

Think About It

1. In what way is Iswaran an asset to Mahendra?

Answer: Iswaran was a good domestic assistant for Mahendra. Apart from cooking and doing household chores he was a great entertainer for his master. He was good at managing resources as he could find vegetables out of nowhere also never had complain while accompanying his master.

2. How does Iswaran describe the uprooted tree on the highway? What effect does he want to create in his listeners?

Answer: Iswaran describes the uprooted tree on the highway with eyebrows suitably arched and hands held out in a dramatic way. He would begin by saying that the road was deserted and he was all alone. Suddenly he spotted something that looked like an enormous bushy beast lying sprawled across the road. He was half inclined to turn and go back. But as he came closer he saw that it was a fallen tree, with its dry branches spread out. The effect he wants to create is suspense and a surprise ending to every small incident that he narrates to his readers.

3. How does he narrate the story of the tusker? Does it appear to be plausible?

Answer: He started the story of the elephant by giving a prologue in which he called elephants 'huge well-fed beasts.' He said that after escaping from the timber yard, the elephant started roaming about, stamped on bushes and tore up wild creepers. It then came to the main road of the town and smashed all the stalls selling fruits, mud pots, and clothes. It then entered a school ground where the children were playing. It pulled out the football goal-post, tore down the volleyball net, flattened the drum kept for water and uprooted the shrubs. All the teachers and students were so afraid that they climbed up to the terrace of the school building. According to Iswaran, he was studying in the junior class at that time. He grabbed a cane from the hands of one of the teachers and ran into the open. The elephant continued grunting and stamping its feet. It looked frightening. However, he moved slowly towards it. When the elephant was ready to rush towards him, he moved forward and whacked its third toe nail. It looked stunned and then collapsed. This story does not appear to be plausible.

4. Why does the author say that Iswaran seemed to more than make up for the absence of a TV in Mahendra's living quarters?

Answer: The author says so because Iswaran provided a great company to Mahendra. He would chat with Mahendra at night when he returned from his work. Iswaran would also entertain Mahendra by telling stories. Thus, with Iswaran around Mahendra never felt bored and never felt the necessity of having a TV for entertainment.

5. Mahendra calls ghosts or spirits a figment of the imagination. What happens to him on a full-moon night?

Answer: Mahendra calls ghosts or spirits a figment of the imagination because Iswaran informed him that they were living on a burial site and kept narrating to him stories of various ghosts he himself had encountered.

On one full moon night, Mahendra was woken up from his sleep by a low moan close to his window. At first he thought that it was a cat prowling around for mice. But the sound was too deep and guttural for a cat. He resisted looking outside as he did not want to witness a sight that might stop his heartbeat. But the crying became louder and less subtle. He could not resist the temptation any more. Lowering himself to the level of the windowsill he looked out at the white sheet of moonlight outside. There, not too far away, was a dark cloudy form clutching a bundle. He broke into a cold sweat and fell back on the pillow, panting.

6. Can you think of some other ending for the story?

Answer: The story could have ended on a more positive note. Instead of resigning from his job, Mahendra could have been shown as a real courageous man and proving the ghost theory wrong.

Another ending can be of both Mahendra and Iswaran leaving the place together and in turn continuing their bond which is depicted earlier in the story. Iswaran has been explained as a man of all seasons for Mahendra.