

Unit 7 Prose

A Birthday Letter

Jawaharlal Nehru



Warm up

- ▲ Have you ever received a personal letter from your friends or relatives?
- ▲ If yes, from whom and about what?
- ▲ Have you ever written a personal letter to anyone?
- ▲ If yes, to whom and about what?



It was the summer of 1928, when Jawaharlal Nehru began writing letters to his young daughter, Indira, who was in Mussoorie at that time. In his letters, he speaks to his daughter on a wide range of topics, including languages, trade, history, geography, science, epics and evolution. When Indira was about to turn 13 in 1930, Nehru started sending her more detailed letters. These letters contained his understanding of the world which he wanted to further impart to his daughter. Even while he was in prison, he wanted to make sure that his child is not devoid of her father's teachings. Over the next four years, Nehru continuously wrote to his daughter from prison and his words are still inspiring.



The letters written by Nehru from the various prisons in British India to his daughter Indira, were published in 1942 as a book called "Glimpses of World History". It is a collection 196 letters on world history.



Now read the letter from Jawaharlal Nehru to his daughter Indira.

Central Prison, Naini
October 26, 1930

My dear Indira,

On your birthday you have been in the habit of receiving presents and good wishes. Good wishes you will still have in full measure, but what present can I send you from Naini Prison? My presents cannot be very material or solid. They can be of the mind and spirit. Things that even the high walls of prison cannot stop.

You know sweetheart, how I dislike sermonising and doling out good advice. I have always thought that the best way to find out what is right and what is not right, what should be done and what should not be done, is not by giving a **sermon**, but by talking and discussing, and out of discussion sometimes a little bit of truth comes out. I have liked my talks with you and we have discussed many things, but the world is wide and beyond our world lie other wonderful and mysterious worlds. None of us need ever be bored or imagine that we have learned everything worth learning and become very wise.

But what am I to do then? A letter can hardly take the place of a talk; at best it is a one-sided affair. Imagine that I have made a suggestion to you for you to think over, as if we really were having a talk.

In history we read of great periods in the life of nations, of great men and women. Do you remember how **fascinated** you were when you first read the story of Joan of Arc, and how your ambition was to be something like her? Ordinary men and women are not usually heroic. They think of their bread and butter, of their children, of their household worries and the like. But a time comes when a whole people become interested in a great cause. Then history helps even

- ▲ From which prison did Nehru write this letter?
- ▲ Did Nehru send any presents to Indira?

- ▲ Which historical character inspired young Indira?
- ▲ What helps the ordinary men and women to become heroes?





simple, ordinary men and women to become heroes. Great leaders have something in them which inspires a whole people and makes them do great **deeds**. In India a great leader, full of love for all who suffer and eager to help them, has inspired our people to great actions and noble sacrifice. He has helped to make the **starving**, the poor and the **oppressed** free and happy.

Bapuji is in prison, but the magic of his message has stolen the hearts of India's millions. Men and women, and even little children, come out of their little shells and become India's soldiers of freedom. In India today we are making history, and you and I are fortunate to see this happening before our eyes and to take some part ourselves in this great drama.

If we are to be India's soldiers, we have to respect India's honour, and that honour is a **sacred** trust. It is no easy matter to decide what is right and what is not. One little test I shall ask you to apply whenever you are in doubt. Never do anything in secret or anything that you would wish to hide. For the desire to hide anything means that you are afraid, and fear is a bad thing and unworthy of you. Be brave, and all the rest follows.

You know that in our great Freedom Movement, under Bapuji's leadership, there is no room for secrecy or hiding. We have nothing to hide. We are not afraid of what we do or what we say. We work in the sun and in the light. Even so in our private lives let us make friends with the sun and work in the light and do nothing secretly and if you do so, my dear, you will grow up a child of the light, unafraid and **serene** and **unruffled**, whatever may happen.

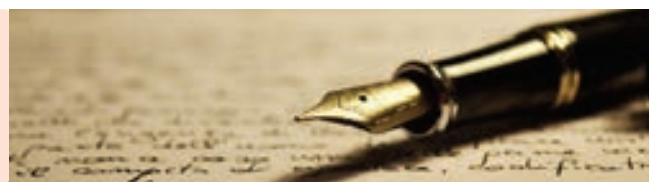
I have written a very long letter to you. And yet there is so much I would like to tell you. How can a letter contain it? Good-bye, little one, and may you grow up into a brave soldier in India's service.

With all my love and good wishes.

Your loving father,

Jawaharlal Nehru

- ▲ Who is addressed as 'Bapuji'?
- ▲ What should the soldiers of India respect?





About the Author



Jawaharlal Nehru (14 November 1889 – 27 May 1964) was the first Prime Minister of India and a central figure in Indian politics before and after independence. He emerged as an eminent leader of the Indian independence movement under the tutelage of Mahatma Gandhi and served India as Prime Minister from its establishment as an independent nation in 1947 until his death in 1964. He is considered to be the architect of the modern Indian nation-state: a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic. He was also known as 'Pandit Nehru' while many Indian children knew him as 'Uncle Nehru'.

Glossary



- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| sermon (n) | - ceremony in which a priest gives a talk on a religious or moral subject |
| fascinated (adj.) | - extremely attracted |
| deed (n) | - a brave or noble act |
| starving (adj.) | - suffering or dying from hunger |
| oppressed (adj.) | - governed in an unfair and cruel way and prevented from having opportunities and freedom |
| sacred (adj.) | - considered to be holy and deserving respect |
| serene (adj.) | - peaceful and calm |
| unruffled (adj.) | - not nervous or worried, usually despite a difficult situation |

A. Answer the following questions in one or two sentences.

1. Why could not Nehru send any presents to Indira?
2. What cannot be stopped even by the high walls of prisons?
3. Why did Nehru dislike sermonizing?
4. What does history tell us?
5. What do ordinary men and women usually think of?
6. When do ordinary men and women become heroes?
7. What does the phrase 'great drama' refer to?
8. Why are the freedom fighters under Gandhi not afraid of anything?





B. Answer the following in about 80 - 100 words each.

1. Explain the important elements of Nehru's letter.
2. Imagine yourself as Indira and write a reply letter to your father, Nehru for the letter you received on your birthday.

C. Match the words with correct Synonym and Antonym from the table.

S.No	Word	Synonym	Antonym
1	wide	privilege	freedom
2	noble	valiant	public
3	oppress	valuable	coward
4	honour	personal	ignoble
5	worthy	gentle	dishonour
6	private	broad	narrow
7	brave	subdue	unworthy

Think and answer.

What is the difference between an opinion and a fact?

- ❖ An opinion is one's feelings or thoughts about somebody/something.
- ❖ A fact is a piece of information that can be proved to be true.

D. Identify, whether the following statements are of OPINION or FACT

1. On your birthday you have been in the habit of receiving presents and good wishes. (*Opinion/Fact*)
2. I have liked my talks with you. (*Opinion/Fact*)
3. The best way to find what is wrong and right is by discussing. (*Opinion/Fact*)
4. A letter can hardly take the place of a talk. (*Opinion/Fact*)
5. For the desire to hide anything means that you are afraid. (*Opinion/Fact*)

***LISTENING**



E. *Listen to the dialogue and answer the following questions.

1. Aadhav and Raghav are _____.
a. brothers b. friends c. colleagues d. classmates
2. The brothers are planning to celebrate their _____ wedding anniversary.
a. uncle's b. parents' c. grandparents' d. sister's

*Listening text is on Page - 213





3. The wedding anniversary is on _____.
a. March 2nd b. April 2nd c. May 2nd d. June 2nd
4. As part of the celebration, the brothers have planned to make their parents to _____.
a. visit an orphanage b. donate some money
c. plant a mango sapling d. conduct a game

5. **State whether the statement is true or false.**

The brothers have decided to borrow money for the wedding anniversary celebration.

READING



Anne Frank's Diary Entry about her birthday.

Sunday, June 14, 1942

Dear Kitty,

I hope I will be able to confide everything to you (the diary), as I have never been able to confide in anyone, and I hope you will be a great source of comfort and support.

I'll begin from the moment I got you, the moment I saw you lying on the table among my other birthday presents. (I went along when you were bought, but that doesn't count.)

On Friday, June 12, I was awake at six o'clock, which isn't surprising, since it was my birthday. But I'm not allowed to get up at that hour, so I had to control my curiosity until quarter to seven. When I couldn't wait any longer, I went to the dining room, where Moortje (the cat) welcomed me by rubbing against my legs.

A little after seven I went to Dad and Mom and then to the living room to open my presents, and you were the first thing I saw, maybe one of my nicest presents. Then a bouquet of roses, some peonies and a potted plant. From Dad and Mom, I got a blue blouse, a game, a bottle of grape juice, a puzzle, a jar of cold cream and a gift certificate for two books. I got another book as well, Camera Obscura (but my sister Margot already has it, so I exchanged mine for something else), a platter of homemade cookies (which I made myself, of course, since I've become quite an expert at baking cookies), lots of candy and a strawberry tart from Mother.

Then Hanneli my classmate came to pick me up, and we went to school. During recess I passed out cookies to my teachers and my class, and then it was time to get back to work. As it was my birthday, I got to decide which game my classmates would play, and I chose volleyball. Afterward they all danced around me in a circle and sang "Happy Birthday."



F. Answer the following questions based on the given reading passage.

1. What is the name of her diary?
2. Why did Anne want to exchange the book 'Camera Obscura'?
3. Who baked the homemade cookies?
4. What game did Anne choose to play?
5. Which gift did Anne value the most?

SPEAKING



G. Imagine you are going to celebrate your forthcoming birthday at an orphanage/old-age home.

Deliver a short speech about your birthday celebration by using the following hints.

- ◆ The reasons for choosing an orphanage/old-age home.
- ◆ The people who accompany you.
- ◆ The food which you are going to offer them.
- ◆ The useful gifts/articles which you are going to give them.
- ◆ Other events like cake cutting, conducting games etc.

WRITING



Developing Hints

Developing hints is developing the phrases into full sentences and then into a meaningful coherent paragraph.

Points to remember :

- ▲ Read the hints twice or thrice carefully.
- ▲ Understand the passage well.
- ▲ Jot down the points.
- ▲ If the events in the passage are in present tense, write the story in the past tense.
- ▲ Arrange the matter in two or three paragraphs.
- ▲ Give a suitable title.

H. Write a meaningful paragraph using the hints given below.

Mahesh – celebrates – 14th birthday – an old-age home – family, friends – informs home in advance – delegates tasks – friends buy things necessary – arrives home early – decorates place – balloons, colour papers – inmates gathered – cuts cake – sing song, claps – distributes cakes – expresses his feelings – gets blessings – offers things – bedsheets, footwear etc. needed – fun, entertainment – happy and content.



Determiners

Observe the nouns in the following sentences and words before them.

- ✱ **An** apple is a healthy fruit.
- ✱ **Two** cats have drunk a bowl of milk.
- ✱ **My** father has **many** cars.

Determiners are the words that introduce a noun and provide some information about it (but do not describe it).

Determiners are followed by a noun.

- ✱ **The** ball
- ✱ **Five** cats
- ✱ **His** son
- ✱ **Some** students

Types of Determiners

Articles	Demonstratives	Possessive Adjectives
a, an, the	this, that these, those	my, our, your, his, her, its, their
Quantifiers	Cardinal Numbers	Ordinal Numbers
some, any, few, little, more, much, many, every	one, two, three, twenty, forty, hundred etc.	first, second, third, twentieth etc.

- ◆ The quantifiers **all, any, enough, less, a lot of, more, most, no, none of, some etc.**, are used with both countable and uncountable nouns.
- ◆ The quantifiers **both, each, either, fewer, neither etc.**, are used only with countable nouns.

A. Choose the Correct Determiner

- Could you bring me _____ tools I left in the garden? (**this, those, these**)
- _____ Earth revolves around the sun. (**the, a, an**)
- I found _____ one rupee coin in the playground while playing. (**a, an, the**)
- There aren't _____ students in the library. (**much, many, a lot**)



5. It was _____ unforgettable experience. (a, an, the)
6. I haven't got _____ pictures in my bedroom. (some, any, many)
7. He said that he wanted to become _____ engineer. (a, an, the)
8. Kokila gave a pen to _____ child in the classroom on her birthday. (any, all, each)
9. I've got to solve _____ math problems before I go to sleep. (all, some, any)
10. India is _____ largest democracy in the world. (a, an, the)
11. My father doesn't drink _____ coffee. (much, many, a lot)
12. I always keep _____ money in my wallet for emergencies. (any, every, some)
13. This year we are celebrating my sister's _____ birthday. (a, two, second)
14. I have _____ pencils with me. (a, three, third)
15. 'What is that noise?' I think it is _____ aeroplane. (a, an, the)

Reported Speech

Look at the following sentences

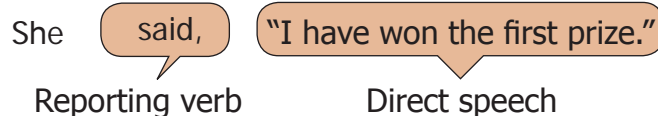
She said, "I have won the first prize." (Direct Speech)

She said that she had won the first prize. (Indirect Speech)

- ✦ In the first sentence, the reporter conveys the message of the girl using her actual words i.e., ("I have won the first prize.")
- ✦ In the second sentence, the reporter conveys her message but in his own words without any change in the meaning. (She said that she had won the first prize.)
- ✦ In direct speech, we reproduce the actual words of the speaker. We place spoken words within inverted commas (" ").
- ✦ In indirect speech (*also called Reported Speech*), we report the words of the speaker with a few changes.

Key Terminology

Direct Speech



Reporting Statements

We make the following changes when reporting the statements.

- Change the **pronouns**
- Reporting verb followed by 'that'
- Change the **tense**, **time** and **place**

(e.g.) Kowsalya said, "We watched a film yesterday."

Kowsalya said **that they watched** a film **the day before**.

pronoun tense time

Reporting Imperatives

To report an imperative, use the pattern –

request/order/suggest + someone + to infinitive

(e.g.) Karthi said to Ram, "Please, switch on the fan."

Karthi requested Ram to switch on the fan.

Reporting Questions

When reporting questions, we use the pattern:

asked/ wanted to know + question word + pronoun + verb

(e.g.) She said to me, "Where did you go?"

She asked me where I went.

Note: If the 'wh' question is missing, *if* or *whether* is added.

(e.g.) Praveena asked, "Have you watered the plants?"

Praveena asked if/whether I had watered the plants.

Sometimes it is not necessary to report everything that is said word by word. It may be better to use 'reporting verbs' which summarise what was communicated.

Below are some of the most commonly used verbs of this kind.

accept	advise	apologise	ask	assure	blame
complain	complement	congratulate	explain	greet	hope
invite	offer	order	persuade	promise	remind
regret	say	suggest	tell	thank	answer
warn	encourage	regret	sympathize	refuse	instruct

Remember these rules of change

Pronouns			
Direct Speech	Indirect Speech		
	Masculine	Feminine	Plural
I	he	she	-
You (Subject)	he	she	they
you (Object)	him	her	them
your	his	her	their
my	his	her	their
myself	himself	herself	themselves
we	-	-	they
us	-	-	them

Denoting Time and Position	
Direct Speech	Indirect Speech
this	that
these	those
now	then
ago	before
last night	the previous night
next day	the following day

Denoting Time and Position	
Direct Speech	Indirect Speech
today	that day
yesterday	the previous day
tomorrow	the next day
next week	the following week
last week	the previous week
here	there



**B. Observe the following call-outs. Reporter (C) has reported the sentences of Speaker (A).
Now, help Reporter (C) report the rest of the sentences of Speaker (A).**

A (Speaker)

I have to go.

Can you hear me?

Consult the doctor.

I won't go to the party.

When did you come?

Don't touch the wire.

B (Questioner)

What did he say?

What did she say?

What did he say?

What did he say?

What did she say?

What did she say?

What did he say?

What did he say?

C (Reporter)

He said that he wanted to go.
(say)

She asked if you could hear her.
(ask)

He advised you to consult the doctor.
(advise)

(say)

(ask)

(warn)





C. Report the following sentences.

1. Pushpa said, "Do not spoil the eco-system."
2. Ebin said, "Have you booked the tickets to Delhi?"
3. Rehman said to Tilak, "When are we leaving to our native?"
4. Maha said, "Lakshan, you should get up early in the morning."
5. Gladin said to his mother, "Can you, please, buy me a hot-chocolate?"
6. "Tomorrow I have to take a test in English", said Sudha.
7. Amali said to her sister, "I need your help to arrange the books in the shelf."
8. "Why don't you use crayons for colouring?" said Prabhu to his son.

Project

D. Write a Diary entry each day for a month and compile them into a book. You may also name your diary as Anne Frank did.

Diary writing is one of the most personal and informal categories of writing. A diary writing can be based on an experience, a scene, a description or narration of certain event or any other thing or activity that the writer considers worth writing in his/her personal diary.

The style and tone is generally informal and personal. However, it depends on the subject. You can freely express your viewpoints and feelings. As the diary is writer's personal document, the diary entry doesn't need any signature.

The more frequently you write entries in your diary, the more you will enjoy doing it and the more you will learn from them.



Unit 7 Poem

The Stick-together Families

Edgar Albert Guest



Warm up

At the heart of life lie the relationships you have with other people: with family, classmates and friends close-by and far away. All relationships are based on some commonly accepted values like respect, honesty, consideration and commitment. Think about all the important relationships in your life and complete the table given below.



Relationship	What I value the most about this relationship	What are the things that may/do cause unpleasantness in this relationship?	What could I do to improve this relationship?
Grandparents			
Parents			
Siblings			
Friends			
Teachers			

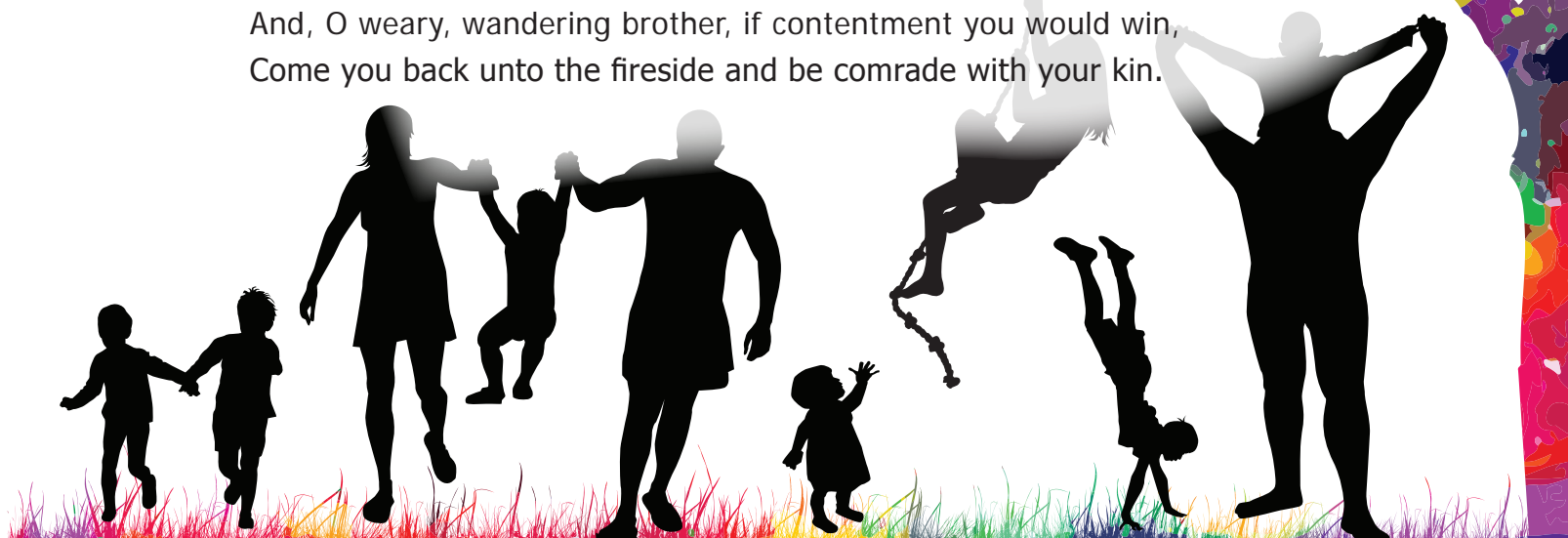
FAMILY

The stick-together families are happier by far
Than the brothers and the sisters who take separate highways are.
The gladdest people living are the wholesome folks who make
A circle at the fireside that no power but death can break.
And the finest of conventions ever held beneath the sun
Are the little family gatherings when the busy day is done.

There are rich folk, there are poor folk, who imagine they are wise,
And they're very quick to shatter all the little family ties.
Each goes searching after pleasure in his own selected way,
Each with strangers likes to wander, and with strangers likes to play.
But it's bitterness they harvest, and it's empty joy they find,
For the children that are wisest are the stick-together kind.

There are some who seem to fancy that for gladness they must roam,
That for smiles that are the brightest they must wander far from home.
That the strange friend is the true friend, and they travel far astray
They waste their lives in striving for a joy that's far away,
But the gladdest sort of people, when the busy day is done,
Are the brothers and the sisters who together share their fun.

It's the stick-together family that wins the joys of earth,
That hears the sweetest music and that finds the finest mirth;
It's the old home roof that shelters all the charm that life can give;
There you find the gladdest play-ground, there the happiest spot to live.
And, O weary, wandering brother, if contentment you would win,
Come you back unto the fireside and be comrade with your kin.





Glossary



- conventions** (n) - a large formal meeting of people who have a similar interest
- shatter** (v) - to break suddenly into very small pieces
- astray** (adv.) - away from the correct path or correct way of doing something
- mirth** (n) - laughter, humour or happiness
- comrade** (n) - a friend

A. Based on your understanding of the poem, answer the questions in a sentence or two.

1. *The gladdest people living are the wholesome folks who make
A circle at the fireside that no power but death can break.*
 - a. Who are the gladdest people living ?
 - b. Where do they gather?
 - c. What can break their unity?
2. *And the finest of conventions ever held beneath the sun
Are the little family gatherings when the busy day is done.*
 - a. When do they have their family gatherings?
 - b. Where do they have their family conventions?
 - c. What does the poet mean by 'finest conventions'?
3. *There are rich folk, there are poor folk, who imagine they are wise,
And they're very quick to shatter all the little family ties.*
 - a. What do the rich and poor folk imagine themselves to be?
 - b. What do they do to their families?
 - c. Whom does 'they' refer to?
4. *There are some who seem to fancy that for gladness they must roam,
That for smiles that are the brightest they must wander far from home*
 - a. Why do they roam?
 - b. According to them, when do they get bright smiles?
5. *But the gladdest sort of people, when the busy day is done,
Are the brothers and the sisters who together share their fun.*
 - a. Who are the gladdest people?
 - b. When do they share their fun?
 - c. What does 'who' refer to?





6. *It's the stick-together family that wins the joys of earth,
That hears the sweetest music and that finds the finest mirth;*
- Who wins the joys of the earth?
 - How do they find their joy?
 - What does the poet mean by 'stick-together family'?

B. Based on the understanding of the poem, fill in the blanks using the words and phrases given below to make a meaningful summary of the poem.

brothers and sisters	bitterness	joint family	share their fun	rich and the poor folk
shatter their family	charm of life	separate ways	the joy of earth	stick-together families

The poet brings out the difference in the attitudes of children living in joint family and nuclear family. The _____ are the happiest of all. Where as the _____ of nuclear families take _____. The gladdest people are the children from _____ who circle near the fireside. No power other than death can break them. The _____ imagine themselves to be wise and in the process they _____ ties. Each of them goes searching for pleasure in their own selected way. They harvest only _____ and find empty joy. But the wisest among them are the children of the stick-together families. When the busy day is done, they together _____. The stick-together family wins _____. The old house shelters all the _____. The poet invites wandering brothers to come and join the stick-together families in their fireside and have fun.

C. Answer the following questions in about 80 - 100 words.

- The stick-together families are the happiest of all. Explain.
- Bring out the difference between the children of the joint family and nuclear family.

Figure of speech

Personification

Personification is a figure of speech in which an inanimate object or abstraction is given human qualities or abilities.

E.g. *It's the stick-together family that wins the joys of earth,...*

Imagery

Imagery means to use figurative language to represent objects, actions, and ideas in such a way that it appeals to our physical senses.

E.g. *That hears the sweetest music...*

Metaphor

Metaphor is a figure of speech that makes an implicit, implied, or hidden comparison between two things that are unrelated, but which share some common characteristics

E.g. *It's the old home roof that shelters....*

There you find the gladdest play-ground...

D. Answer the following

1. *There are rich folk, there are poor folk, who imagine they are wise,...*
Pick out the words in alliteration.
2. Mention the rhyme scheme of the poem.

*LISTENING



E. Listen to the passage and fill in the blanks with appropriate answer.

1. A person is valued based on his _____.
2. _____ does not happen overnight.
3. A close family bond is like a _____.
4. A strong foundation for any individual comes from being with a _____.
5. A gift not only with _____, but _____ who care and love us beyond themselves.

SPEAKING



- F. "The building actually rests on the well laid out foundation and hence is strong and still." How can this be related to a family? Discuss with your partner and share your views in the class.

WRITING



G. Write a four-line poem with rhyming words describing your family.

*Listening text is on Page - 214



Read and Enjoy

Memories of My Dad

Rebecca D.Cook.

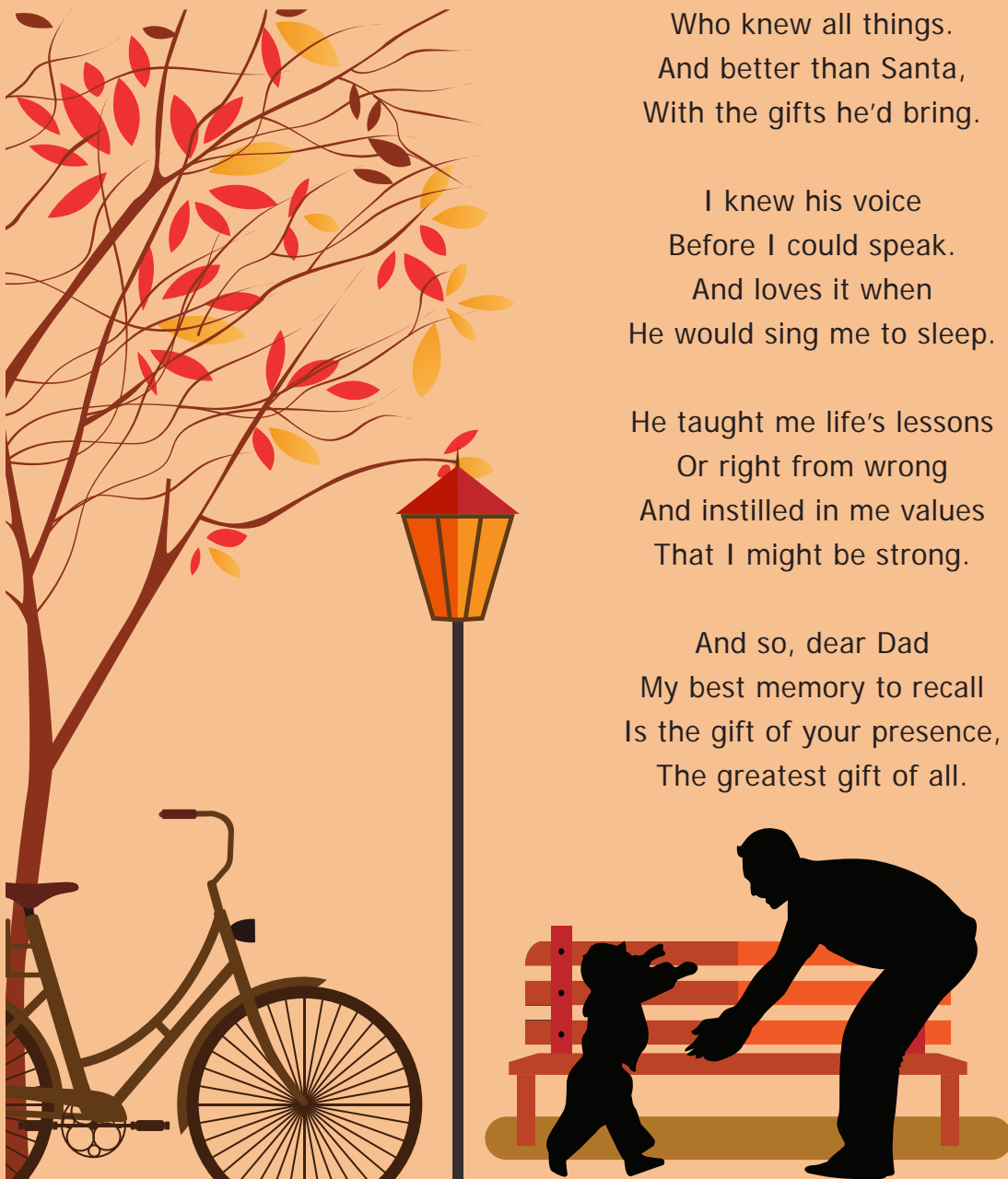
He wasn't a hero
Known by the world,
But a hero he was
To his little girl.

My daddy was God,
Who knew all things.
And better than Santa,
With the gifts he'd bring.

I knew his voice
Before I could speak.
And loves it when
He would sing me to sleep.

He taught me life's lessons
Or right from wrong
And instilled in me values
That I might be strong.

And so, dear Dad
My best memory to recall
Is the gift of your presence,
The greatest gift of all.



The Christmas Truce

Aaron Shepard



Warm Up

- ★ Name one festival which you like the most.
- ★ How do you celebrate that festival?
- ★ Narrate a memorable incident which happened during that celebration.

This piece, set during World War I, highlights the beauty of unlikely friendships and fellowship. It is a British soldier's letter to his sister on how all enmity was forgotten as British and German soldiers celebrated Christmas together.

Christmas Day, 1914

My dear sister Janet,

It is 2:00 in the morning and most of our men are asleep in their **dugouts** – yet I could not sleep before writing to you about what happened here on Christmas Eve. In truth, what happened seems almost like a fairy tale, and if I had not been through it myself, I would scarce believe it. While you and the family sang **carols** before the fire there in London, I did the same with enemy soldiers here on the battlefields of France!

As I wrote before, there has been little serious fighting of late. The first battles of the war left so many dead that both sides have held back until replacements could come from home. So, we have mostly stayed in our **trenches** and waited.

But what a terrible waiting it has been! Knowing that any moment an artillery shell might land and explode beside us in the trench, killing or **maiming** several men. And in daylight not daring to lift our heads above ground, for fear of a sniper's bullet.

And the rain – it has fallen almost daily. Of course, it collects right in our trenches, where we must bail it out with pots and pans. And with the rain has come mud – a good foot or deeper. It **splatters** and cakes everything, and constantly sucks at our boots. One new recruit got his feet stuck in it, and then his hands too when he tried to get out.



Through all this, we could not help feeling curious about the German soldiers across the way. After all, they faced the same dangers we did and **slogged** about in the same **muck**. What's more, their first trench was only fifty yards from ours. Between us lay No Man's Land, bordered on both sides by barbed wire - yet they were close enough we sometimes heard their voices.

Of course, we hated them when they killed our friends. But other times, we joked about them and almost felt we had something in common. And now it seems they felt the same.

Just yesterday morning - Christmas Eve Day - we had our first good freeze. Cold as we were, we welcomed it, because at least the mud froze solid. Everything was tinged white with frost while a bright sun shone over everything. Perfect Christmas weather!

During the day, there was little shelling or rifle fire from either side. And as darkness fell on our Christmas Eve, the shooting stopped entirely. Our first complete silence in months! We hoped it might promise a peaceful holiday, but didn't count on it. We'd been told the Germans might attack and try to catch us off guard.

I went to the dugout to rest, and lying on my cot, I must have drifted asleep. All at once my friend John was shaking me awake, saying, "Come and see! See what the Germans are doing!" I grabbed my rifle, **stumbled** out into the trench, and stuck my head cautiously above the sandbags.

I never hope to see a stranger and more lovely sight. Clusters of tiny lights were shining all along the German line, left and right as far as the eye could see.

"What is it?" I asked in bewilderment, and John answered, "Christmas trees!"

And so it was. The Germans had placed Christmas trees in front of their trenches, lit by candle or lantern, like beacons of goodwill.

And then we heard them singing.

Stille nacht, heilige nacht...

This carol may not yet be familiar to us in Britain, but John knew it and translated: "Silent Night, Holy Night." I've never heard one lovelier - or more meaningful, in that quiet, clear night, its darkness softened by a first - quarter moon.

When the song finished, the men in our trenches applauded. Yes, British soldiers applauded Germans! Then one of our own men started singing, and we all joined in.

The first Nowell, the angel did say ...

In truth, we sounded not nearly as good as the Germans, with their fine harmonies. But they responded with enthusiastic applause of their own and then began another.



O Tannenbaum, o Tannenbaum...

Then we replied.

O come all ye faithful...

But this time they joined in, singing the words in Latin.

Adeste fideles...

Britain and Germany harmonizing across No Man's Land! I would have thought nothing could be more amazing – but what came next was even more so.

"English, come over!" we heard one of them shout. "You no shoot, we no shoot."

There in the trenches, we looked at each other in **bewilderment**. Then one of us shouted jokingly, "You come over here."

To our astonishment, we saw two figures rise from a trench, climb over their barbed wire, and advance unprotected across No Man's Land. One of them called, "Send officer to talk."

I saw one of our men lift his rifle to the ready, and no doubt others did the same - but our captain called out, "Hold your fire." Then he climbed out and went to meet the Germans halfway.

We heard them talking, and a few minutes later, the captain came back and announced, "We've agreed that there will be no shooting before midnight tomorrow. But sentries are to remain on duty, and the rest of you, stay alert."

Across the way, we could make out groups of two or three men starting out of trenches and coming towards us. Then some of us climbed out too, and in minutes, there we were in No Man's Land – over a hundred soldiers and officers of each side, shaking hands with men we'd been trying to kill just hours earlier!

Before long, a bonfire was built and around it we mingled – British khaki and German grey. I must say, the Germans were the better dressed, with fresh uniforms for the holiday.

Only a couple of our men knew German, but more of the Germans knew English. I asked one of them why that was so.

"Because many have worked in England!" he said. "Before all this, I was a waiter at the Hotel Cecil. Perhaps I waited on your table!"

"Perhaps you did!" I said, laughing.

Another German had been a porter at Victoria Station. He showed me a picture of his family back in Munich. It was so lovely, I told him I would like to meet his family members someday. He happily gave me his family's address.



Even those who could not converse could still exchange gifts – our tea for their coffee, our corned meat for their [sausage](#). Badges and buttons from uniforms changed owners, and one of our boys walked off with a spiked helmet! I myself traded a jack knife for a leather equipment belt – a fine souvenir to show when I get home.

As it grew late, a few more songs were traded around the fire, and then all joined in for – I am not lying to you – “Auld Lang Syne.” Then we parted with promises to meet again tomorrow, and there was even some talk of a football match.

I was just starting back to the trenches when an older German soldier clutched my arm. “My God,” he said, “why cannot we have peace and all go home?”

I told him gently, “That you must ask your emperor.”

He looked at me searchingly and said, “Perhaps, my friend. But we must also ask our hearts.” And so, dear sister, tell me, has there ever been such a Christmas Eve in all history? What does it all mean, this impossible befriending of enemies?

For the fighting here, of course, it means regrettably little. Decent fellows those soldiers may be, but they follow orders and we do the same. Besides, we are here to stop their army and send it home, and never could we shirk that duty.

Still, one cannot help but imagine what would happen if the spirit shown here were caught by the nations of the world. Disputes may arise but what if our leaders were to offer good wishes in place of warnings; songs in place of insults; gifts in place of reprisals? Would not all wars end at once?

All nations say they want peace. Yet on this Christmas morning, I wonder if we want it quite enough.

Your loving brother,
Tom



About the Author



Aaron Shepard (October 7, 1950) is the award-winning author of *Savitri: A Tale of Ancient India*, *The Legend of Lightning Larry*, *The Sea King's Daughter*, and many more children's books. Aaron's specialty is retelling folktales and other traditional literature from around the world. His work has been honoured by the American Library Association, the National Council for the Social Studies, the American Folklore Society, the New York Public Library, and the Bank Street College of Education.





Glossary



- truce** (n) - an agreement to stop fighting or arguing for a period of time
- dugout** (n) - a trench that is dug and roofed over as a shelter for troops
- carols** (n) - a religious folk song or popular hymn, particularly one associated with Christmas.
- trenches** (n) - a long, narrow ditch
- maim** (v) - injure or wound seriously and leave permanent damage to body or parts
- splatter** (n) - a small quantity of something moist or liquid
- slog** (v) - work hard over a period of time
- muck** (n) - dirt, rubbish, or waste matter.
- stumble** (v) - trip or momentarily lose one's balance; almost fall
- bewilderment** (n) - a feeling of being perplexed and confused.



"Aung Lang Syne" is a Scots poem written by Robert Burns in 1788 and set to the tune of a traditional folk song. In many English-speaking nations, it is traditionally sung during the New Year's Eve. The song's title may be loosely translated as "for the old times" or "long long ago".

A. Choose the correct answer.

- The story is set during the _____.
a. World War I b. World War II
c. Kargil War d. Indo-China War
- The story is about the celebration of _____ festival.
a. Deepavali b. Pongal c. Ramzan d. Christmas
- Tom called the incidents happened there as a _____.
a. fairy tale b. poetry c. tragedy d. comedy
- The Germans had placed Christmas trees in front of their _____.
a. houses b. trench c. tanks d. cars
- One of the German soldiers worked as a _____ at Victoria Station.
a. tea-seller b. ticket-checker c. porter d. shop keeper





B. Identify the character, speaker or both of the following lines.

1. Our first complete silence in months!
2. Come and see! See what the Germans are doing!
3. Hold your fire.
4. You no shoot, we no shoot.
5. My God, why cannot we have peace and all go home?

C. Answer the following questions in about 100 – 120 words.

1. Narrate the Christmas celebration as happened in the war field.

D. Think and answer.

1. Do you envision a similar truce taking place in any wars or fighting today? Explain.
2. Today, much of what we know about the truce comes from soldiers' postcards home. In the postcard given below, write a short message home, imagine that you took part in the 1914 Christmas Truce.

POST CARD

Printed in England

ADDRESS

**PLACE
STAMP
HERE**

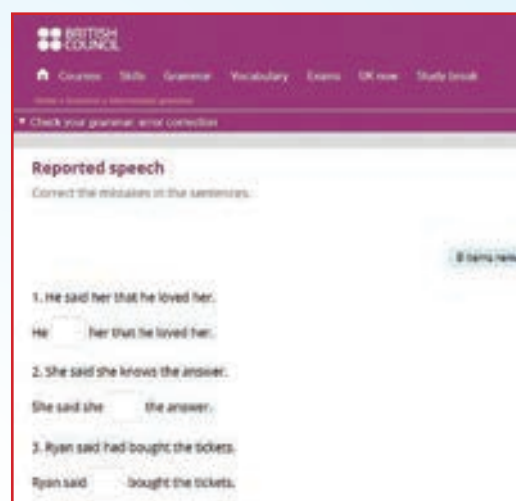




ICT CORNER

Reported Speech

This webpage from [British Council](#) helps the students to learn reported speech with examples. Students can also try the online worksheets to improve their learning.



Steps

1. Type the URL link given below in the browser or scan the QR code.
2. Read the instructions which are given above the video, then watch the video to know about the content.
3. Read the explanation and examples for different types of reported speech.
4. Click the "Check Your Grammar" tab to practice "Matching, Error Correction and Gap Fill" exercises on your own and check your answers online.
5. You can also download and use the resources offline which is given under "Worksheets and Downloads" tab.



Download Link

Type the following link in your browser or click or scan the QR code to download the application and install it.

<http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/grammar/intermediate-grammar/reported-speech>