

3.2 The Magic Herb



‘Knock! Knock! Knock!’ Someone was knocking on the door of the inn. It was already getting dark outside.

“Who’s there?” the innkeeper called from within.

“I am a poor, tired merchant. I want to spend the night at the inn,” said the man outside.



The innkeeper was not pleased to hear that the man was poor. But all the same, he opened the door and brought him inside. The merchant wore simple garments and carried only a simple cloth bag on his back.

“I have spent a long, tiring day at the market. I don’t have the energy to walk back to my village. Please prepare a simple dinner for me,” requested the merchant.

The innkeeper just nodded and went back to the kitchen.

“Ugh! What’s the point in serving such beggarly customers! He calls himself a merchant, but look at his clothes! Look at his bag! His shoes are all worn out. He has to carry his merchandise himself. Cannot afford a servant! Cannot afford even a good meal!” He began to complain to his wife.

“You are right!” said his wife. She was as greedy and unkind as her husband.

“We cook a meal for him, give him a place to sleep, and what is he going to pay in return? Just a couple of coins maybe! Why did you take him in? Drive him out.”





“No, no!” said the innkeeper. “That is not good for our reputation. But I have an idea – a very clever idea ! I have this magic herb. I bought it long ago. Whoever eats this herb forgets something. We will cook a good meal for this fellow and add the magic herb to it. Then he is sure to forget some of his merchandise here tomorrow.”

“How clever you are!” exclaimed the wife. “Yes, what else can he forget? He has just his merchandise with him. Maybe he will forget all of it and leave it behind here. It will surely be ours tomorrow!”

So that’s what the greedy couple did. They cooked a tasty meal for their customer and added the magic herb to it. The poor merchant did not suspect anything. He thanked the innkeeper for the good meal and went to bed.



The next morning, as soon as the innkeeper and his wife woke up, they went to the merchant’s room! But alas! The merchant was not there. The room was empty.

“What’s this? There’s no one here. And where’s the bag of merchandise? That, too, is gone!”



“Let’s check. The magic of the herb is quite strong. He must have forgotten something. He must have left something behind!”

The innkeeper searched in every nook and corner of the room but he couldn’t find anything. “How come he forgot nothing? I can’t believe it!” said he.

Suddenly the wife slapped herself on the forehead. “We were so foolish! He has certainly forgotten something! HE HAS FORGOTTEN TO PAY US!”

The innkeeper never used the magic herb again!

- A Japanese folk-tale



- **inn** : a small hotel
- **afford** : have enough money for something
- **beggarly** : like a beggar, very poor
- **reputation** : people's opinion - what they think someone / something is like
- **merchandise** : goods for sale, things that a merchant sells
- **suspect** : doubt something, think that something is wrong

POINTERS



1. Answer the following questions :

- (1) Who was knocking on the door of the inn?
- (2) Why was the innkeeper not pleased?
- (3) What did the merchant request?
- (4) Why did the innkeeper not drive the merchant away?
- (5) What was the speciality of the magic herb?
- (6) What did the merchant forget?

2. Form groups. Convert the story into a play.

Read your play aloud.

3. Describe the merchant and the innkeeper with the help of the story and using your own imagination.

4. The 'k' in 'knock' is silent. It is not pronounced.

Write two other words with a silent 'k'.

Underline the silent letter in the following words.

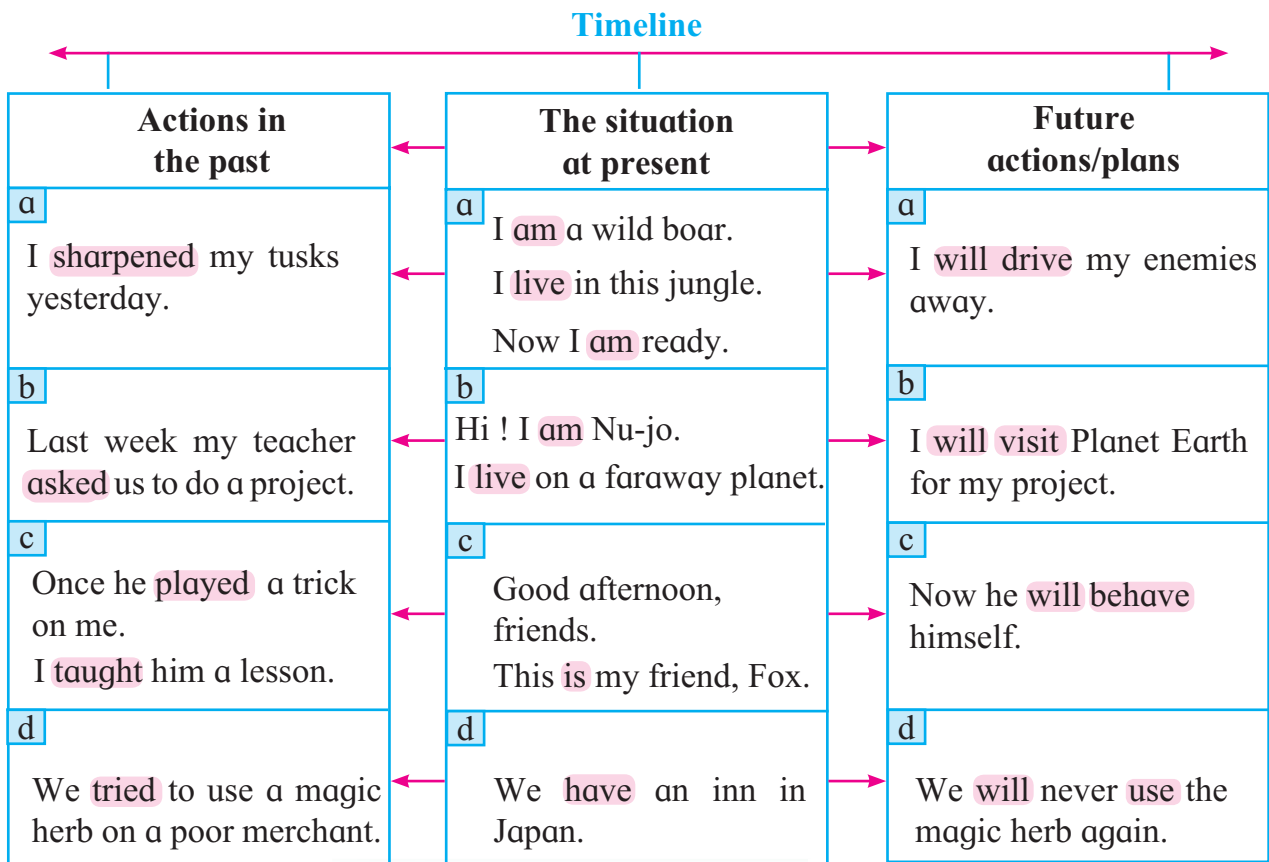
- | | | | | |
|------------|-----------|----------|---------|----------|
| * write | * right | * wrist | * palm | * school |
| * scissors | * pitcher | * listen | * rhyme | * hour |



5. Read what the following characters are telling you now.

- (a) 'I am a wild boar. I live in this jungle. I sharpened my tusks yesterday. Now I am ready. I will drive my enemies away.'
- (b) 'Hi ! I'm Nu-jo. Last week my teacher asked us to do a project. I will visit Planet Earth for my project. I live on a faraway planet.'
- (c) 'Good afternoon, friends. This is my friend, Fox. Once he played a trick on me. I taught him a lesson. Now he will behave himself.'
- (d) 'We have an inn in Japan. We tried to use a magic herb on a poor merchant. We will never use the magic herb again.'

Let's rearrange their sentences properly on the timeline -



LEARNING

about

LANGUAGE

TENSES : The past, the present and the future

Note the verbs in the sentences in the three columns. In the 'past' column, they have different forms — sharpened, asked, played, taught, tried. In the 'future' column, the verbs have 'will' before them. The different forms of verbs that show the 'time' of the action are called **tenses**. Guess the present tense of 'taught' and the past tense of 'is', 'have' and 'live'.