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Understanding the text

I. Give reasons for the following statements.

1. The article has been titled 'Silk Road.'

Answer:

The article is titled Silk Road because the author travelled through the mountains where the ancient Silk Road used to pass, connecting Tibet to China.

2. Tibetan mastiffs were popular in China's imperial courts.

Answer:

Tibetan mastiffs were ferocious and watchful guard dogs. When the author's vehicle entered the property, they chased it down without fear. As a result, they were presented to the Chinese imperial court as a form of tribute from Tibet.

3. The author's experience at Hor was in stark contrast to earlier accounts of the place.

Answer:

The author's experience at Hor contrasted with travel accounts such as those of Kawaguchi and Hedin, who were overcome by the beauty and serenity of the lake, and cried. The author observed a neglected Hor with sparse vegetation, a rocky and dusty landscape, and discarded waste in the surrounding area.

4. The author was disappointed with Darchen.

Answer:

When they arrived in Darchen, the author couldn't sleep due to a cold, so he sought treatment from a Tibetan doctor. When he looked around the next day, he noticed there were no pilgrims, which was a major disadvantage for his future journey.

5. The author thought that his positive thinking strategy worked well after all.

Answer:

When the author discovered no pilgrims in Darchen, he began to doubt his positive thinking. But, by chance, he ran into Norbu, who had also come to do kora. He was a professor in Beijing. When he suggested that they both form a team, the author realised that his positive thinking had paid off after all.

II. Briefly comment on

1. The purpose of the author's journey to Mount Kailash.

Answer:

The author's trip to Mount Kailash was part of a self-improvement programme. The author wanted to boost his positive thinking, so he went on a pilgrimage called the kora.

2. The author's physical condition in Darchen.

Answer:

At Darchen, one of the author's nostrils became blocked. When he tried to sleep, he got up because his chest felt uneasy, though it was fine once he sat up. When he discovered he couldn't lie down, he tried sleeping by leaning against a wall, but he became afraid of falling asleep due to his breathing problem. He felt better after taking the medication.

3. The author's meeting with Norbu.

Answer:

Norbu and the author met by chance in Darchen's cafe. When Norbu noticed the author reading an English novel, he struck up a conversation, and they soon realised they were both headed for Korba. They decided to form a group.

4. Tsetan's support to the author during the journey.

Answer:

Tsetan drove the author from Ravu to Darchen in his four-wheel drive vehicle. He manoeuvred his way through the snowy terrain. When the author became ill, he also took him to the Darchen medical college. Throughout, Tsetan was a dependable and approachable companion.

5. "As a Buddhist, he told me, he knew that it didn't really matter if I passed away, but he thought it would be bad for business."

Answer:

Tsetan was a devout Buddhist who believed that death was not the end of the world. Kailash is a holy place; going there would be better for him because it would transport him to heaven. Then, if the author died there, it would be bad for his business because his credibility in looking after the tourists would be jeopardised, and he might not get any customers later.

Thinking about language

1. Notice the kind of English Tsetan uses while talking to the author. How do you think he picked it up?

Answer:

Tsetan's English must have been picked up through his travels and interactions with the pilgrims he met.

2. What do the following utterances indicate?

(i) "I told her, through Daniel ..."

(ii) "It's a cold," he said finally through Tsetan.

Answer:

The preceding utterances demonstrate the absence of a common language. The author was unable to communicate in the local language and could only communicate in English. As a result, Daniel was the translator, and Tsetan was the one who translated the doctor's words for the author.

3. Guess the meaning of the following words.

kora drokba kyang

In which language are these words found?

Answer:

These are of Tibetan language.

Father to Son

Think it out

1. Does the poem talk of an exclusively personal experience or is it fairly universal?

Answer:

The poem discusses a fairly universal experience concerning the relationship between parents and children. The poem discusses the communication gap and how neither of them understands what the other is thinking.

2. How is the father's helplessness brought out in the poem?

Answer:

The father's helplessness is emphasised by the depiction of his emotional struggle. He is aware of the issue and wants to solve it, but he is unable to do so. He bemoans the fact that his son has become a stranger to him. He regrets the lack of a strong emotional bond and proper communication with his estranged son and wishes to start over and rebuild their relationship.

3. Identify the phrases and lines that indicate distance between father and son.

Answer:

Lines and phrases that show the distance between father and son are:

"land is his and none of mine"

"Him prodigal, returning to his father's house"

"see him make and move his world"

"put out an empty hand"

4. Does the poem have a consistent rhyme scheme?

Answer:

The poem has a rhyme scheme, but it is inconsistent. The rhyme scheme varies slightly between stanzas.