

2.2 Three Questions

Warming Up!

1. Expressions in English classified under different heads.

Pair up with your partner, guess and match the columns. (Use a dictionary.)

A		B
(1) Principle	(a)	a generally accepted, evident, truth
(2) Quotation	(b)	short striking messages for the public
(3) Moral	(c)	a short witty remark stating truth
(4) Idioms	(d)	a popular, well-known truth
(5) Slogans	(e)	established expressions which do not convey exactly the same as individual words
(6) One-liners	(f)	words cited from a speech/text of a famous person
(7) Maxims	(g)	a lesson derived from a story or experience
(8) Proverb	(h)	a rule to govern one's behaviour

2. Read the polite requests/suggestions and complete the gaps in the responses. Make sure they are polite and not repeated.

Could you lend me
your dictionary ?

Accept (1)
Refuse (2)

Can you please
pass the salad ?

Accept (1)
Refuse (2)

May I know the exact time ?

Accept (1)
Refuse (2)

Shall we plan a class-picnic ?

Agree (1)
Refuse (2)

Do you need help ?

Accept (1)
Refuse (2)

Is it alright if I use your laptop ?

Accept (1)
Refuse (2)

3. Let's see if you remember a nursery rhyme you must have sung, as a kid :

Fill in the missing words :

'The time to be happy is

The to be happy is here.

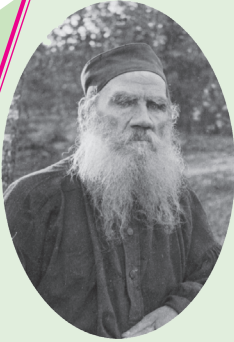
And the way to be, is to someone happy And have a little right here !'

(happy, make, heaven, now, place)

(You can listen to this song on the internet.)



2.2 The Three Questions



Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) was a Russian writer who is regarded as one of the greatest authors of all time. He first achieved literary acclaim in his twenties with his semi-autobiographical trilogy *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth*.

A parable is a short story with a moral lesson. A parable usually has human characters. This parable concerns a king who wants to find the answers to what he considers to be the three most important questions in life.

◆ **proclamation** : an official announcement in public

◆ *What is the right time according to you?*

◆ *What final suggestion did the last group of learned men offer, regarding the best time?*

Once a certain king had an idea. If he always knew the right time to begin everything, if he knew who were the right people to listen to and who to avoid the most important thing to do, he would never fail in anything that he would undertake and above all, if he always knew what was the most undertake. Since he was convinced that he was right in thinking this way, he had a **proclamation** made in his kingdom. He would give a great reward to anyone who would teach him what the right time was for every action, who the most necessary people were, and how he might know the most important thing to do.

Many learned people came to the court but they all gave different answers. In reply to the first question, some said that to know the right time for every action, one must draw up in advance a table of days, months and years, and must live strictly according to it. Others declared that it was impossible to decide beforehand the right time for every action; but that, not letting oneself be absorbed in idle pastimes, one should always attend to all that was going on, and then do that which was most essential. Yet others said that it was impossible for one man to decide correctly the right time for every action and that the king should, instead, have a council of wise people, who would help him to fix the proper time for everything.

Equally varied were the answers to the second question. Some said, the people, the king most needed, were his councillors; others the priests; others the doctors while some said the warriors were the most necessary.

To the third question about what was the most important occupation, some replied that the most important thing in the world was science. Others said it was skill in warfare; and others, again, that it was religious worship. The king was convinced by none of these answers and gave the reward to none.

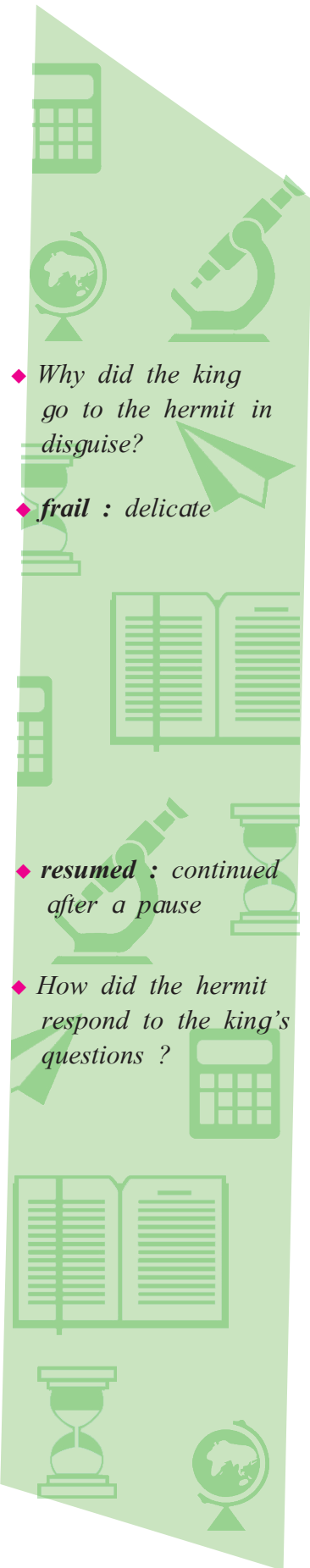
He decided, instead to go to a hermit who was widely renowned for his wisdom. The hermit lived in a small hut in a forest which he never left. He spoke only to common folk. So the king put on simple clothes and approaching the hermit's cell, dismounted his horse and left his bodyguard behind.

When the king arrived, the hermit was digging the ground in front of his hut. He greeted the king but went on digging. The hermit was **frail** and weak, and each time he struck the ground with the spade and turned over a little earth, he breathed heavily. The king went up to him and said, "I have come to you, wise hermit, to ask you to answer three questions—How can I learn to do the right thing at the right time? Who are the people I most need, and to whom should I, therefore, pay most attention? And what affairs are the most important and need my first attention?"

The hermit listened to the king but said nothing. He just spat on his hand and **resumed** digging. The king watched in silence for a while. Then, feeling sorry for the hermit, he said, "You are tired, let me take the spade and work a while for you." The hermit silently handed over the spade and sat down on the ground. When he had dug two beds, the king stopped and repeated his questions. The hermit again gave no answer, but rose, stretched out his hand for the spade, and said, "Now rest a while and let me work a bit". But the king did not give him the spade and continued to dig.

One hour passed and another. The sun began to sink behind the trees and the king at last stuck the spade into the ground and said, "I came to you, wise one, for an answer to my questions. If you can give me none, please say so, and I will go home". "Here comes someone running," said the hermit, "let us see who it is."

The king turned round and saw a bearded man come running out of the forest. The man held his hands

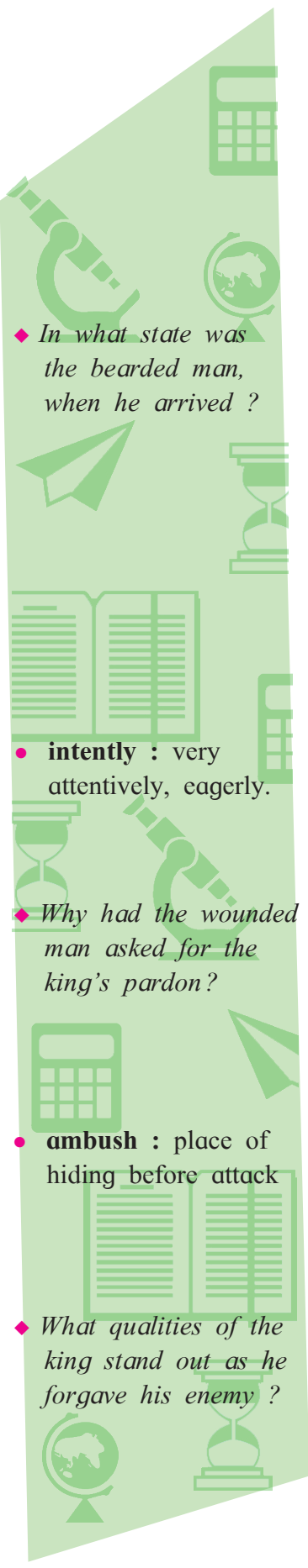


♦ *Why did the king go to the hermit in disguise?*

♦ **frail** : delicate

♦ **resumed** : continued after a pause

♦ *How did the hermit respond to the king's questions ?*



◆ *In what state was the bearded man, when he arrived ?*

● **intently** : very attentively, eagerly.

◆ *Why had the wounded man asked for the king's pardon ?*

● **ambush** : place of hiding before attack

◆ *What qualities of the king stand out as he forgave his enemy ?*

pressed against his stomach, and blood was flowing from under them. When he reached the king, he fainted and fell to the ground, moaning feebly. The king and the hermit unfastened the man's clothing. There was a large wound in his stomach. The king washed it as well as he could, and bandaged it with his handkerchief and a towel the hermit had. But the blood would not stop flowing, and the king again and again removed the bandage soaked with warm blood and washed and rebandaged the wound. When at last the blood stopped flowing, the man revived and asked for something to drink. The king brought some fresh water and gave it to him.

Meanwhile the sun had set and it had become cool. So the king, with the hermit's help, carried the wounded man into the hut. The man lay there quietly with his eyes closed. By now, the king was so tired after his walk and the work he had done, that he lay down himself and also fell asleep. When he awoke in the morning, it took him some time to remember where he was and who was the strange bearded man lying by his side and gazing **intently** at him. "Forgive me!" said the bearded man in a weak voice, when he saw that the king was awake and was looking at him. "I do not know you, and I've nothing to forgive you for," said the king.

"You do not know me, but I know you. I am that enemy of yours who swore to revenge himself on you because you executed his brother and seized his property. I knew you had gone alone to see the hermit, and I resolved to kill you on your way back. But the day passed and you did not return. So I came out of my **ambush** to find you. Your bodyguards recognised me and wounded me. I escaped from them but would have bled to death had you not dressed my wound. I wished to kill you but you have saved my life. Now if I live, and if you wish it, I'll serve you all my life."

The king was very glad to have made peace with an enemy so easily and to have gained him for a friend. He not only forgave him but said he would send his men and his own physician to attend to him. The king then took leave of him and went out of the hut to look for the hermit. Before going away he wished once more to beg for an answer to the questions he had

asked. The hermit was outside, on his knees, sowing seeds in the beds that had been dug the day before.

The king approached him and said, "For the last time, I pray you to answer my questions, wise man."

"You have already been answered!" said the hermit still **crouching** on his thin legs and looking up at the king who stood before him.

"What do you mean?" asked the king.

"Do you not see?" replied the hermit. "If you'd not pitied my weakness yesterday and stayed to dig these beds for me, you would have gone back and been killed by that man. So the most important time was when you were digging the beds, and I was the most important man and to do me good was your most important business. Afterwards, the most important time was when you were attending to that man, for if you'd not bound his wounds, he would have died without having made peace with you. So he was the most important man and what you did for him was your most important business. Remember then, there is only one time that is important-now! It is the most important time because it's the only time when we have any power. The most necessary person is the one with whom you are, for you do not know whether you will ever have dealings with anyone else; and the most important thing is to do this person good, because for that purpose alone were you sent into this life!"

— Leo Tolstoy

• **crouching** : bending

◆ *How did the hermit finally point out the answers to the king's questions ?*

ENGLISH WORKSHOP

1. Read the story and answer whether the following statements are true or false.

- (a) The people convinced the King to make a proclamation.
- (b) The hermit spoke usually to everyone.
- (c) The King received all answers from the hermit.
- (d) The person the King saved and helped was his enemy.
- (e) To do good to people is the purpose of our life.

2. Match the titles with the contents of the proper paragraph.

1	Once a certain king . . . important to do.	a	King gains a friend.
2	Many learned people . . . time for everything.	b	The wounded stranger
3	Equally varied . . . gave the reward to none.	c	King helps the hermit.
4	When the King arrived, . . . my first attention.	d	The stranger begs for pardon.
5	The hermit listened . . . continued to dig.	e	The hermit points out answers.
6	The King turned round . . . gave it to him.	f	Stranger's vicious intention
7	Meanwhile the sun . . . said the King.	g	Questions remain unanswered.
8	"You do not know . . . all my life.	h	The king receives various answers.
9	The King was very glad . . . the day before.	i	King's announcement.
10	"Do you not see?" . . . sent into this life!"	j	The King meets the hermit.

(1) (2) (3) (4)
 (5) (6) (7) (8)
 (9) (10)

3. The character traits of the king and hermit are mixed up. Sort them out in the right box.

feeble helpful enlightened
 impatient
 eager to succeed
 patient convincing wise

KING

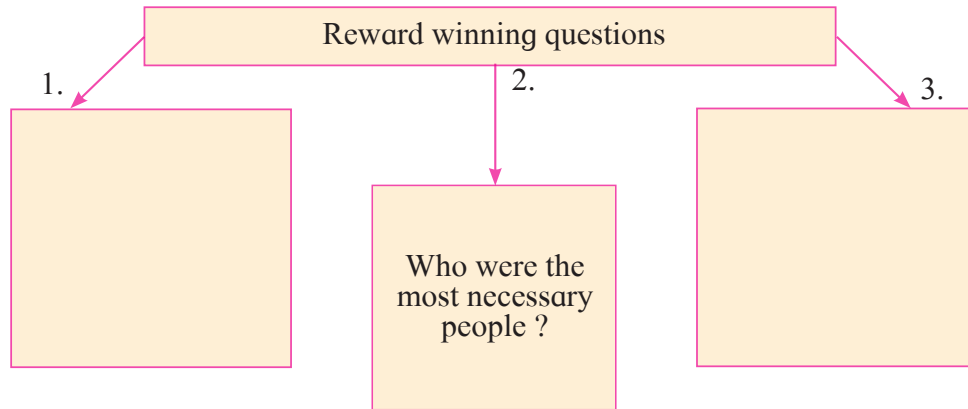
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HERMIT

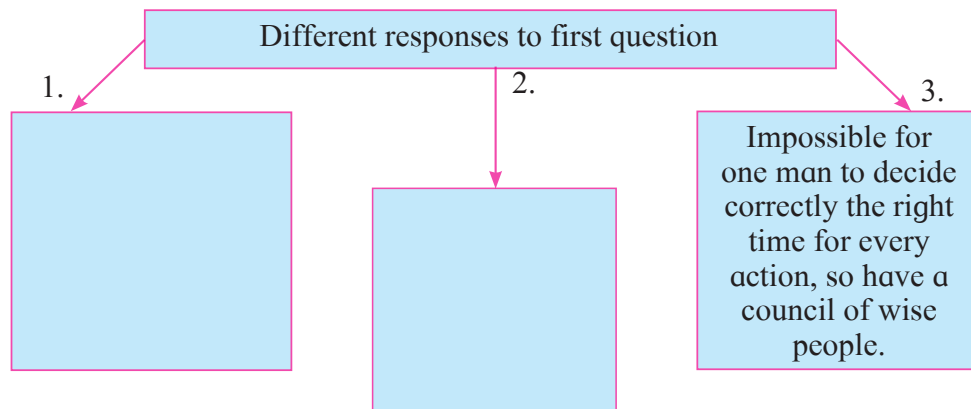
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4. Complete the Tree diagrams associated with the happenings in the story.

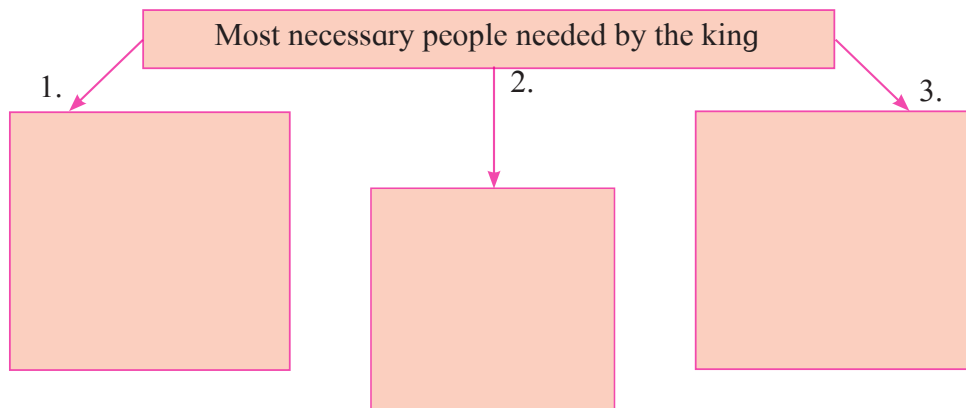
(A)



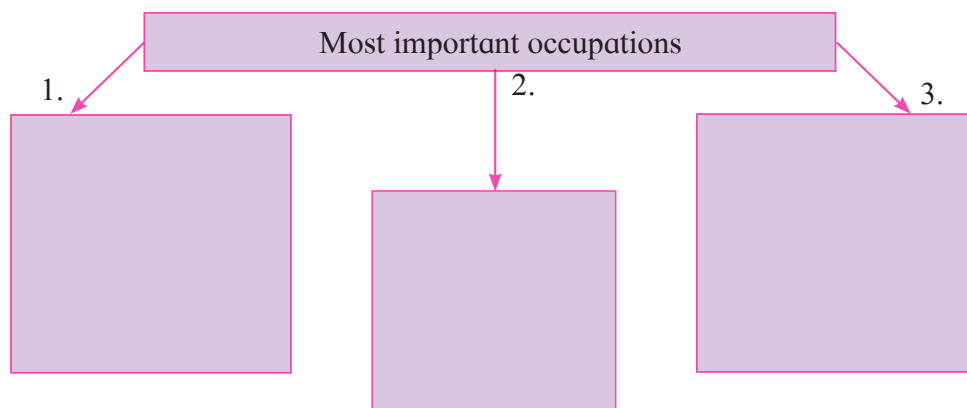
(B)



(C)



(D)



5. Write down in your notebook two points for each of the following. How do you know . . .

- (a) the learned advisers who came to the court confused the king.
- (b) the king was humble.
- (c) the king's enemy was repentant.
- (d) the hermit was truly wise.

6. Choose the correct answer and fill in the blanks.

- (a) "Varied" (Paragraph-3) means
(i) different (ii) unnecessary (iii) unequal (iv) unimportant.
- (b) Many learned people came to the court and gave
(i) The same answers (ii) correct answers (iii) different answers (iv) wrong answers.
- (c) The synonym of 'convinced' is
(i) persuaded (ii) happy (iii) unhappy (iv) angry.
- (d) The King wanted to know the time to begin everything.
(i) right (ii) exact (iii) proper (iv) good.
- (e) "I pray you to answer my question." Here 'pray' means
(i) plead to God (ii) request (iii) order (iv) suggest.
- (f) Choose an adverb that collocates with "breathed
(i) hurriedly (ii) heavily (iii) hardly (iv) calmly.

7. Answer the following questions.

- (a) The learned people were sometimes divided in their opinions, different persons giving quite different answers; at other times, none of them gave an answer. They all suggested ways to look for an answer. Point out one example of each.
- (b) Though the hermit did not say anything to the king for some time, he did not ignore the king or treat him rudely in any way. Do you agree? What evidence of his politeness can you point out? What shows that he listened and responded to the king's words?
- (c) The hermit 'spoke only to common people'; so the king 'put on simple clothes'. Do you think the king hoped to be mistaken for a common man, or was he just showing that he was a humble person? What shows that the hermit knew him to be the king?
- (d) Did the king behave as an ordinary person, rather than as a ruler, at the hermit's hut? What shows it? Did he also act as a good, kind person? When did he do so?
- (e) Do you think the hermit knew, beforehand, not only about the king's arrival but about the ambush by his enemy? Think a little about this and say what you really feel.

8. Consider this list of the different things that happened and rearrange them in the order of time, that is, what happened first, what happened next and so on. Read the related paragraph again if you are uncertain.

- (a) The bearded man resolved to kill the king.
- (b) The king went alone to see the hermit.
- (c) The king executed the bearded man's brother.
- (d) The king spent the night at the hermit's hut.
- (e) The bearded man laid an ambush to kill the king.
- (f) The king's bodyguards recognised and wounded the bearded man.
- (g) The bearded man came out of the ambush.

9. Read the story in your own language, summarize the following aspects of the story in 4 to 5 lines each in your own language. Write it in your notebook.

- (a) King's problem :
- (b) Attempts made to find a solution :
- (c) Climax :
- (d) Solution :
- (e) Message :

10.(A) The following compound words from the story are spelt in a jumbled order. Rearrange the letters to make them meaningful.

- (1) a r e e t u k d n =
- (2) y o n n a e =
- (3) s t a p s i e m =
- (4) d u b g y r o a d =
- (5) f r a w e r a =
- (6) h e e d a r f o n b =
- (7) h e i l n e w a m =
- (8) n e v h i g r e t y =

(B) From the story, find the collocations of the following.

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| (1) important. | (2) intently |
| (3) frail and | (4) widely |
| (5) time | (6) blood |
| (7) simple | (8) closed |
| (9) asleep | (10) peace |

11. Say whether the Verbs underlined in the sentences are finite (limited by the number or person of the subject) or non-finite (not governed by the subject, number or person).

- (1) He decides to go to a hermit.

- (2) I have come to you, wise hermit.
- (3) He gave the reward to none.
- (4) The hermit was digging the ground.
- (5) I pray you to answer my questions.
- (6) “Forgive me.”
- (7) The sun began to sink.

12. Narrate an experience of your own that has helped you to realise that ‘Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.’ Write it in your notebook, in about 20 lines.

13. After reading this story, develop a dialogue with 2 of your classmates about the characters in the story. Besides the tactful introduction to the conversation and write 8 to 10 sets of dialogues.

14. From the library or Internet, read the story ‘How much land does a man need?’ by Leo Tolstoy and write a review of the same, covering the following points.

- Background of the story
- Characters
- Plot/Theme
- Climax
- Message/Moral

If necessary, the students can read the same story two or three times to understand all the points.

