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Understanding the Text

1. List the steps taken by the captain

(i) to protect the ship when rough weather began.

(ii) to check the flooding of the water in the ship.

Answer:

(i) To protect the ship when rough weather began, the captain planned to slow the ship down. The storm jib was dropped and the mooring rope which was heavy was lashed in a loop over the stem. Everything was double-fastened and they went through the life-raft drill.

(ii) Herb and Larry started to pump the water out. The canvas was stretched by the captain and the waterproof hatch covers were secured across the gaping holes. When the electric pump short circuited and two hand pumps were blocked, he noticed another electric pump and started it by connecting it to an earth pipe.

2. Describe the mental condition of the voyagers on 4th and 5th January.

Answer:

On 4th January, after pumping out water continuously for 36 hours, the voyagers felt relieved. They consumed their first meal in two days. But their break was short-lived. On 5th January, they faced a dangerous situation. The fear of death appeared huge and they underwent great mental stress.

3. Describe the shifts in the narration of the events as indicated in the three sections of the text. Give a subtitle to each section.

Answer:

The first section explains a peaceful journey from Plymouth in England to 3500 km east of Cape Town in Africa. The narrator is fully confident and relaxed. Then they faced huge waves as the weather deteriorated. To save themselves, they took precautionary measures and struggled with the disaster. The narration becomes grim, but exudes confidence and illustrates their fighting spirit and strong will power. The Wave-walker rode out of the storm by 6th January morning, and by evening, they sighted the Ile Amsterdam Island. Now the narrator is relaxed. Relief, joy and confidence are apparent.

Talking About The Text

Discuss the following questions with your partner.

1. What difference did you notice between the reaction of the adults and the children when faced with danger?

Answer:

There are lots of differences in the way the children and adults reacted when faced with danger. The adults initially felt the stress of the situation. But they soon garnered strength and prepared themselves to face it. When the rough weather began, enough precautions were taken to protect the ship. Everyone was equipped with water-proof clothes, lifelines and life jackets. Herb and Larry worked optimistically and cheerfully for three continuous days to pump the water out from the ship. The narrator at the wheel was replaced by Mary who steered the ship when the deck was smashed. She served them meals after a struggle of two days against all odds. As a captain, the narrator performed his role with determination, courage, responsibility and resourcefulness. He undertook the repair work by providing apparatus and giving the directions which were required to protect the ship. He helped in steering the ship towards the island. The children suffered patiently

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and silently. Sue, with her troubles, did not bother her father. Jon behaved courageously and was not scared to die if everyone perished together.

2. How does the story suggest that optimism helps to endure “the direst stress”?

Answer:

The story suggests that optimism helps to endure “the direst stress”. The behaviour of four adults throughout the crisis bears it out. Herb Seigler and Larry Vigil were the two crewmen. As the deck was smashed by the huge waves, water entered the ship from the openings and holes. From the evening of 2nd January, Herb and Larry started to pump out water. They worked feverishly, excitedly and continuously for about 36 hours. As a result of pumping continuously, they reached the last few centimeters of water on 4th January. They stayed optimistic and cheerful while facing dangerous situations. The narrator did not lose his presence of mind, hope or courage while facing problems. He was not worried about the equipment loss and used whatever was present there. His practical knowledge and self-confidence helped them steer out of the storm and reach the Ile Amsterdam Island. In those difficult hours, Mary remained at the wheel. She did not lose courage or hope either.

3. What lessons do we learn from such hazardous experiences when we are face-to-face with death?

Answer:

Hazardous experiences bring us face-to-face with death and impart a few crucial lessons. Our life is not always a bed of roses. We must respond to risks and danger with fortitude and patience. The real test of character is adversity. The purity of gold is decided by putting it on fire. So, hazardous experiences of life bring the best out of us. Before death, **cowards die many times**. Negative feelings like fear lead to inactivity and abject surrender to **situations**. Such **soldiers or sailors** lose the war against difficulties in life. On the other hand, people with **courage, self-confidence, presence of mind and resourcefulness** face the dangers bravely and successfully come out of all disasters. Their caring and sharing attitude inspires others to face difficult situations boldly and steer through them with fortitude.

4. Why do you think people undertake such adventurous expeditions in spite of the risks involved?

Answer:

Human beings are adventurous by nature. The higher the risk, the more the thrill. The thrill of exploring lands and discovering the beauty and wealth which lies hidden in far-off lands inspires brave people to even put their lives at stake. Maybe, they value one hour of glory more than an uneventful long life of inactivity and sloth. At times, adventures are risky and prove deadly. The failure of a few people does not discourage true lovers of adventure. They learn lessons from errors and shortcomings of others and make new attempts with greater zeal. The key to an adventurous expedition lies in adapting to the situations and overcoming the problems. The victory of an adventurous expedition brings wealth, fame and glory. History books are full with accounts of well-known explorers such as Vasco da Gama, Columbus, Captain Scott and Captain Cook.

Thinking about Language

1. We have come across words like ‘gale’ and ‘storm’ in the account. Here are two more words for ‘storm’: typhoon, cyclone. How many words does your language have for ‘storm’?

Answer:

The Hindi language has the following words for ‘storm’: toofan, aandhi, chakravat, and jhanjavat

2. Here are the terms for different kinds of vessels: yacht, boat, canoe, ship, steamer, schooner. Think of similar terms in your language.

Answer:

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Similar terms in Hindi for vessels which are used to travel on water are nava, nauka, jahaj, and pot

3. ‘Catamaran’ is a kind of a boat. Do you know which Indian language this word is derived from? Check the dictionary.

Answer:

‘Catamaran’ is a word derived from Tamil which means ‘tied wood’. It is a boat or yacht containing twin hulls in parallel. It is defined as ‘a fast sailing boat with two hulls’ in the dictionary.

4. Have you heard any boatmen’s songs? What kind of emotions do these songs usually express?

Answer:

The boatmen’s songs invite other sailors to awaken, arise and come to the sea to explore its wealth. These are inspirational songs that provide moral support to the hard-working boatmen.

Working With Words

1. The following words used in the text as ship terminology are also commonly used in another sense. In what contexts would you use the other meaning?

knot

stern

boom

hatch

anchor

Answer:

1. Knot

(a) In a rope/string – a joint which is made by tying two ends or pieces of string or rope together. For example – to tie a knot.

(b) Of hair – Twisting the hair into a round shape at the back of the head. For example – Ria tied her hair in a loose knot.

(c) In wood – a round hard spot in wood where once a branch was present.

(d) Referring to a group of people – a small group of people standing together. For example – Little knots of children gathered at the school gate.

(e) In muscles – a hard, tight feeling in the stomach or throat which are caused by anger, nerves, etc. For example – I felt the knot of fear in his throat.

2. Stern

(a) Often disapproving and serious, expecting others to obey you. For example – His voice was stern.

(b) Difficult and serious. For example – We faced stern opposition.

3. Boom

(a) In economy/ business – an increase in economic activity or trade, a period of success and wealth. For example – A boom in the sales of plots.

(b) Popular period – a time period during which a sport or music suddenly became popular and successful. For example – The way to satisfy the boom of cricket is to provide more playgrounds.

(c) A deep loud sound. For example – the distant boom of the horn.

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(d) In harbour/ river – A floating barrier which is placed at the harbour entrance to prevent ships from going out or coming in.

(e) In microphone – A long pole which carries a microphone.

4. Hatch

(a) An opening in the wall between the dining room and a kitchen through which food is passed. For example – a serving hatch.

(b) A door in a spacecraft or an aircraft.

(c) An escape hatch – a door in a ceiling or floor or an opening. For example – a hatch to the attic.

(d) Young fish, bird or insect coming out of the egg.

(e) To create an idea or a plan in secret.

5. Anchor

(a) to fix something in a position firmly so that it cannot move. For example – Ensure that the apparatus is anchored securely.

(b) to base something on something else firmly. For example – Prem’s novels are anchored in the life of humans.

(c) A person who reports, reads the news on television or radio. For example – The evening news was anchored by Rihana for five years.

(d) A thing or a person who gives a feeling of safety. For example – Julia was the anchor of my life in difficult times.

2. The following three compound words end in -ship. What does each of them mean?

airship

flagship

lightship

Answer:

1. Airship – A large aircraft that has no wings, which is filled with gas that is driven by engines and lighter than air.

2. Flagship –

(i) In the navy, the main ship among the fleet of ships.

(ii) The important service, product or building owned or produced by an organization. For example, the company is opening a new flagship store in Germany.

3. Lightship – A small ship which stays in a particular place at sea and has a powerful light to guide or warn other ships.

3. The following are the meanings listed in the dictionary against the phrase ‘take on’. In which meaning is it used in the third paragraph of the account:

take on sth: to begin to have a particular quality or appearance; to assume sth

take sb on: to employ sb; to engage sb; to accept sb as one’s opponent in a game, contest or conflict

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take sb/sth on: to decide to do sth; to allow sth/sb to enter e.g. a bus, plane or ship; to take sth/sb on board

Answer:

In the third para of the chapter, ‘take on’ is made use of in the meaning of ‘take sb on’ that is to engage sb; to employ sb

Quote from the text: “...we took on two crewmen — American Larry Vigil and Swiss Herb Seigler — to help us...”

Things To Do

1. Given on the next page is a picture of a yacht. Label the parts of the yacht using the terms given in the box.

bow	cabin	rudder	cockpit
stern	boom	mainsail	mast

Answer:

