i) White temple

ii) College girls

iii) Three college girls

- iv) Stone triangle
- v) Ordinary stone triangle
- vi) Love triangle
- vii) Hundred dresses
- viii) Ordinary dresses
- ix) Uncomfortable dresses
- x) Uncomfortable ordinary dresses.
- xi) First person
- xii) Rough person
- xiii) Invigorating thoughts
- xiv) Ridiculous thoughts
- xv) Tremendous roar
- xvi) Rough roar
- xvii) College boys
- xviii) Incurable boys
- xix) Birthday gifts
- xx) Heartbreaking scream
- xxi) Heartbreaking farewell
- xxii) Loud expression

xxiii) Slang expression

xxiv) First time

xxv) Rough time

xxvi) Ridiculous subject

xxvii) Panoramic landscape

xxviii) Birthday handkerchief

xxix) Marriage handkerchief

xxx) Railroad crossing

### III. Read this sentence :

He shook himself, and I half expected **a cloud of dust**.

The author uses a cloud of dust to give a picture of a large quantity of dust.

Phrases like this indicate a particular quantity of something that is not usually countable. For example :

A bit of land, a drop of blood, a pinch of salt, a piece of paper.

### 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

**Ans:** i) A portion of fried fish

ii) (a) a pool of water.

(b) A pool of blood.

iii) Flakes of snow.

iv) (a) A hung heap of stones.

(b) A hung heap of snow.

(c) A hung heap of gold.

(d) A huge heap of fried fish.

v) A gust of wind.

vi) (a) Little drops of water.

(b) Little drops of blood.

vii) (a) A piece of cotton.

(b) A piece of gold.

(c) A piece of snow.

viii) (a) a pot of gold.

(b) A pot of water.

**1. Use a bit 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.      My teacher gave me a bit of  
Some advice.                      Advice.

ii) Can you give me some \_\_\_\_\_  
Day, please                      \_\_\_\_\_

3) The information you \_\_\_\_\_  
Gave me was useful              \_\_\_\_\_

4) Because of their se \_\_\_\_\_  
Factories. Smoke hangs \_\_\_\_\_  
Over the city

5) Tow stones rubbed.              \_\_\_\_\_  
Together can produce Spark of fire. \_\_\_\_\_

6) He gave me some \_\_\_\_\_  
Flowers on my birthday.              \_\_\_\_\_

**Ans:** ii) Can you give me a lump of/a bit of clay, please?

iii) The bit of/piece of information you gave was very useful.

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

v) Two pieces of stones rubbed to other can produce sparks of fire.

vi) He gave one a bunch of flowers in my birthday.

## Speaking

You have seen how Maxwell describes the otter's feelings and thoughts by watching him. Play the game of dumb charades. Take turns to express a feeling or thought silently, through gestures. Let the class speak out their guess about the feelings or thoughts you are trying to express.

**Ans:** Do yourselves in the class.

## Writing

Writing a description of a person or an animal (such as a pet) that you know very well and love very much. Questions (4) and (5) in 'Thinking about the text' will have given you some idea about how to do this. Mention some things the person or animal does, what you think the person or animal feels, etc.

**Ans:** Tommy, my pet

I have a pet dog. I named it Tommy. It is alsatian and black in colour. Tommy is very much smart and likes me very much as I do. As soon as I enter home it will come to me and greet me in its way. Every morning I take Tommy out for a walk. Tommy is good at play. The important thing is that Tommy understands. If I am in a sad mood it will show its sympathy by bowing down to me.

## Comprehension questions and answers

**Q:- Read the passages carefully and answer the questions choosing appropriate options given below :-**

1. I cabled to England, and when, three days later, nothing had happened, I tried to telephone. The call had to be booked twenty – four hours in advance. On the first day the line was out of order, on the second the exchange was closed for a religious holiday. On the third day there was another breakdown. My friend left, and I arranged to meet him in a week's time. Five days later, my mail arrived.

I carried it to my bedroom to read, and there, squatting on the floor, were two Arabs; beside them by a sack that squirmed from time to time. They handed me a note from my friend; "here is your otter....."

**Questions:-**

**1. Why did the speaker try to telephone?**

- a) Because he did not get his mail.
- b) Because he could not cable.
- c) Because he booked telephone earlier.
- d) Because he was Instructed to do so.

**Ans:** a) Because he did not get his mail.

**2. Why could he not telephone on the first day? Because –**

- a) The exchange was closed.
- b) Tt had to booked earlier.
- c) The line was out of order.
- d) It was a holiday.

**Ans:** b) Tt had to booked earlier.

**3. When did he get his mail?**

- a) On the second day.
- b) Two days later.
- c) Five days later.
- d) After a week.

**Ans:** c) Five days later.

**4. Who sent him the offer?**

- a) Two Arabs.
- b) The consulate- general.
- c) A man from iraq.
- d) His friend.

**Ans:-** d) His friend.

2. With the opening of that sack began a phase of my life that has not yet ended, and may, for all I know, not end before, I do. It is, in effect, a thralldom to otters, an otter fixation, that I have since found to be shared by most other people, who have ever owned one.

The creature that emerged from this sack on to the spacious tiled floor of the consulate bedroom resembled most of all a very small, medievally – conceived, dragon. From the head to the tip of the tail he was coated with symmetrical pointed scales of mud armour, between whose tips was visible a soft velvet fur like that of a chocolate – brown mole. He shook himself, and I half expected a cloud of dust, but in fact it was not for another month that I managed to remove the last of the mud and see the otter, as it were, in his true colours.

**Questions :-**

**1. What happened when the speaker opened the sack?**

- a) He was bewildered.
- b) Nothing happened.
- c) An otter came out.
- d) A bird flew away.

**Ans:** c) An otter came out.

**2. When did a new phase of the speaker 's life begin?**

- a) With the opening of the sack.
- b) Reaching his bedroom.
- c) Getting his mail.
- d) Reading his mail.

**Ans:** a) With the opening of the sack.

**3. The otter looked like a-**

- a) Small animal.
- b) Mole.
- c) Pet.
- d) Small, medieval dragon.

**Ans:** d) Small, medieval dragon.

**4. The otter' s true colours came when –**

- a) He shook himself.
- b) He was bathed.
- c) His mud was removed.
- d) He began to play.

**Ans:** c) His mud was removed.

3. Very soon mij would follow me without a lead and come to me when I called his name. He spent most of his time in play. He spent hours shuffling a rubber ball round the room like a four- footed soccer player using all four feet to dribble the ball, and he could also throw it, with a powerful flick of the neck, to a

surprising height and distance. But the real play of an otter is when he lies on his back and juggles with small objects between his paws. Marbles were mij's favourite toys for this pastime: he would lie on his back rolling two or more of them up and down his wide, flat belly without ever dropping one to the floor.

**Questions :-**

**1. How did the otter spend most of his time?**

- a) In play.
- b) In his sleep.
- c) In his work.
- d) In his bath.

**Ans:** a) In play.

**2. The otter played with the ball like a-**

- a) Cricketer.
- b) Soccer player.
- c) Football coach.
- d) Goal keeper.

**Ans:** b) Soccer player.

**3. The otter played with small objects like a-**

- a) Magician.
- b) Wrestler.
- c) Player.

d) Juggler.

**Ans:** d) Juggler.

**4. What were the otters favorite play objects?**

a) Balls.

b) Bats.

c) Marbles.

d) Toys.

**Ans:** c) Marbles.

4. I sat in the back of the car with the box beside me as the driver tore through the streets of basra like a ricocheting bullet. The aircraft was waiting to take off, I was rushed through to it by infuriated officials. Luckily the seat booked for me was at the extreme front. I covered the floor around my feet with newspaper, rang for the air hostess, and gave her a parcel of fish (for mij) to keep in a cool place. I took her into my confidence about the events of the last half hour. I have retained the most profound administration for that air hostess, she was the very queen of her kind. She suggested that I might prefer to have my pet on my knee, and I could have kissed her hand in the depth of my gratitude. But, not knowing otters, I was quite unprepared for what followed.

**Questions :-**

**1. What was there in the box?**

a) The speaker's belongings.

b) An otter.

c) His official documents.

d) His books.

**Ans:** b) An otter.

**2. The car was running through the streets of –**

a) Basra.

b) London.

c) A village.

d) Camusfearna.

**Ans:** a) Basra.

**3. The speaker found his seat-**

a) At the back.

b) In the middle.

c) At the extreme front.

d) Near the door.

**Ans:** c) At the extreme front.

**4. Who did the author take into his confidence?**

a) His otter.

b) His co-passengers.

c) The crew of the aircraft.

d) The air hostess.

**Ans:** d) The air hostess.

## Short answer type questions

### 1. When did the author think of keeping an otter as a pet?

**Ans:-** The author thought of keeping an otter as pet when he travelled to southern Iraq in 1956.

### 2. When did the author get his mail? What happened when he carried his mail to his bedroom?

**Ans:** – The author got his mail five days later. He carried it to his bedroom to read and there he saw two Arabs squatting on the floor. They brought a sack with them. Inside the sack there was an otter. His friend sent it to him.

### 3. How did the otter behave during the first twenty – four hours?

**Ans:-** During the first twenty-four hours Mijbil, the otter was neither friendly nor hostile. It was indifferent and passive. It slept on the floor near the author's bed. Later it turned active.

### 4. What did Mijbil do in the bathroom?

**Ans:-** Mijbil escaped to the bathroom two days later. He wanted to play in the water. He turned the tap and water trickled out. Then he turned it into full flow. He did it correctly.

### 5. How did the otter spend most of his time?

**Ans :-** The otter spent most his time in playing with a rubber ball like a soccer player and with marbles while living flat.

### 6. How did the author manage to transport Mijbil to London?

**Ans:-** The British airline to London would not carry animals and so the author booked a flight to Paris on another airline, and from there to London. He had to pack Mijbil in a box not more than eighteen inches square, to be carried on the floor of the aircraft.

### **7. How did the author manage to reach the airport?**

**Ans:-**The author was late and driver of the author's car drove along the streets of basra like a bullet. The aircraft was waiting to take off. He was rushed through it by the angry officers. He put the box near his feet.

### **8. What scene did the otter create in the aircraft?**

**Ans:-**In the aircraft, mijbil, the otter, suddenly came out of the box and disappeared at high speed down the seats. A woman stood and cried thinking it to be a rat. The author dived to catch it and his face was covered in curry. The air hostess asked him to go to his seat and she would get the otter back. But soon the otter came back the author.

## **Long answer type questions**

### **1. Describe the otter first seen by the author.**

**Ans:-** When the author saw the otter for the first time he felt that it resembled a media ally conceived dragon. It had symmetrical pointed scales of mud armour on its body. Between the tips there was soft velvet fur and it looked like a chocolate brown mole. In the beginning he found the otter neither friendly nor hostile. It was indifferent. It slept on the floor near the author's bed. But on the second night it came to the author 's bed and slept in the crook of the author' s knees.

### **2. What had happened before mij was boarded in the plane? What did mij do in the plane?**

**Ans:-** mij had been packed in a box before it was to be transported in the aircraft to paris. But mij tore the inner lining of the box and blood trickled from the airholes of the box. The author opened the box and found mij blood-stained. He removed the edges and hurried to the airport.

In the plane mij escaped from the box and a woman cried thinking it for a rat. The author could not catch. But soon it came to the author.

### **3. What were the questions faced by the author regarding the otter in London? For which question did the author award the highest score?**

**Ans:** Mij and the author remained in London for nearly a month. He took mij for walks in the London streets. Mij had developed certain compulsive habits like children. When the author came back mij would run on the outer wall of the primary school.

The author found it strange that londoners were ignorant of the otter. They made various guesses. Otters belong to the small group of mustellians. The badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink etc. Are in this group. The author awarded highest mark to the question of a labourer who started and surprisingly said, " here, mister, what is that supposed to be?"