

ADVENTURES IN A BANYAN TREE

Ruskin Bond

I. Read the passage and answer the questions that follow

It was to be a battle of champions. Hissing defiance, his forked tongue darting in and out, the cobra raised three of his six feet off the ground, and spread his broad, spectacled hood. The mongoose bushed his tail. The long hair on his spine stood up (in the past, the very thickness of his hair had saved him from bites that would have been fatal to others).

Though the combatants were unaware of my presence in the banyan tree, they soon became aware of the arrival of two other spectators. One was a myna, and the other a jungle crow (not the wily urban crow). They had seen these preparations for battle, and had settled on the cactus to watch the outcome. Had they been content only to watch, all would have been well with both of them. The cobra stood on the defensive, swaying slowly from side to side, trying to mesmerize making a false move. But the mongoose knew the power of his opponent's glassy, unwinking eyes, and refused to meet them.

Instead he fixed his gaze at a point just below the cobra's hood, and opened the attack. Moving forward quickly until he was just within the cobra's reach, he made a feint to one side. Immediately the cobra struck. His great hood came down so swiftly that I thought nothing could save the mongoose. But the little fellow jumped neatly to one side, and darted in as swiftly as the cobra, biting the snake on the back and darting away again out of reach. The moment the cobra struck, the crow and the myna hurled themselves at him, only to collide heavily in mid-air. Shrieking at each other, they returned to the cactus plant.

A few drops of blood glistened on the cobra's back. The cobra struck again and missed. Again the mongoose sprang aside, jumped in and bit. Again the birds dived at the snake, bumped into each other instead, and returned shrieking to the safety of the cactus.

1. Who were fighting each other?
2. How did the hair on his spine help the mongoose?
3. Who were the spectators at the battle and where did they sit?
4. The cobra was a good fighter. Pick out the sentence from the passage which proves the same?
5. Was the mongoose an intelligent fighter? How do you know?

Answers

1. A cobra and a mongoose were fighting each other.
2. In the past the very thickness of his hair had saved him from bites.
3. A myna and a crow were the spectators of the battle. They sat on the cactus.
4. The Cobra stood on the defensive swaying slowly from side to side trying to mesmerize the mongoose into making a false move.

5. Yes it was. The cobra tried to mesmerize the mongoose to make a false move. But the mongoose knew his opponent's tricks. He fixed his gaze at a point just below the cobra's hood and opened the attack.

II. Read the passage and answer the questions that follow

The third round followed the same course as the first but with one dramatic difference. The crow and the myna, still determined to take part in the proceedings, dived at the cobra, but this time they missed each other as well as their mark. The myna flew on and reached its perch, but the crow tried to pull up in mid-air and turn back. In the second that it took him to do this, the cobra whipped his head back and struck with great force, his snout thudding against the crow's body. I saw the bird flung nearly twenty feet across the garden, where, after fluttering about for a while, it lay still. The myna remained on the cactus plant, very wisely refrained from interfering again!

The cobra was weakening, and the mongoose, walking fearlessly up to it, raised himself on his short legs, and with lightning snap had the big snake by the snout. The cobra writhed and lashed about in a frightening manner, and even coiled itself about the mongoose, but all to no avail. The little fellow hung grimly on, until the snake had ceased to struggle. He then smelt along its quivering length, and gripping it round the hood, dragged it into the bushes. The myna dropped cautiously to the ground, hopped about, peered into the bushes from a safe distance, and then, with a shrill cry of congratulation, flew away.

When I had also made a cautious descent from the tree and returned to the house, I told Grandfather of the fight I had seen. He was pleased that the mongoose had won. He had encouraged it to live in the garden, to keep away the snakes, and fed it regularly with scraps from the kitchen. He had never tried taming it, because wild mongoose was more useful than a domesticated one.

From the banyan tree I often saw the mongoose patrolling the four corners of the garden, and once I saw him with an egg in his mouth and knew he had been in the poultry house; but he hadn't harmed the birds, and I knew Grandmother would forgive him for stealing as long as he kept the snakes away from the house.

1. How did the crow push itself into trouble?
2. Why is the myna said to be wise?
3. Who won the battle?
4. How did he make sure that the snake is dead? What did the mongoose do?
5. How did the myna congratulate the mongoose?
6. Pick out a word that means "To twist the body"

Answers

1. The crow took part in the fight and missed his mark. As he tried to pull up the cobra whipped with great force and the crow lost his life.
2. Because the myna remained on the cactus plant very wisely and refrained from interfering again.

3. Mongoose won the battle.
4. The mongoose smelt the cobra and made sure that the snake is dead. He smelt along the cobra's quivering length, gripping it round the hood and dragged it into the bushes.
5. The myna congratulated the mongoose by making a shrill cry.
6. Writhe

III. Read the passage and answer the questions that follow

The banyan tree was also the setting for what we were to call the Strange Case of the Grey Squirrel and the White Rat. The white rat was Grandfather's - he had bought it from the bazaar for four annas - but I would often take it from the bazaar for four annas - but I would often take it with me into the roots and branches of the old tree. Banyan tree, where it soon struck up a friendship with one of the squirrels. They would go off together on little excursions among the branches.

Then the squirrel started building a nest. At first she tried building it in my pockets, and when I went indoors and changed my clothes I would find straw and grass falling out. Then one day Grandmother's knitting was missing. We hunted for it everywhere but without success. Next day I saw something glinting in the hole in the banyan tree. Going up to investigate, I saw that it was the end of Grandmother's steel knitting-needle. On looking further, I discovered that the hole was crammed with knitting. And amongst the wool were three baby squirrels-all of them white! Grandfather had never seen white squirrels before, and we gazed at them in wonder. We were puzzled for some time, but when I mentioned the white rat's frequent visits to the tree, Grandfather told me that the rat must be the father. Rats and squirrels were related to each other, he said, and so it was quite possible for them to have offspring--in this case, white squirrels!

1. From where did Grandfather get the white rat?
2. How did the white rat become familiar with the grey squirrel?
3. How did the boy come to know that the squirrel was building a nest?
4. Where did the boy find grandmother's knitting needle?
5. What was the surprise in the hole?

Answers

1. Grandfather got the white rat from the bazaar.
2. The boy would take the white rat with him to the banyan tree.
3. When the boy changed his dress he found straw and grass falling out.
4. The boy found grandmother's knitting needle in a hole in the banyan tree.
5. There were three white baby squirrels in the hole.

IV. Read the following passage from “Adventures in a Banyan Tree” and answer the questions.

“Though the house and grounds of our home in India were Grandfather’s domain, the magnificent old banyan tree was mine chiefly because Grandfather, at the age of sixty-five, could no longer climb it. Grandmother used to tease him about this, and would speak of a certain Countess of Desmond, an English women who lived to the age of 117, and would have lived longer if she hadn’t fallen while climbing an apple tree. The spreading branches of the banyan tree, which curved to the ground and took root again, forming a maze of arches, gave me endless pleasure. The tree was older than Grandfather, as old as the town of Dehra, nestling in a valley at the foot of the Himalayas.

My first friend and familiar was a small grey squirrel. Arching his back and sniffing into the air, he seemed at first to resent my invasion of his privacy. But, when he found that I did not arm myself with a catapult or air-gun, he became friendlier. And when I started leaving him pieces of cake and biscuit, he grew bolder, and finally became familiar enough to take food from my hands.

Before long he was delving into my pockets and helping himself to whatever he could find. He was a very young squirrel, and his friends and relatives probably thought him headstrong and foolish for trusting a human.

1. Where was the house situated?
2. What gave the author endless pleasure?
3. Who was the boy’s first friend from the nature?
4. What was the squirrel’s first reaction?
5. How friendly did the squirrel become?

Answers

1. At Dehra town, at the foot hills of Himalayas.
2. The scenery of the arching banyan tree.
3. A small grey squirrel.
4. He arched his back and sniffed into the air. The squirrel didn’t like the presence of the boy.
5. The Squirrel became friendly enough to take food from his hands and even delved into his pockets.

V. Read the excerpt from “Adventures in a Banyan Tree” and answer the questions.

In the spring, when the banyan tree was full of small red figs birds of all kinds would flock into its branches, the red bottomed bulbul, cheerful and greedy; gossiping rosy pastors; and parrots and crows, squabbling with each other all the time. During the fig season, the banyan tree was the noisiest place on the road.

Half way up the tree I had built a small platform on which I would often spend the afternoons when it wasn't too hot. I could read there, propping myself up against the bole of the tree with cushions taken from the drawing room. Treasure Island, Huckleberry Finn, The Mowgli stories, and the Novels of Edger Rice Burroughs and Louisa May Alcott made up my bag of very mixed reading.

When I did not feel like reading, I could look down through the banyan leaves at the world below, at Grandmother hanging up or taking down the washing, at the cook quarrelling with a fruit vendor or at Grandfather grumbling at the hardy Indian marigolds which insisted on springing up all over his very English garden. Usually nothing very exciting happened while I was in the banyan tree, but on one particular afternoon I had enough excitement to last me through the summer.

That was the time I saw a mongoose and a cobra fight to death in the garden, while I sat directly above them in the banyan tree.

It was an April afternoon. And the warm breezes of approaching summer had sent everyone, including Grand father, indoors. I was feeling drowsy myself and was wondering if I should go to the pond behind the house for a swim, when I saw a huge black cobra gliding out of a clump of cactus and, making for some cooler part of the garden. At the same time a mongoose emerged from the bushes and went straight for the cobra.

In a clearing beneath the tree, in bright sunshine, they came face to face. Cobra knew only too well that the grey mongoose, three feet long, was a superb fighter, clever and aggressive. But the cobra was skilful and experienced fighter too. He could move swiftly and strike with the speed of light, and the sacs behind his long, sharp fangs were full of deadly venom.

It was to be a battle of champions.

1. What happens to the Banyan tree in the spring season?
2. Which are the different kinds of birds which appear on the Banyan tree in the fig season?
3. Where did the boy spend the afternoons when it was not too hot?
4. What kind of books does he read?
5. What were the usual activities of people he observed from the tree?
6. What was the exciting experience he got on that day?
7. What was the cobra searching for?

Answers

1. The Banyan tree is full of small red figs.
2. Red-bottomed bulbul, rosy-pastors, parrots and crows.
3. On the platform built halfway up the tree.
4. Some of the books that he read were Treasure Island, Huckleberry Finn, The Mowgli stories and the Novels of Edgar Rice Burroughs and Louisa May Alcott.
5. Mother, hanging up or taking down the washing, cook quarrelling with a fruit vendor, Grandfather, grumbling at the hardy Indian marigolds.
6. The sight of mongoose and cobra fighting to death.
7. The cobra was searching for a cool place.

VI. Prepare a short profile of Ruskin Bond using the hints given below.

Birth	: May 19, 1934, Kasauli, India
Education	: Bishop Cotton School, Shimla
Famous as	: Author, Poet
Works	: First novel "The Room on the Roof" First Children's book "The Angry River" Short story Collections "Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra"
Awards	: John Llewellyn Rhys Prize (1957) Sahitya Akademi Award (1992) Padma Shri (1999) Lifetime Achievement Award (2017)

RUSKIN BOND

Ruskin Bond is an eminent contemporary Indian writer of British descent. He was born on May 19, 1934 at Kasauli in India. He was educated at Bishop Cotton School, Shimla. He is a famous writer and poet. He wrote his first Novel "The Room on the Roof", at the age of seventeen. He got John Llewellyn Rhys Prize in 1957. His first children's book was "The Angry River". In 1992, he received the Sahitya Academy Award for his short story collection. 'Our Tree Still Grow in Dehra'. He was awarded the Padma Shri in 1999 for his contributions to Children's literature. He was also honoured with the 'Lifetime Achievement Award' in 2017.

VII. Imagine that the English club of your school has decided to conduct a special assembly in connection with the World Environmental Day. Prepare a speech on “The Importance of Conservation of Nature”.

Respected teachers and my dear friends,

A warm good morning to one and all. It is my pleasure to stand here in front of you on this auspicious occasion. Although I am not an expert in public speaking. I would like to share my views about Nature.

Can we imagine a life without Nature? We can't. We live, breathe and die in Nature. Our mother earth keeps us alive by showering her love and care. But how mercilessly we destroy the same! Unscientific construction of buildings, plastic, pollution and global warming... all are increasing day by day. I think it is high time that we should unite to find a solution to protect it. We have inherited this beautiful nature from our ancestors and it is our duty to protect it for the future generation. Air, water, vegetation, forest everything need to be kept and handed over to them. Wise use of natural resources and reduced use of plastics can help us a lot in achieving our goal which is a common plea.

Let's take an oath to keep our life in harmony with nature. Let me conclude my words.

Thank You!

VIII. Prepare a character-sketch of Grandfather in the story ‘Adventures In a Banyan Tree’

Grandfather

The grandfather in the story is the eldest member of the family. He is sixty five. Yet he is active and vigorous. He loves his grandson very much. He is happy at the victory of the mongoose in the single combat. He encourages the mongoose to live in the garden. Because it would keep the snakes away. He is a man of wisdom. He has never tried to tame the mongoose because he knows that a wild mongoose is more useful than a domesticated one. When he sees the white baby squirrels he is astonished and tells that the white rat must be the father. He is also a lover of nature like the boy in the story.

IX. The grandfather and the boy were really surprised at the sight of the three baby squirrels. It was a great surprise for all and the news spread across the village. The news appeared in one of the local dailies. Prepare the likely News Report.

Three White wonders in A Banyan Tree
Staff Reporter

Dehradun, 25 June : Three baby squirrels were found in a hole in the banyan tree in one of the houses of a village in Dehradun.

In the village a grandfather and a grandson found three cute white baby squirrels in the hole in the banyan tree in the yard. The boy found them while he was searching for his grandmother's missing knitting needles. He was surprised to see the needle in the hole and when looked further, he discovered that the hole was crammed with knitting and among the wool were three baby squirrels- all of them white. Even the grandfather was seeing the white squirrels for the first time. Many people gathered to see the three little wonders of nature.

X. Imagine that the Nature Club of your school has decided to conduct a seminar on the topic "Preservation of Nature" in connection with the World Environmental Day (June 5). As the secretary of the club, prepare a notice for the same.

GOVERNMENT HSS KOTTAYAM

Notice

Seminar on "Preservation of Nature"

Dear Teachers and Friends,

The Nature club of our school has decided to conduct a seminar in connection with the World Environmental Day. The programme will be conducted on 5th June, 2021 at 11:00 am in the school auditorium. The famous Environmentalist Prof. John has kindly consented to inaugurate the function. We cordially invite you to the function.

All are welcome

Pala
31/3/2021

Sd/-
Secretary

XI. The boy was so excited to see the white squirrels in the hole of the banyan tree. He decides to scribble something in his diary. What would be his diary entry?

Friday

12 January

9 pm

How miraculous nature is ! With full of hidden secrets and sights! The white squirrels! I have never seen such a creature! It was really amazing. Still I can't believe my eyes. The tiny squirrels are so cute. But how is it possible? The squirrel whom I see everyday is not white. I have seen it making a nest with grandmother's knitting clothes in the banyan tree. Oh! now I remember...Grandfather has a white rat and I have seen him near the Squirrel's nest. Yes, it must be the father; Grandfather says, the rats and squirrels are related to each other and it is quite possible for them to have offsprings – in this case-white squirrels...wonderful nature...I feel so excited.

XII. After watching the deadly fight between the mongoose and the cobra the boy ran to his grandfather and explained the whole incident. What would be the likely conversation between them.

Grandfather : Why do you look so excited?
Boy : Grandpa, I have seen something very exciting.
Grandfather : What have you seen?
Boy : I have seen a mongoose and a cobra fighting to death in the garden.
Grandfather : Where were you then?
Boy : I was in the banyan tree.
Grandfather : I think you didn't get frightened, did you?
Boy : No, I didn't get frightened.
Grandfather : Who won the battle?
Boy : The mongoose won the battle.
Grandfather : It is a useful animal. You had better not disturb it.
Boy : OK Grandpa.

XIII. The boy was thrilled at seeing the fight between the cobra and the mongoose. You may also have the same feeling. Narrate the fight-scene in your own words.

The boy was sitting on the platform half way up the tree. He saw a small mongoose and a huge black cobra fighting to death beneath the banyan tree. Both of them were skilful fighters. At first the cobra struck. But the mongoose avoided it and bit the snake on the back. In its turn the cobra darted away out of reach.

The cobra struck again and missed the object. When the cobra was weakening the mongoose vigorously took it by the snout. The cobra writhed and lashed about in a frightening manner. It even

coiled itself about the mongoose but all in vain. The mongoose hung grimly on until the snake had ceased to struggle. It then smelt it and gripped around the hood and dragged it into the bushes.

Besides the boy, there were two other spectators, a myna and a crow. They tried to intervene in the fight which led to the death of the crow. The myna wisely refrained from interfering again.

XIV. Imagine the boy in the story ‘Adventures In A Banyan Tree’ decides to write a letter to his friend Arun about the deadly fight between the cobra and the mongoose. What would be the likely letter?

Ivy Cottage
Landour Cautt
Dehradun
26 April 2020

Dear Arun,

Hope you are enjoying your vacation there. I am doing the same here, at grandpa’s house.

Arun, I am so excited to share an incident that had happened the last day. As you know, I was sitting on the banyan tree reading some book. After sometime when I got bored I just looked around the place and happened to witness a deadly fight between a cobra and a mongoose.

Both of them were skillful fighters. At first the cobra struck. But the mongoose avoided it and bit the snake on the back. In its turn the cobra darted away out of reach.

The battle went on...When the snake was weakening the mongoose vigorously took it by the snout. The cobra even coiled itself about the mongoose but all in vain. Really it was a battle of champions...Arun. But after sometime the clever mongoose hung grimly on until the snake had ceased to struggle. It gripped around the hood and dragged it into the bushes. Anyway this is an unforgettable incident in my life.

Hope all of you are safe and healthy. My regards to all.

Yours lovingly,
Sd/-

XV. The Film Club of your school is screening a short film, ‘The Mongoose and Snake’ in the School auditorium. Prepare a notice for the same

GOVT HSS KOTTAYAM

NOTICE

“THE MONGOOSE AND THE SNAKE”
(Film Show)

Dear Teachers and friends,

The Film Club of our school has decided to screen the short film “Mongoose and the Snake” in the school auditorium on Tuesday, 21st January 2020 at 10:00 am. We cordially invite everyone to watch the film.

All are welcome!

14/10/2020

Kasaragod

Secretary, Film Club

XVI. Complete the conversation between grandfather and grandmother.

Grandma : Hey, my dear,.....(a).....?

Grandpa : I was there in the garden. What’s the matter?

Grandma : Our grandson has built a platform up on the banyan tree.(b).....?

Grandpa : No, I haven’t seen it. Why did he build it there?

Grandma :(c)..... If you want, you also can enjoy sitting there.

Grandpa : I can’t climb trees at this age of sixty-five.

Grandma : Sixty-Five is not too old an age. You’ve lost all your courage. Do you know the Countess of Desmond?

Grandpa :(d)..... Who is that?

Grandma : She was an English woman who used to climb tree till her death at the age of 117.

Grandpa : Then, you’re my Countess! You go climbing trees; I can’t any more.

Answers

- a. Where were you?
- b. Have you seen it?
- c. He says he likes sitting there and reading books.
- d. No, I don’t know any Countess.

XVII. Answer the following

- a).** Grandfather : Who won the fight between the mongoose and the cobra?
Boy : The mongoose won the fight.

1. What did the grandfather ask the boy?
2. What was his reply?

Answers

1. Grandfather asked the boy who had won the fight between the mongoose and the cobra.
2. The boy replied that the mongoose had won the fight.

- b).** Boy: "There is a surprise for you,"
Grandfather: Wow! I haven't seen white baby squirrels ever before.

Answers

1. Boy told grandfather that there was surprise for him.
2. Grandfather exclaimed that he hadn't seen white squirrels ever before.

XVIII. Complete the following passage choosing appropriate phrasal verbs given in the box.

[put up with, get up, give up, put out, set out, get into]

Amal has never been able to..... (a)..... early from bed. Though his mother would set the alarm clock, Amal simply turned it off and went back to sleep. Every morning, he would (b)..... late to school. So he (c)..... the class late every day. Amal knew well that his class teacher would not (d)..... with the situation.

Answers (a). Get up (b) set out (c) got into (d) put up with

XIX. Fill in the blanks choosing the right words from the brackets.

[a, to, the, above, in, and]

That was (a)..... time I saw (b)..... mongoose (c)..... a cobra fight (d)..... death (e)..... the garden, while I sat directly (f)..... them (g)..... the banyan tree.

Answers (a) the (b) a (c) and (d) to (e) in (f) above (g) in

XX. Fill in the blanks choosing the right words from the brackets

(in, on, into, with, of, the)

.....(a).....the spring, when the banyan tree was full of small red figs, birds
(b)..... all kinds would flock.....(c)... its branches, the red-bottomed bulbul, cheerful and
greedy; gossiping rosy-pastors; and parrots and crows; squabbling.....(d)..... each other all
the time. During.....(e).....fig season, the banyan tree was the noisiest place.....(f).....the
road.

Answers (a) In (b) of (c) into (d) with (e) the (f) on

XXI. Edit the following passage

‘Adventures In A Banyan Tree’ is a beautiful short story wrote by Ruskin Bond. This are a
story about what the author saw as a young boy when he is sitting in an old banyan tree in his
grandfather house. It was a fight among a mongoose and a cobra.

Answers (a) written (b) is (c) was (d) grandfather’s (e) between

XXII. Read the newspaper-headlines given below and answer the questions that follow:

- a) Thailand Open : Saina Nehwal and rest of Indian contingent clear Covid-19 test.
- b) UP doctors warns against Bird flu spreading to humans, asks to avoid chicken consumption.
- c) Regular Aspirin use may increase old people’s risk of dying from Cancer.
- d) Crude Shock : Petrol price headed for a new high on tax boost.
- e) National Cricket Academy to be set up in Sikkim : Chief Minister.

1. Which headline is related to the field of sports?
2. Which headline refers to the recent pandemic?
3. Which headline speaks about the Bird flu?
4. Which headline is related to medicine?
5. The headline that can upset a vehicle owner is.....

Answers 1. e 2. a 3. b 4. c 5. d

XXIII. Construct a meaningful word pyramid with the word 'man' following the same pattern

Tree

A tree

A huge tree

A huge tree in the garden

A huge tree in the garden that attract birds