

A House is Not a Home

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Chapter Overview

The story 'A house is not a home' depicts the importance of love, care and affection in one's life. The author, a high school student feels strange in his new school. Situation became worse when his house catches fire and his cat is lost. Then it was his school mates' love and care, that supported him. His feelings of loneliness and loss disappeared with them slowly and the author came back to normal life again.

Summary of the Chapter

Author's Love for the Old School

The author after leaving junior high school had shifted to the new high school. He felt lonely among new teachers and students. His new school was twice bigger than the old school. His old friends were sent to another high school. He missed his old teachers and he often went to meet them. They encouraged him to get involved in new school activities. The author's old teachers also told him to come and meet whenever he wanted.

Author's House Caught Fire

One Sunday afternoon, the author was sitting on his dining-room table and doing his homework while his favourite red cat was lying on top of all his papers. It was cold and the fire was burning in the fireplace. The author's mother was stoking (adding fuel to) the fire to keep the house warm. Suddenly, the author noticed that the room was filled with smoke as the roof had caught fire. As the smoke increased, the author and his mother ran out into the front yard. Soon, the fire spread into the whole house. When the author ran to neighbours to call the fire department, he saw that his mother ran back into the house. She wanted to save some important documents. Soon, she came out with a small metal box which was full of important documents.

The author's mother again ran into the house to get some pictures and letters of her husband. As her husband was died and she did not want to let his pictures and letters burnt in the fire. The author was also about to ran after his mother but he was caught by a fireman.

Arrival of Firemen

After the arrival of firemen, one of them went inside the burning house and saved the author's mother. He took author's mother to the truck and put an oxygen mask on her mouth. The author was also wrapped in a blanket and seated down in the car.

Author's Lost His Cat

After five hours, the fire was put out but the author's house was completely burned down. Suddenly, the author remembered his cat. It was not found anywhere. The author started crying while thinking that his cat was also burnt in the fire. The author and his mother went to the author's grandparents house to spend the night.

Going to School

Next day, the author went to the school. He was wearing an old dress. He had no shoes, no books, no backpack. He had borrowed some tennis shoes from his aunt. In this condition, he did not want to grow up and wanted to die. In school, he felt strange and embarrassed. One day, while the author was returning from school, he saw his burnt house. He was shocked to see the damage. He also cried for his missing cat.

The Author Moves on

The author and his mother had to start their life again. They borrowed money from author's grandparents. After a week, the rubble (remains) of the house was cleared. The author used to think about his cat how she would climb up his robe and came into his pocket to sleep.

Schoolmates Helps the Author

Next day, when people in the author's new school got to know about his situation, they all started behaving more friendly. They took the author to the gym and gifted him different things that he would require in his daily life like notebooks, school supplies, jeans, tops, sweatsuits etc.

People who had never spoken to the author came to him to introduce themselves and invited him to their house. His schoolmate's concerns made him realise that everything would go back to normal again.

Life Back to Normal Again

A month later when he visited his house, it was being rebuilt. His two new friends also visited with him. The fire had changed the life of the author. He stopped focussing on his feeling of insecurity and started to mix up with the people around him.

The Author Got back his Cat

When the author was talking to his friends, a lady came up with a cat. The author immediately recognised that it was his cat. The author took the cat in his hands and feels very happy.

The author realised that his cat had run away during the fire. Their phone number was written on the collar of the cat but people could not contact them as their phones were destroyed in the fire. The lady who bought the cat searched for the author and finally found him. Now the author was happy again and he was getting back to his normal life again.

WORD MEANINGS

The given page nos. correspond to the pages in the prescribed textbook.

Word	Meaning
freshman	a student in the first year of high school or college
nonetheless	in spite of what has just been said
tabby	a domestic cat with a striped and mottled coat.
swat	to hit someone or something with a quick motion
rescue	to save someone from danger or harm
stoke	to stir or add fuel to something that is burning
seam	a line where two pieces of wood, metal etc are joined together
groping	to move forward carefully by putting your hands in front of you so that you can feel anything that blocks you.

Word	Meaning
yard	ground
engulfed	to flow over and enclose
crazed	insane
screamed	shouted
yelling	to say something very loudly especially because you are angry, surprised or trying to get someone's attention
tow	accompanying someone
dazed	(especially of an emotional or physical shock) make someone unable to think or react properly
outcast	a person who has been rejected by their society or group.
geek	a person who is socially awkward and unpopular

Word	Meaning
surreal	very strange or unusual
ripped	torn or destroyed
grieve	feel intense sorrow
ache	feel intense sadness or compassion
rubble	waste or rough fragments of stone, brick, concrete etc
tag along	a person or animal who follows a person
robe	a long, loose outer garment reaching to the ankles
plight	a dangerous, difficult or otherwise unfortunate situation
milling	to move in a confused or disorderly manner within a limited area.
shove	push someone or something roughly

Word	Meaning
outpouring	an outburst of strong emotion
sigh	make a long, deep audible breath expressing sadness, relief, tiredness etc

Word	Meaning
curb	a short border along the edge of a street that is usually made of stone or concrete
leapt	move quickly and suddenly

Word	Meaning
freaked	terrified
sorely	to a very high degree or level of intensity

NCERT FOLDER

(Here we have covered questions given in the NCERT textbook along with their answers.)

Think About It (Page 54)

- 1 What does the author notice one Sunday afternoon? What is his mother's reaction? What does she do?

Ans. The author noticed smoke coming from the ceiling of his house on a Sunday afternoon. The author and his mother came out of the house. The reaction of author mother was that she ran back into the house to save important documents and photographs and letters of his father.

- 2 Why did he break down in tears after the fire?

Ans. The author broke down in tears after the fire as he was unable to find his pet cat. He was already sad as he missed his old school and now his house got burned and his pet cat was missing.

- 3 Why is the author deeply embarrassed the next day in school? Which words show his fear and insecurity?

Ans. The author was deeply embarrassed on the next day in school as his clothes looked weird, he had no books or homework and his backpack was destroyed in the fire. The words 'outcast', 'geek' and 'zombie' show his fear and insecurity.

- 4 The cat and the author are very fond of each other. How has this been shown in the story? Where was the cat after the fire? Who brings it back and how?

Ans. The author missed the cat badly when she got lost. Many times he would go to his damaged house to search for the cat. He would also remember the time the author spent with the cat.

The cat used to climb on him and crawl into his pocket to sleep when it was a kitten. She would also follow him. All this shows that the author and the cat were very fond of each other.

The cat was terrified when the author's house caught fire so she had ran away.

A lady brought the cat back by holding it in her arms.

- 5 What actions of the schoolmates change the author's understanding of life and people and comfort him emotionally? How does his loneliness vanish and how does he start participating in life?

Ans. The author's schoolmates gave him school supplies, notebooks and clothes as his house had been completely destroyed by the fire. They also introduced themselves to him and invited him to their house. All these things comforted the author emotionally and changed his understanding of life and people. This incident made the author think for the first time that things are going to be normal in the future. It made his loneliness vanish and led him to make new friends.

- 6 What is the meaning of "My cat was back and so was I"? Had the author gone anywhere? Why does he say that he is also back?

Ans. The sentence 'My cat was back and so was I' means that the author is back to normal life after finding his cat. The author had not gone anywhere. He says this sentence because finding his cat gives him new hope that have replaced the feelings of loss and tragedy. His beloved cat rescues his interest in life and he came back to a positive state of mind.