

Lesson 9

BIRBAL'S WIT

A. WARMER

Has anyone ever cracked a joke on you? How did you feel/react and why ?

SCENE I: THE PALACE GARDEN

(Akbar and some of his courtiers are looking at the roses.)

AKBAR: Where's Birbal? I have not seen him since this morning.

FIRST LORD: We, too, have not seen him, Badshah Salamat. The messenger came back saying he had gone out-very busy counting crows. (smiling)

AKBAR (also smiling): Well, so he's taken the challenge seriously. Do none of you wish to compete for the prize?

SECOND LORD: We accept our defeat, sir. What you set was an impossible task. We tried and gave up!

RAJA MAN SINGH: Did you really expect an answer, Your Highness, or was it a joke?

AKBAR: Man Singh, wait and see. We have set seven o'clock as

the deadline. There is at least an hour left. 3000 gold coins and a bag of precious jewels are not to be sneezed at! I'm sure thousands of people in the capital are out counting the crows! (trying to hide his laughter)

(After an hour...)

AKBAR:(re-entering the garden) The time's up. How many want to win the prize? Open the gate and let us see how many have their answers ready!

FIRST LORD: There is no one outside the gate, Badshah Salamat.

AKBAR: No one? Not even one person has taken up the challenge? I am disappointed!

SECOND LORD: Wait, Sir! Someone is hurrying in. Why, it's Birbal!

AKBAR: Ha! Ha! Ha! (delighted) Welcome, Birbal. (smiling) I guess you too have no answer! Was the prize too small to tempt you?

BIRBAL: Badshah Salamat – a challenge is a challenge. The amount of the prize does not matter. And I have the exact answer. The number of the crows in the capital at six o'clock today is 21,412 exactly! (with a flourish)

AKBAR: (stunned and not really believing him) Shall we check?

BIRBAL: Certainly, Badshah Salamat ! (pretending to be very serious) Of course some crows may have left the city to visit their relatives in another town. But then it is also likely some others may have flown in for the weekend. I am absolutely certain, however, that at the last count, at six o'clock, there were 21,412 crows exactly!

AKBAR (laughing as he does at all Birbal's clever answers) Birbal, you are the life of this court. Bring the prize!



WORDS TO KNOW

compete (v): (कम्पीट) भाग लेना प्रतियोगिता में to take part in a contest

gave up (v): (गेव अप) छोड़ दिया left

expect (v): (एक्सपेक्ट) उम्मीद करना, आशा करना **hope for**

not to be sneezed at (v): (नॉट टू बी स्नीज्ड एट) नहीं छोड़ने योग्य **not to be passable**

disappointed (v): (डिस्अपॉइन्टेड) निराश हुआ **unhappy because something he hoped for or expected did not happen**

flourish(v): (फ्लैरिश) एक खास शैली में **in style**

stunned (v): (स्टन्ड) हक्का बक्का या भौंचक रह जाना **bewildered**

pretending (v): (प्रीटेंडिंग) देखने की कोशिश करना **trying to look**

absolutely (adv): (एबसाल्यूटली) पूर्णरूपेण, पूर्णतया **completely**

B. LET'S THINK AND TELL

B.1. Answer the followings questions orally:

1. Do you think Birbal was actually busy with counting the crows?
2. How many courtiers accepted Akbar's challenge?
3. What, according to Birbal, was the number of crows in the capital?
4. What was the prize money?

C. THINK AND WRITE

C.1. Answer the following questions in two or three sentences:

1. What task did Akbar set for the people?
2. Why did none of the courtiers except Birbal wish to compete for the prize?

3. Did Birbal take up the challenge for the prize? Give reasons in support of your answer.

C.2. Answer the following questions in not more than 70 words:

1. Do you think that the task set by Akbar was impossible? Give reasons.
2. Do you believe that Birbal really counted the crows?
3. What arguments did Birbal put forth in support of his claim?
4. Does the amount of prize matter when you take up a challenge? Justify your answer.

D. LET'S INCREASE WORD POWER

D.1. Correct the spelling of the following mis-spelt words:

mesenger chalenge imposible disapointed stuned

D.2 Look at these sentences from the lesson:

The words seriously, exactly and likely in the sentences given above have been made by adding '-ly' to the words serious, exact and like. Here, '-ly' is a suffix as it is added at the end of a word.

Can you think of some more words which are formed in such a way? Write at least ten such words. Also use them to make meaningful sentences; e.g.

slowly: The tortoise runs slowly

E. LET'S LEARN GRAMMAR

E.1. Look at the following sentences:

- (a) We accept our defeat, sir.
- (b) The messenger came back saying he had gone out - very busy counting crows.
- (c) Ha! Ha! Ha!
- (d) Shall we check?

In the sentence (a), a comma (,) is used to separate the word of address from the rest of the sentence. A full stop (.) is used at the end of the sentence. In sentence (b), a dash (-) is used to explain the purpose. In sentence (c), an exclamation mark (!) is used after an interjection. Similarly in sentence (d), a question mark has been used after the sentence asking a question.

Put appropriate punctuation marks in the sentences given below:

- (a) Ram I am your friend
- (b) She had only one purpose in life to be a teacher
- (c) My friend you have got a chance now
- (d) Alas he is no more
- (e) Who is your best friend
- (f) How lovely the flower is
- (g) Can you tell me the answer
- (h) Bravo you have done well
- (i) She forgot her grandfathers name
- (j) No I cant do you favour

F. LET'S TALK

Have you ever faced a challenge? Narrate your experience in class. Involve your classmates in discussion and encourage them to tell about the challenges they may have ever accepted or faced.

(Hint:Someone may challenge you to solve the puzzle.)

G. LET'S WRITE

On the basis of the discussion done in F. LET'S TALK, write a paragraph, in about 100 words on:

‘The challenge that I faced’

H. ACTIVITY

Work in groups

1. Collect some other stories of Akbar and Birbal and narrate them to the members of your group.
2. Enact the play ‘Birbal’s Wit’.

