

- Is there a place you would like to visit?
- Name that place and describe it in detail.
- Why do you wish to visit it?

Now let us visit the Curlew Island.



[ Amal is a child who has to stay indoors all day because of his poor health. His uncle, Madhab Datta, takes care of him. Amal stands in Madhab Datta's courtyard all day and talks to the people passing by and asks them about the places they go to. ]

(Amal is quite unwell and not allowed to go out of his room even for short periods. Everyone who knows Amal comes and leaves little gifts. Boys/friends are shooed away when Madhab Datta enters.)

**Amal:** Uncle, can't I even sit near that window any more today?

**Madhab Datta:** No, baba. Sitting there every day has made your illness worse.

**Amal :** No, uncle—I feel fine if I sit there.

**Madhab Datta:** Sitting there, you've been striking up with anyone who comes along –it's like a great *mela* every day outside my house –how are you going to get well if this goes on? See, how pale you've become!

**Amal :** But Uncle, if my Holy Man doesn't see me at the window today, he might go away.



**Madhab Datta:** Who is this Holy Man of yours?

**Amal :** The one who comes everyday and tells me lots of things about far-off lands – I love listening to him.

**Madhab Datta:** I don't know of any such Holy Man.

**Amal:** It's almost time for him to come—please go and speak to him, ask him to sit in my room for a while.  
(Thakurda, dressed as a Holy Man, enters.)

**Amal:** Here he is, here's my Holy Man –come, come and sit on my bed.

**Madhab Datta:** What's this? That's –

**Thakurda:** (winking) I'm the Holy Man.

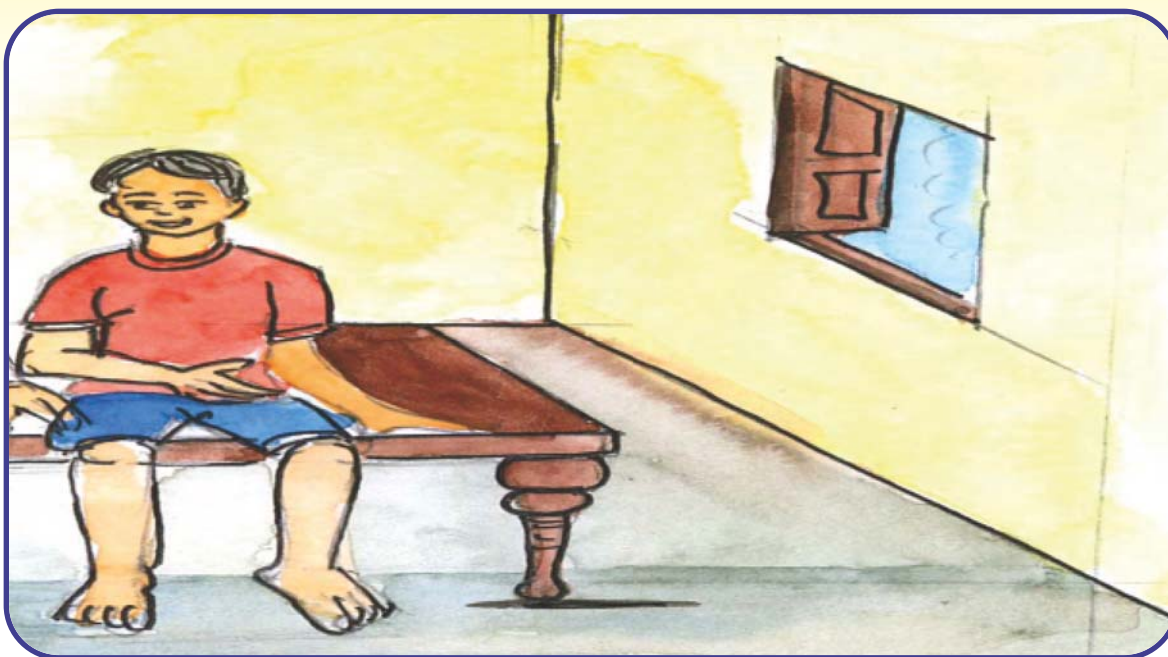
**Madhab Datta:** I wonder what you are not.

**Amal:** Where did you go this time, Holy Man?

**Thakurda:** I went to the Curlew Island.

**Madhab Datta:** The Curlew Island?

**Thakurda:** Why are you so surprised? Do you think I am like the rest of



you? I don't have to pay to go anywhere. I can go where I please.

**Amal: (clapping his hands)**

What fun you must have! You said that when I was well, you'd take me on as your student –do you remember, Holy Man?

**Thakurda:**

I certainly do. I'll teach you such spells. You'll be able to travel over the seas, mountains, forests –nothing will stop you anywhere.

**Madhab Datta:**

What nonsense you are talking, the two of you!

**Thakurda:**

Amal, baba, I'm not afraid of seas, mountains or forests-but if Kabiraj turns up again with your uncle, my spells will be ruined.

**Amal:**

No, no-don't say anything to Kabiraj, Uncle. I'll rest right here, I shall not do anything. As soon as I'm well, I'll use the Holy Man's spells to go away –over rivers, mountains and seas –nothing will stop me.

**Madhab Datta:**

Really, baba, you must stop this talk of going away-it makes me feel miserable.

**Amal:** Please tell me, Holy Man, what sort of place is the Curlew Island?

**Thakurda:** It's an amazing land of birds –there are no people there. They don't talk or walk –they sing and fly.

**Amal:** How wonderful! Beside the sea?

**Thakurda:** Right beside the sea.

**Amal:** And is there a blue mountain there?

**Thakurda:** Yes, that's where the birds have their nests. In the evening when the light of the setting sun falls on the mountain and flocks of green-coloured birds return to their nests, the colour of the sky and the birds and the mountain look so beautiful.

**Amal:** Is there a stream on the mountain?

**Thakurda:** Of course there is! Trickling down like molten diamonds –how it dances! Rattling the pebbles as it flows, bubbling and leaping down to the sea –no one can stop it even for a second. If I weren't just a worthless human, banned by the birds from their company, I'd make my home by the stream near those thousands of nests, and spend all day watching the waves of the sea.

**Amal:** If I were a bird then –

**Thakurda:** Then you'd be in real trouble. I hear that you told the curd seller you'd sell curds when you were grown up –but there wouldn't be much of a market for curds among the birds – you'd probably make a loss.

**Madhab Datta:** I can't take any more of this! You're both set on driving me crazy. I'm off.

**Amal:** Uncle, has my curd-seller come and gone?

**Madhab Datta:** But of course! If he flew off to your Curlew Island nest, carrying a bundle like your fancy Holy Man, he'd starve! He's left a pot of curds for you. He said his niece is getting



married in his village, so he's got a lot to do –he's gone to **kalmipara** to hire a flute-player.



*The construction of a post office nearby makes Amal imagine that he gets a letter from the King asking him to work as a postman. The Village Headman makes fun of Amal and tells him about a letter from the King promising that his 'Royal Doctor' would come and visit him. Towards the end of the play, the doctor does indeed visit him.*

**Rabindranath Tagore**

### GLOSSARY:

<b>shooed away</b>	: waved hands and arms to tell a child to go away
<b>baba</b>	: a Bengali word used out of love and affection for a child
<b>striking up</b>	: starting a friendship
<b>mela</b>	: a word for a children's fair or circus
<b>Thakurda</b>	: a Bengali word for grandfather
<b>Spells</b>	: magic charms
<b>miserable</b>	: unhappy, sad
<b>trickling down</b>	: flowing down slowly in a narrow stream
<b>molten</b>	: melted, liquid
<b>make a loss</b>	: not earn anything out of
<b>hire</b>	: to pay somebody for a particular job for a short time

## Activity - I

### A. Tick the correct alternative.

I. Amal used to sit by the window side because...

- a) he wanted to take fresh air
- b) he was not well to go out
- c) he wanted to speak to the people
- d) all of the above

II. The Holy Man was more friendly to

- a) uncle
- b) Madhav Datta
- c) Amal
- d) Kabiraj

### B. Say whether the statements given below are true or false-

- I. Amal used to sit at the window.....
- II. Amal's uncle was not very caring.....
- III. He would ask Amal to rest instead of waiting for the Holy Man.....
- IV. Madhab Datta felt very miserable while talking to Amal.....
- V. Curlew Island was a place full of wild animals.....
- VI. Thakurda is a very boring person.....

### C. Answer the following questions in 10 to 20 words.

- I. How did Amal keep himself busy?
- II. Who did Amal talk to every day?
- III. Who was the Holy Man actually?
- IV. Where had the Holy Man gone to?
- V. What was this place (Curlew Land) like?

### D. Answer the following questions in 30 to 40 words.

- I. Why did Thakurda tell Amal that he would make a loss if he were to become a curd-seller?
- II. What did Thakurda promise to Amal and why?

## Activity - II

Here are five verbs to do with quick movement.

<b>rattling</b>	: to move quickly making a lot of noise
<b>bubbling</b>	: flowing like a stream while making a gurgling sound
<b>leaping</b>	: springing or bounding along as if jumping from the ground
<b>flitting</b>	: to move about rapidly but in a nimble way
<b>darting</b>	: to move suddenly and rapidly

**A. Fill in the blanks using the suitable word from the box above.**

- I. One could hear the sweet sound of the.....brook nearby.
- II. The small birds went.....by, as they returned home after sunset.
- III. The trams.....along the cobbled streets of Kolkata.
- IV. You can see the mouse.....across the room as soon as it sees a cat nearby.
- V. The waterfall seems to be.....over the cliff as it plunges down to the lake.

**B. Complete the following words by filling in “ei” or “ie” in the blanks.**

- |          |           |              |           |
|----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| I. n__ce | II. p__ce | III. f__gn   | IV. r__gn |
| V. w__gh | VI. n__gh | VII. anx__ty |           |

## Activity - III

**Read the following sentences carefully:**

If I were a bird, I would fly in the sky.

If I lived near school, I would come to school in time.

The sentences above are conditional sentences. The first sentence is an example of 'improbable condition' in which '*were*' is used with every subject and 'would + verb first form' in the result. The second sentence expresses type two conditional sentence in which verb (II form) is used in condition and would + verb (I form) is used in result. In such types of sentences condition cannot be fulfilled.

- I. If I .....(be)....a lion, I .....(live) in a cave.
- II. If I .....(be).....a fish, I.....(swim) in water.
- III. If I were a teacher, I ...(teach)...the students.
- IV. If he...(work) hard, he ..(pass).. the exam.
- V. If you asked, I ...(help).... you.

**B. Complete the following sentences.**

- I. If I were a monkey, I would.....
- II. If I were a millionaire, I would.....
- III. If my brother were a king, he would.....
- IV. If I were you, I would never.....
- V. If my father gave me pocket money, I would.....

### Activity - IV

Divide the class into two groups and ask them to speak a few sentences about the places they have visited. Each group will get one point for a correct sentence.

### Activity - V

Write a letter to your friend telling him about the place you have visited recently. Also invite him to visit that place with you.