

The Book that Saved the Earth

Introduction

This play has been written by Claire Boiko. It is set four centuries in future and is a humorous take on Martian invasion of Earth.

Summary

The play opens in the twenty-fifth century at the Museum of Ancient History. The Historian introduces the play by talking about the significance of the books. He credits the books for saving the Earth.

The Historian then turns on the projector. Spotlight comes on Think Tank who is shown as the ruler of Mars and her two moons. He has a huge, egg-shaped head. He wears a long robe decorated with stars and circles. His apprentice, Noodle, is standing beside him at an elaborate switchboard. Think Tank orders Noodle to establish communication with their manned space probe to Earth, as he wants to invade Earth before lunch. The scene closes with Noodle adjusting levers on the switchboard and amidst the noise of electronic buzzes and beeps.

The second scene of the play opens at the Centerville Public Library where three Martians are seen opening and closing catalogue drawers, counting books, opening and closing a book, turning it upside down, shaking and then riffling the pages. These Martians are Captain Omega, Lieutenant Iota and Sergeant Oop. At that moment, Noodle makes voice contact with them and asks them to give them their location. Captain Omega tells them that they have taken shelter in a square place. Lieutenant Iota says that the place contains peculiar items and appears like a storage barn. Sergeant Oop thinks that the books were hats and perhaps they have landed in a haberdashery. They then ask Think Tank opinion regarding that place. Think Tank says that it appears to him that they are at a refreshment stand and that the books are sandwiches. He then orders them to eat it. Sergeant Oop eats a corner of the book and finds it terrible. Noodle hints at these being communication devices. Think Tank wants Omega to listen to the script. Not being able to hear, Noodle advises the book to be opened to be understood. Finally, eye communication is tried but that is also futile. On Noodle's suggestion, chemical vitamins are taken which enable Omega to transcribe the code. Omega is able to transcribe the nursery rhyme on 'Mistress Mary', 'The Cat and the Fiddle' and 'Humpty Dumpty'. The poems made Think Tank come to conclusion that the Earthlings are planning to attack them. Think Tank immediately orders Noodle to prepare a space capsule for his evacuation.

The Historian chuckles in humour. She says that one dusty old book of nursery rhymes saved the Earth from a Martial invasion. She says that now they have friendly relations with the Martians. Noodle is now their ruler. They now know the difference between books and sandwiches and they also know how to read.

Message

This play is lighthearted and comical and gives unusual interpretations of common nursery rhymes. It conveys the message that even normal things appear abnormal to those who are not aware of them.



Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow:

1. **Think-Tank** : That's better Noodle, I wish to be placed in communication with our manned space probe to that ridiculous little planet we are going to put under our generous rulership. What do they call it, again?

Noodle : Earth, your Intelligence.

Think-Tank : Earth – of course. You see how insignificant the place is? But first something important. My mirror. I wish to consult my mirror.

(CBSE 2023)

(a) **Think-Tank wants to communicate with the**

- (i) People of Earth
- (ii) Scientists on Earth
- (iii) Environmentalists on Earth
- (iv) Martians on Earth

(b) **Complete the analogy by selecting the suitable word from the passage.**

read : learn :: explore :

(c) **'Your Intelligence' refers to:**

- (i) Earth
- (ii) Noodle
- (iii) Little Planet
- (iv) Think-Tank

(d) **What does Think-Tank want to do?**

(e) **Fill in the blank with one word only.**

Think-Tank is a of the Martian team.

Answers

- (a) (iv) Martians on Earth
 - (b) probe
 - (c) (iv) Think-Tank
 - (d) Think-Tank wants to be placed in communication with his manned space probe to the ridiculous planet. Earth.
 - (e) commander-in-chief
2. Omega: It shall be done, Sir. Remove vitamins. (Crew takes vitamins from boxes on their belts.) Present vitamins.
(They hold vitamins out in front of them, stiffly.) Swallow vitamins. (They pop the vitamins into their mouths and gulp simultaneously. They open their eyes wide, their heads shake, and they put their hands to their foreheads.)
Think-Tank: Excellent. Now, decipher that code.
All: It shall be done, Sir. (They frown over the book, turning pages.)
Omega: (brightly) Aha!
Iota: (brightly) Oho!
Oop: (bursting into laughter) Ha, ha, ha.
Think-Tank: What does it say? Tell me this instant.
Transcribe, Omega. (CBSE SQP 2022-23, Modified)

(a) **What did Think-Tank want Omega to do in the last sentence?**

(b) **State whether the given statement is True or False.**
Omega is the commander-in-chief.

(c) **'Decipher that code'. What are they trying to decode?**

(d) **Give a word that can replace 'transcribe' in the extract.**

Answers

- (a) Think-Tank wanted Omega to decipher the code of the sandwich (book) and transcribe it.
- (b) False
- (c) Omega had found a large and colourful volume of the book 'Mother Goose'. They thought that it contained some sort of code. So, they are trying to decipher that code.
- (d) Interpret or Translate.



Short Answer Type Questions

Q 1. **According to Historian, what happened in 2040? Why?**

Ans. According to Historian, Mars planned to attack the Earth in 2040. The Martian people were headed by Think-Tank. He thought that the Earth was an insignificant and ridiculously little planet. He thought that the Earthlings were ugly with tiny heads. This led him to the belief that the Earth could be easily captured.

Q 2. **Who tried to invade the Earth in the twenty-first century?**

Ans. The Martians tried to invade the Earth in the twenty-first century.

Q 3. **Who is declared 'the most powerful and intelligent creature' in 'The Book that Saved the Earth'?**

Ans. Think-Tank is declared as the most powerful and intelligent creature. He is considered the wisest creature in the whole of universe. He is the ruler of Mars and her two moons.

Q 4. **What report is given by Omega to Think-Tank?**

Ans. Omega tells Think-Tank that they have reached the Earth without any problem. Now, they have taken shelter in a square room but he did not have any idea regarding what it was.

Q 5. **What guesses are made by Think-Tank about the books found on the Earth?**

Ans. Think-Tank guesses that the books might be 'sandwiches' which the Earthlings ate.

Q 6. What does Iota say when she is asked to eat the sandwich to know the truth?

Ans. Iota says that it shall be her honour to be the first Martian to eat a sandwich, but she then says that she cannot be so impolite as to eat before her Sergeant. She then orders Sergeant Oop to eat the sandwich.

Q 7. What was Oop's opinion about the 'sandwiches' he had eaten?

Ans. Think-Tank regards the books to be sandwiches. He orders Sergeant Oop to eat them. Oop said that the sandwiches were not delicious. He got confused and surprised how the Earthlings could get those sandwiches down without water, as they were as dry as Martian dust.

Q 8. What does Noodle tell Think-Tank about the books?

(CBSE 2016)

Ans. Noodle suggests to Think-Tank that the books are some sort of communication device. He tells Think-Tank that the Earthlings opened the books and watched them.

Q 9. What does 'Think-Tank' infer on listening to the nursery rhyme, 'Hey diddle diddle ...'? (CBSE 2015)

Ans. Think-Tank finds it alarming. He says that the Earthlings have been able to teach their domesticated animals many things. He says that the Earthlings have reached a high level of civilisation. Their domesticated animals have knowledge about musical culture and space techniques. Even their dogs have sense of humour. He also says that it was a possibility that the Earthlings might be launching an inter-planetary attack with the help of millions of cows.

Q 10. What 'high levels of civilisations' have the Earthlings reached, according to Think-Tank?

Ans. Think-Tank declares that the Earthlings have reached the high levels of civilisation. They have taught their domesticated animals musical culture and space techniques. Even their dogs have a sense of humour. He thinks that at this time, they may be launching an inter-planetary attack with the help of millions of cows.

Q 11. Why did Think-Tank decide to evacuate Mars?

Ans. Sergeant Oop reads out the poem 'Humpty Dumpty' to Think-Tank. He also shows the picture of Humpty Dumpty to him. The picture of Humpty-Dumpty closely resembles Think-Tank. He jumps to the conclusion that the Earthlings have seen him and they are after him. He thinks that they also plan to capture Mars Central Control.

So, he decides to evacuate Mars and head for Alpha Centauri, which was a hundred million miles away.

Q 12. How did the book change Think-Tank's opinion about the Earthlings?

Ans. Think-Tank first thinks that the Earthlings are primitive beings and therefore can be easily conquered. But when Omega, Iota and Oop read out the book of nursery rhymes to him, he interprets them in an unusual way. He thinks that Earthlings

have discovered how to grow rare metals and explosives. He thinks that they have been able to teach their domesticated animals musical culture and space techniques. He thinks that they are after him. So, a book changes Think-Tank's opinion about Earthlings.

Q 13. Noodle avoids offending Think-Tank but at the same time he corrects his mistakes. How does he manage to do that?

Ans. Noodle avoids offending Think-Tank but at the same time he corrects his mistakes. He manages to do that by using a humble and polite way of talking.

Q 14. If you were in Noodle's place, how would you handle Think-Tank's mistakes? (CBSE 2020)

Ans. If I had been in place of Noodle, I would not have been able to praise Think-Tank. In all probability I would have entered into a fight with him.

Q 15. Why was the twentieth century called the 'Era of the Book'?

Ans. The twentieth century was called the 'Era of the Book' because in those days books had everything—from anteaters to Zulus. Then, books taught the people almost everything.

Q 16. Do you think books are being replaced by the electronic media? Can we do away with books altogether?

Ans. With the growth in science and onset of computers, books seem to be dwindling. At times, we feel that electronic media has replaced books. But when we try to think over it, we find this to be an imagination. Books are still our constant companion. They are our trustworthy friend and they stand by us.

So, we cannot do away with books altogether.



Long Answer Type Questions

Q 1. Who tried to invade the Earth in the twenty-first century and what saved it?

Ans. The Martians tried to invade the Earth in 2040. A book saved the Earth from being invaded. The residents of Mars could not comprehend the contents of the book. When captain Omega reads the poem, 'Mistress Mary', their ruler thinks that the Earthlings have discovered the art of growing rare metals such as silver and high explosives. So, he orders his invasion fleet to hold back and not attack Earth. Then Lieutenant Iota reads the poem, 'The Cat and the Fiddle'. On hearing the poem, their ruler thinks that the Earthlings have reached a high level of civilisation.

Their domesticated animals have knowledge about musical culture and space techniques. Even their dogs have sense of humour. He also says that it was a possibility that the Earthlings might be launching an inter-planetary attack with the help of millions of cows.

He then orders that there will be no invasion that day. Then Sergeant Oop reads the poem 'Humpty Dumpty'.

He also shows the picture of Humpty Dumpty to him. The picture of Humpty Dumpty closely resembles Think-Tank. He jumps to the conclusion that the Earthlings have seen him and they are after him. He thinks that they also plan to capture Mars Central Control. So, he decides to evacuate Mars and head for Alpha Centauri, which was a hundred million miles away. He orders the invasion fleet to return. Thus, a book saved the planet Earth.

Q 2. What is Think-Tank proud of? How do you know?

(CBSE 2019)

Ans. Think-Tank was the ruler of the planet Mars and its two moons. He had a huge, egg-shaped head and wore a long robe decorated with stars and circles. He was very arrogant and haughty. He considered himself the most powerful and intelligent creature in the whole universe. He wanted to attack the Earth and bring it under the rule of Mars. His apprentice was Noodle. His other companions were Captain Omega, Lieutenant Iota and Sergeant Oop. He had his invasion fleet with him. He was proud of his technical expertise this is clear from his plan to invade the Earth.

Q 3. Have you ever thought about aliens? What information do you have about aliens? Think yourself in place of Think-Tank and then explain what would you have done after hearing the rhymes?

Ans. Yes. I often think about the aliens. I am very curious about them. Whenever I chance to read or listen about aliens, automatically my imaginations work and my mind creates some special ideas about aliens like how they look, where they live, what is the reality behind them, etc.

As I have read in books and watched on Discovery channel, many unidentified flying objects are seen in different parts of the world. It is one of the most controversial mysteries known to mankind.

Some film makers have made movies on aliens, and almost all of them have been liked much. It is only because of the curiosity about aliens.

If I were in place of Think-Tank, I would have tried to listen to the rhyme more carefully as it was an unknown language for me. After watching the picture, I would have tried to find out the reality of the picture, and as Noodle was giving very correct advice, I would have consulted with him about the picture and then would have reached the conclusion.



Practice Exercise

Extract Based Questions

Directions (Q. Nos. 1-6): Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow:

1. When I opened the door, Tricki trotted out and was immediately engulfed by Joe, the greyhound, and his friends. After rolling him over and thoroughly inspecting him, the dogs moved off down the garden. Tricki followed them, rolling slightly with his surplus fat.

(a) Who opened the door?

(b) State whether the given statement is True or False.

Tricki was surrounded by Mr Herriot's friends.

(c) What happened when the door was opened?

(d) Complete the analogy with a word from the extract:

immediately : instantly :: completely :

2. And then there was his accent. Though he spoke French and German passably, he had never altogether lost the American accent he had brought to Paris from Boston twenty years ago.

(a) Who is 'he' here?

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| (i) Max | (ii) Ausable |
| (iii) Fowler | (iv) The author |

(b) Why did Fowler want to meet Ausable?

(c) At present, he had a room in:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| (i) a German hotel | (ii) an American hotel |
| (iii) a French hotel | (iv) a Russian hotel |

(d) Give a word which can correctly substitute 'Passably', in the given sentence from the extract.

Though he spoke French and German passably

3. She laughed, and he begged, thinking that he had persuaded her, "Look, I have no right to ask you for

anything, but I'm desperate. Let me go and I promise never to do this kind of thing again. I really mean it."

(a) Who is 'she'?

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| (i) Mrs Pumphrey | (ii) Bholi |
| (iii) A young lady | (iv) Matilda |

(b) Give a word that can be used in place of 'persuaded' in the given extract.

(c) Who is 'he'?

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| (i) Mr Herriot | (ii) Horace Danby |
| (iii) M. Loisel | (iv) Bishamber |

(d) Explain the happenings of the extract.

4. Suspicion grew even stronger when he suddenly produced some ready cash, though he had admitted not long before that he had no money.

(a) What was 'he' suspected of?

(b) State whether the given statement is True or False.

In the extract 'he' refers to Mr Hall.

(c) What happened when the suspicion grew even stronger?

(d) Give a word which is opposite in meaning to the word 'admitted'.

5. Mme Forestier was touched and took her hands as she replied, "Oh! My poor Matilda! Mine were false. They were not worth over five hundred francs!"

(a) By what was Mme Forestier touched?

(b) State whether the given statement is True or False.

'Mine' in the extract refers to Mme Forestier's dress

(c) Explain the last sentence of the extract.

(d) Mme Forestier and Matilda met after

6. Omega: It shall be done, Sir. Remove vitamins. (Crew takes vitamins from boxes on their belts.) Present vitamins.

(They hold vitamins out in front of them, stiffly.) Swallow vitamins. (They pop the vitamins into their mouths and gulp simultaneously. They open their eyes wide, their heads shake, and they put their hands to their foreheads.) Think-Tank: Excellent. Now, decipher that code.

All: It shall be done, Sir. (They frown over the book, turning pages.)

Omega: (brightly) Aha!

Iota: (brightly) Oho!

Oop: (bursting into laughter) Ha, ha, ha.

Think-Tank: What does it say? Tell me this instant.

Transcribe, Omega.

- (a) What did Think-Tank want Omega to do in the last sentence?
- (b) State whether the given statement is True or False.
Omega is the commander-in-chief.
- (c) 'Decipher that code'. What are they trying to decode?
- (d) Give a word that can replace 'transcribe' in the extract.

Short Answer Type Questions

- Q 7. Why was Tricky an uninteresting object for other dogs at the surgery?
- Q 8. Why did the thief change his name every month? How did he rob people?

Q 9. Describe Ausable's real personality traits that are given in the story.

Q 10. How did the lady dressed in red manage to rob the safe without leaving a single fingerprint?

Q 11. How did the invisible man first become visible?

Q 12. Why did Matilda (Mme Loisel) leave the ball in a hurry? What does it show about her character?

OR

Why was Matilda in a hurry to go to her house after the ball?

Q 13. If you were in Noodle's place, how would you handle Think-Tank's mistakes?

Long Answer Type Questions

- Q 14. What would you have done if you were:
(i) a member of the staff in Mrs Pumphrey's household, (ii) a neighbour? What would your life have been like, in general?
- Q 15. How does Ausable manage to make Max believe that there is a balcony attached to his room? What makes it a convincing story?
- Q 16. The author compares Ebright's achievement with 'a home run'. Why does he do so?
- Q 17. On the basis of your understanding of 'Bholi', sketch the character of Bholi. ●