

Chapter – 6

Want Something In A Cage

Comprehension Check

Q1. Write 'True' or 'False' against each of following statements.

- (i) Mr. Purcell sold birds, cats, dogs and monkeys. _____
- (ii) He was very concerned about the well-being of the birds and animals in his shop. _____
- (iii) He was impressed by the customer who bought the two doves. _____
- (iv) He was a successful shop owner, though insensitive and cold as a person. _____

Answer. (i) True

(ii) False : He was happily unaware of the twittering, chirping and screeching noises of the birds and animals.

(iii) False : He found the customer strange and uncanny.

(iv) False : He greeted the customers very well.

Q2. Why is Mr. Purcell compared to an owl?

Answer. Mr. Purcell's large glasses magnified his eyes so as to give him the appearance of a wise and genial owl.

Q3. From the third paragraph pick out

- (i) words associated with cries of birds,
- (ii) words associated with noise,
- (iii) words suggestive of confusion and fear.

Answer. (i) Twitters, rustling, squeals, cheeps, squeaks

(ii) Flicker, scampered

(iii) Frantic, frightened, bewildered, blindly seeking

Q4. Mr. Purcell heard it no more than he would have heard the monotonous ticking of a familiar clock." (Read para beginning with "It was a rough day...")

- (i) What does 'it' refer to?
- (ii) Why does Mr. Purcell not hear 'it' clearly?

Answer. (i) Here, 'it' refers to the chirping, squeaking and mewing of the birds and animals in the shop.

(ii) Mr Purcell did not hear the noise clearly because he owned the pet shop and thus, these noises seemed usual to him, like the monotonous ticking of a clock. He was used to the noise.

Q5. Do you think the atmosphere of Mr. Purcell's shop was cheerful or depressing? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer. The atmosphere of Mr. Purcell's shop was cheerful because of the presence of so many chirping and squeaking birds and animals. However, all these birds and animals were in cages, and no one can be happy when inside a cage. Hence, the atmosphere was in a way depressing as well.

Q6. Describe the stranger who came to the pet shop. What did he want?

Answer. The stranger who came to the pet shop was wearing shiny shoes, a cheap, ill-fitting, but new suit. He had a shuttling glance and close-cropped hair. He was gazing around the shop. He wanted something in a cage.

Q7. (i) The man insisted on buying the doves because he was fond of birds. Do you agree?

(ii) How had he earned the five dollars he had?

Answer. (i) No, it does not seem that he insisted on buying doves because he was fond of birds. He did not ask for them straightaway. He only said that he wanted something in a cage. Later, he added that he wanted something that flew. This manner in which he conveyed what he wanted does not show that he bought the doves because he was fond of them.

(ii) He had earned the five dollars in ten years. He said that he had been given five dollars and a cheap suit, and had been told not to get caught again, implying that he had earned the money in prison and had recently been freed.

Q8. Was the customer interested in the care and feeding of the doves he had bought? If not, why not?

Answer. No, the customer was not interested in the care and feeding of the doves he had bought. This was because he was going to set them free.

Exercises

Q1. Why, in your opinion, did the man set the doves free?

Answer. The man set the doves free because he himself had been set free. The description that he gave about how he had earned the five dollars show that he had been in prison for ten years. On release, he had been given the five dollars and a cheap suit. He had been told not to get caught again. Knowing the importance of freedom, he

identified with the birds in the cage wanting to fly and to be free. Therefore, he bought the two doves using the money he had, and then set them free.

Q2. Why did it make Mr. Purcell feel “vaguely insulted”?

Answer. Mr. Purcell owned the pet shop and considered himself as a professional man. Customers bought birds and animals from him to keep as pets in their houses. He thought that the man had desired the doves desperately as he had spent all his income on it. That is why he sold the doves to him at a reduced price. Mr. Purcell was annoyed with the man because of his behaviour. The man did not show any interest when Mr. Purcell started telling him about the care and feeding of doves. Instead, he walked out of the shop and freed the two doves he had bought, throwing away the cage on the road. This made Mr. Purcell feel “vaguely insulted”.