

## A Hero

### A. Lead-in :

Have you read stories of courage and bravery. Recollect a story and tell to the class. Look at the title of this lesson. What type of action and behaviour do you expect from a hero ? Discuss with your friends and sum up the important qualities of a hero.

Here is a story of courage and bravery.

### B. The text :

#### I

For Swami events look an unexpected turn. Father looked over the newspaper he was reading under the hall lamp and said, "Swami listen to this : News has been received about the bravery of a village lad, who, while returning home by the jungle path, came face to face with a tiger..." The paragraph described the fight the boy had with the tiger and his flight up a tree where he stayed for half a day till some people came that way and killed the tiger.

After reading it through, father looked at Swami fixedly and asked, "What do you say to that ?" Swami said, "I think he must have been a very strong and grown-up person, not at all a boy. How could a boy fight a tiger ?"

"You think you are wiser than the newspaper?" Father sneered. "A man may have the strength of an elephant and yet be a coward ; whereas another may have the strength of a consumptive" but having courage he can do anything. Courage is everything; strength and age are not important."

Swami disputed the theory. "How can it be, father ? Suppose I have a lot of courage, what could I do if a tiger attacked me ?"

"Leave alone strength, can you prove you have courage ? Let me see if you can sleep alone tonight in my office room". A frightful proposition, Swami

thought. He had always slept beside his granny in the passage, and any change in this arrangement kept him trembling and awake all night. He hoped at first that his father was only joking. He mumbled weakly, "Yes", and tried to change the subject ; he said very loudly and with a great deal of enthusiasm, "We are going to admit even elders in our cricket club hereafter. We are buying brand new bats and balls. Our captain has asked me to tell you..".

'We'll see about it later," father cut in. "You must sleep alone hereafter." Swami realised that the matter had gone beyond his control : from a challenge it had now become a plain command. "From the first of next month I'll sleep alone, father." "No, you must do it now. It is disgraceful, sleeping beside granny or mother like a baby. You are in the Second Form and..... I don't at all like the way you are being brought up," he said.

## II

Swami's father sat gazing gloomily at the newspaper on his lap. Swami prayed that his father might lift the newspaper once again to his face so that he might slip away to his bed and fall asleep before he could be called again. As if in answer to his prayer father rustled the newspaper and held it up before his face. And Swami rose silently and tiptoed away to his bed in the passage. Granny was sitting up in her bed, and remarked, "Boy, are you already feeling sleepy ? Don't you want to hear a story ?" Swami made wild gesticulations to silence his granny, but that good lady saw nothing. So Swami threw himself on his bed and pulled the blanket over his face.

Granny said, "Don't cover your face. Are you really very sleepy ?" Swami leant over and whispered, "Please, please, shut up, granny. Don't talk to me, and don't let anyone call me even if the house is on fire. If I don't sleep at once I shall perhaps die..." He turned over, curled, and snored under the blanket till he found his blanket pulled away.

Father was standing over him. "Swami, get up," he said. He looked like an apparition in the semi-darkness of the passage, which was dimly lit up by

light reaching there from the hall lamp. Swami stirred and groaned as if in sleep. Father said, "Get up, Swami !

"Granny pleaded, "Why do you disturb him ?"

"Get up, Swami," he said for the fourth time and Swami got up. Father rolled up his bed, took it under his arm and said, "Come with me." Swami looked at granny, hesitated for a moment and followed his father into the office room. On the way he threw a look of appeal at his mother and she said, "Why do you take him to the office room ? He can sleep in the hall, I think." "I don't think so," father said, and Swami walked behind him slowly with bowed head.

"Let me sleep in the hall, father," Swami pleaded. "Your office room is very dusty and there may be scorpions behind your Law books."

"There are no scorpions, little fellow, Sleep on the bench if you like."

"Can I have a lamp burning in the room ?"

"No. You must learn not to be afraid of darkness. It is only a question of habit. You must cultivate good habits."

"Will you at least leave the door open?"

"All right. But promise you will not roll up your bed and go to your granny's side at night. If you do it, mind you, I will make you the laughing-stock of your school."

Swami felt cut off from humanity. He was pained and angry. He didn't like the strain of cruelty he saw in his father's nature. He hated the newspaper for printing the tiger's story. He wished that the tiger hadn't spared the boy, who didn't appear to be a boy after all, but a monster.

### III

As night advanced and the silence in the house deepened, his heart beat faster. He remembered all the stories of devils and ghosts he had heard. How

often had his chum, Mani, seen the devil in the banyan tree at the end of the street ? And what about poor Munisami's father who spat out blood because the devil near the river's edge slapped his cheek when he was returning home late one night..... ?

And so on and on his thoughts continued. He was faint with fear. A ray of light from the street lamp strayed in and cast shadows on the wall. Through the stillness all kinds of noises reached his ears— the ticking of the clock, the rustling of leaves, sounds of snoring and the humming of some unknown insects. He covered himself with the blanket as if it were an armour, covered himself so completely that he could hardly breathe. Every moment he expected the devils to come up and clutch at his throat or carry him away. There was the instance of his old friend in the fourth class who suddenly disappeared and was said to have been carried off by a ghost to Siam or Nepal.

Swami hurriedly got up and spread his bed under the bench and crouched there. It seemed to be a much safer place. He shut his eyes tight and encased himself in his blanket once again and unknown to himself fell asleep, and in sleep he saw terrible dreams. A tiger was chasing him. His feet stuck to the ground. He tried hard to escape but his feet would not move; the tiger was at his back, and he could hear its claws scratch the ground.... scratch, scratch, and then a light thud...Swami tried to open his eyes but his eye-lids would not open and the frightening dream continued. It threatened to continue all his life. Swami groaned in despair.

Using his utmost efforts he opened his eyes. He put his hand out to feel his granny's presence at his side, as was his habit, but he only touched the wooden leg of the bench. And his lonely state came back to him. He sweated with fright. And now what was this rustling ? He moved to the edge of the bench and stared in the darkness. Something was moving down. He lay gazing at it in horror. His end had come. He became desperate. He knew that the devil would presently pull him out and tear him to shreds, and so why should he

wait ? As it came nearer he crawled out from under the bench and hugged it with all his might, and used his teeth on it like a mortal weapon.

“Aiyo ! something has bitten me” “There was an agonised cry which was followed by a heavy tumbling and falling amidst furniture. In a moment father, cook and a servant came in carrying a light.

And all three of them fell on the burglar who lay amidst the furniture with a bleeding ankle.

#### IV

Congratulations came showering on Swami the next day. His classmates looked at him with respect, and his teacher patted his back. The headmaster said that he was a true scout. Swami had bitten into the flesh of one of the most notorious houses-breakers of the district and the police were grateful to him for it.

The Inspector said, “Why don't you join the police when you grow up ? Swami said for the sake of politeness, “Certainly, I will,” though he had quite made up his mind to be an engine driver, a railway guard, or a bus conductor, later in life.

When he returned home from the club that night, father asked, “Where is the boy ?”

“He is asleep”.

“Already ?”

“He didn't have a wink of sleep the whole of last night”, said his mother.

“Where is he sleeping ?”

“In his usual place”, mother said casually. “He went to bed at seven-thirty.”

“Sleeping beside his granny again !” father said. “No wonder he wanted to be asleep before I should return home – clever boy !”

Mother lost her temper. "You let him sleep where he likes. You needn't risk his life again..." Father mumbled as he went in to change: "All right, pamper and spoil him as much as you like. Only don't blame me afterwards..."

Swami, following the whole conversation from under the blanket, felt tremendously relieved to hear his father giving him up.

### C. Notes and Glossary :

- fixedly - (Adj.) - Continuously, without looking away.
- sneer(ed) - (v) - To show that you have no respect for somebody by the expression on your face.
- consumptive - (N) - A person suffering from tuberculosis.
- proposition - (N) - An idea or a plan of action that is suggested.
- mumble (d) - (V) - To speak in a quiet voice in a way that is not clear.
- gazing - (V) - Looking steadily at something for a long time.
- gloomily - (Adv) - depressingly.
- rustled - (V) - Moved or rubbed together.
- tiptoed - (V) - Walked on the front part of the foot with heels off the ground.
- gesticulation - (N) - Movements of hands and arms to express ideas and feelings.
- standing over - To supervise or watch closely.
- apparition - (N) - A strange figure appearing suddenly and thought to be a ghost.
- laughing stock - An object of scornful laughter.
- monster - (N) - An abnormal boy.
- chum - (N) - A friend.
- humming - (V) - Making a low continuous sound.

- armour - (N) - Special metal clothing that soldiers wore in the past to protect their bodies while fighting.
- crouched - (V) - Lay on the ground with limbs drawn close to his body in fear.
- encased - (V) - Covered something completely.
- thud - (N) - A sound like the one which is made when a heavy object hits something else.
- shreds - (N) - Very small pieces.
- hugged - - Put the arms around and hold tightly to express happiness.

**D. Let's understand the text :**

- Swami was very much interested in the newspaper report about the brave village boy. What were Swami's views ?
- Why did Swami's father want him to sleep alone ?
- How did Swami react to his father's proposal to sleep alone ?
- How did Swami feel when he was left alone in his father's office at night ?
- What kind of dreams did he have while he was sleeping there ?
- Why did he wake up ?
- What made Swami desperate ?
- What made him attack the burglar ?
- Suppose you were asked to describe Swami in a few words, how would you do it ? Write the most appropriate answer.
  - Young, strong and brave.
  - Well-behaved and polite.
  - Disobedient, disrespectful and naughty.
  - Clever but not courageous.

10. What did Swami dream in the office ?

- a) The devils came up and clutched at his throat.
- b) A tiger chased him and he tried hard to escape but couldn't.
- c) As a devil came nearer he put his arms around the devil and held tightly.

**E. Let's understand the text better :**

- (i) Discuss how Swamy felt being forced to sleep alone.
- (ii) How would you feel if you were made to sleep alone in a room ? Do you share Swami's feelings ?
- (iii) How did Swami feel in the darkness ?
- (iv) Discuss Swami's response to the movement in the darkness.
- (v) Was Swami really courageous ? What did people think about him ?
- (vi) "Courage is everything, strength and age are not important"

**F. Let's learn some new words :**

The words given in the brackets have come from the story "A Hero". The expression in each sentence is the meaning of the word after that sentence. Rewrite each sentence using the appropriate form of the word in brackets.

**Example :**

The teacher looked at me continuously before asking the question.  
(fixedly)

**Ans.** The teacher looked at me fixedly before asking the question.

1. The plan of action suggested by the students was not accepted by the headmaster. (proposition)
2. The child spoke in an unclear manner which her mother couldn't hear. (mumble).

3. My friend sleeps in a separate room because he breathes noisily while asleep (snore).
4. The patient's painful condition affected everyone (agonize)
5. The boy was not prepared and so did not want to take the examination. (hesitate)
6. The low continuous sound of the bee adds charm to the garden. (humming)
7. The surface of my car was damaged due to the accident. (scratch)

The following sentences occur in the story you have read in Section-I

1. "How could a boy fight a tiger ?"
2. Any change in this arrangement kept him trembling

'Fight' in sentence 1 is a verb.

'Change' in sentence 2 is a noun.

Now read these sentences :-

1. He got into a fight with a man in the bar.
2. We change our car every two years.

Often in English one comes across words which can function both as nouns and as verbs in different contexts.

Read the story again and pickout ten such words. Then use each word in two different sentences of your own mentioning 'noun use' and 'verb use'.

### **G. Let's Learn Language :**

When we repeat the actual words of a speaker without making any changes, it is called "Direct Speech". When we give the exact meaning of a remark or a speech without necessarily using the Speaker's exact words, it is called "Indirect Speech" or "Reported Speech".

#### **Example :**

He said, "I have lost my pen" – Direct Speech

He said that he had lost his pen – Indirect Speech.

**Notice that :**

- (i) In direct speech the actual words of a speaker are placed within quotation marks ("——")
- (ii) In indirect speech the reporting verb in the case of a statement (e.g., "said" in the sentence given above) is often followed by "that" and there is no comma after the reporting verb.
- (iii) The pronouns are changed in indirect speech. For example 'I' in indirect speech is changed to 'he' (referring to the speakers, the subject of the verb 'said') in indirect speech.
- (iv) When the reporting verb is in the present simple, present continuous, present perfect there is no change of ~~tense form~~ of the verb in the reported speech.
- (v) When the reported verb is in the past tense the verb in indirect speech is also changed from the ~~present~~ to the past form. ('am' changed to 'was')

**Here are some more examples :**

- (i) Swami said, "Your office room is very dusty and there may be scorpions behind your law books". (Direct speech)

Swami told his father that his office room was very dusty and there might be scorpions behind his law books.

Turn the following statements into indirect speech.

- (i) Father said, "I don't at all like the way you are being brought up".  
"If you do it, mind you, I will make you the laughing stock of your school."

**2. Questions :**

Look at the following sentence.

Granny pleaded, "why do you disturb him ?"

In Indirect speech the question will be "Granny asked father why he disturbed Swami.

**Notice that**

- (i) The question pattern in direct speech (Question word + auxiliary verb + subject + main verb) is changed to the statement pattern (question word + subject + main verb) in Indirect speech.
- (ii) "Why do you disturb ?" — "Why he disturbed". "You" in direct speech is changed to 'he' in indirect speech.
- (iii) The verb in the simple present (do disturb) is changed to "disturbed" (past simple) as the reporting verb 'asked' is in the past tense.

**Now look at this sentence.**

Granny said, "Are you really very sleepy ?"

In Indirect speech, the question will be

— "Granny inquired if he were really very sleepy.

Notice that in Yes – No questions the word 'if' (or whether) is introduced at the beginning of the reported question which is then given the statement pattern.

"Are you ----- ?" — "If he were-----"

**Exercise :****Report the following dialogue.**

"Let me sleep in the hall, father" Swami pleaded. "Your office room is very dusty and there may be scorpions behind your law books".

"There are no scorpions, little fellow. Sleep on the bench if you like".

"Can I have a lamp burning in the room ?"

"No. You must learn not to be afraid of darkness. It is only a question of habit. You must cultivate good habits".

"Will you at least leave the door open?"

"All right. But promise you will not roll up your bed and go to your granny's side at night".

**H. Let's write :**

1. In the story you read Swami was asked by his father to sleep alone in his office room at night.

Imagine that you are Swami and give an account of what followed from your point of view.

Begin : It was a terrible experience. Father told me to sleep in the office room alone to do away with fear. Till then I always used to.....

You may like to end with : My fear for darkness remained unchanged and I still had the habit of sleeping with granny. But the incident made me a hero overnight.

2. Write a citation (a statement about someone's character or brave actions) to be read out on the occasion of the award giving ceremony in honour of a brave young man of your locality who has been selected for the "Bravery Award" by the government.

