Unit 1

Family

J1N6W9

Reading A : The Tattered Blanket

Reading B : My Mother (Poem)

Reading C : Letter to a Friend

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Family

Look at the pictures and answer the questions that follow.

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1. What do you observe in the pictures?
2. What type of families do we find in our present society? Why?
3. Which family do you like? Why?

Oral Discourse: Debate - "Small families are happy families".

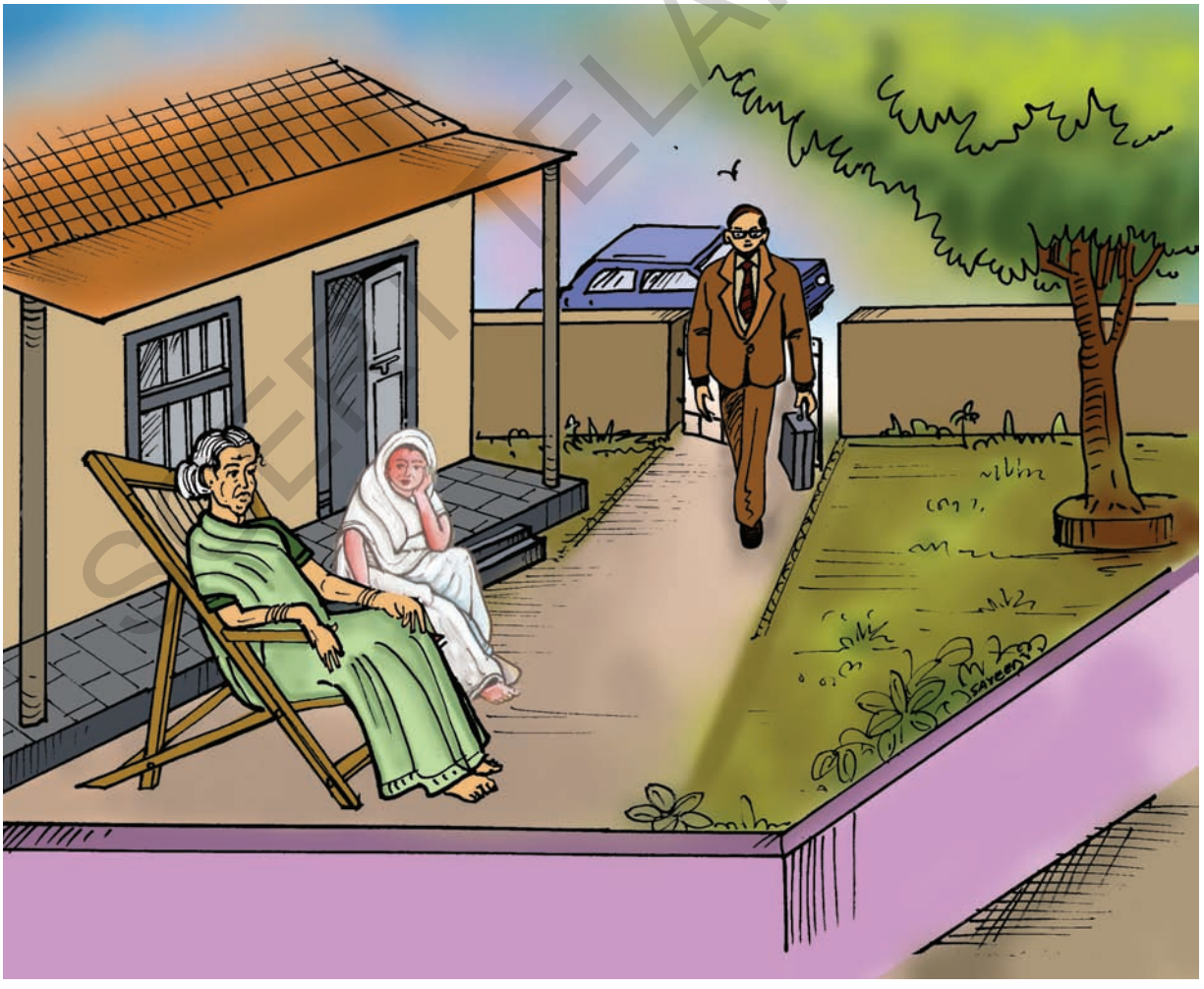
A Reading

The Tattered Blanket

When he arrived unexpectedly at his home in the countryside in his office car and got down at the gate, his mother, who was lying in an armchair on the veranda, made a futile attempt to get up.

'Kamala, there is somebody at the gate,' she said, 'somebody is in a car.'

Kamala, her eldest daughter, a widow, who was sitting huddled up on the *thinna* on the *veranda*, her head and ears covered with a thin bath towel, got up reluctantly, walked slowly to the gate and screwing up her eyes peered into the darkness.



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She saw a bald, fat, middle-aged man walking in through the gate.

'Oh, Gopi!' She said in her grating voice. 'Why this sudden unexpected visit?'

'Kamala, who is it?' Her mother asked loudly from the *veranda*.

'Gopi,' the man said. 'There was a meeting in Thiruvananthapuram. I just dropped in on my way back.'

'Who? Kamala, who is it?' There was a note of alarm in *Amma's* voice.

'*Amma*, why are you so scared?' Kamala, Gopi's eldest sister, asked her a little awkwardly. 'As if you are seeing Gopi for the first time!'

'Amma, it's me, Gopi,' he said again.

He bent down and brought his face close to her wrinkled cheeks. '*Amma*, it's me.'

'Gopi? Kamala, I can't believe it! Has his school closed for vacation?'

'*Amma* is often like this these days. She doesn't recognize anybody,' Gopi's sister explained. 'But sometimes her memory is quite sharp. Then she asks me if you have sent any letter. I tell her everything is fine with you, Vimala and the kids. What is the point of telling her that you haven't written for a year? Poor thing! I wouldn't dream of making her unhappy.'

'I got a promotion last year. After that I am always on my toes. And there are tours quite often. I don't get any time to write letters.'

'Why don't you ask Vimala to write, or doesn't she get any time too?'

'What are you mumbling over there?' *Amma* said loudly.

'I heard somebody coming in a car. Who is it?'

'I told you, it's Gopi.'

'But Gopi is in Delhi, isn't he?'

'Yes, *Amma*, it's me. I've come from Delhi.'

'Who did Gopi marry?' *Amma* said, suddenly lowering her voice. 'I mean, what's his wife's name?'

'Don't say you've forgotten her name too. Don't you remember, Vimala, District Collector Nambiar's eldest daughter?' Gopi's sister said.

'Oh, I forgot the name. Was there a letter from Gopi today?'

'There was. He writes every day.'

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'I'm terribly upset if I don't get a letter from him every day.'

'He knows it. That's why he writes every day.'

'Look at the way she talks,' Gopi's sister turned to him. 'Just as I told you. You know nothing about what's going on here, do you?'

'Who is that?' *Amma* said again. 'Who is that in a car?'

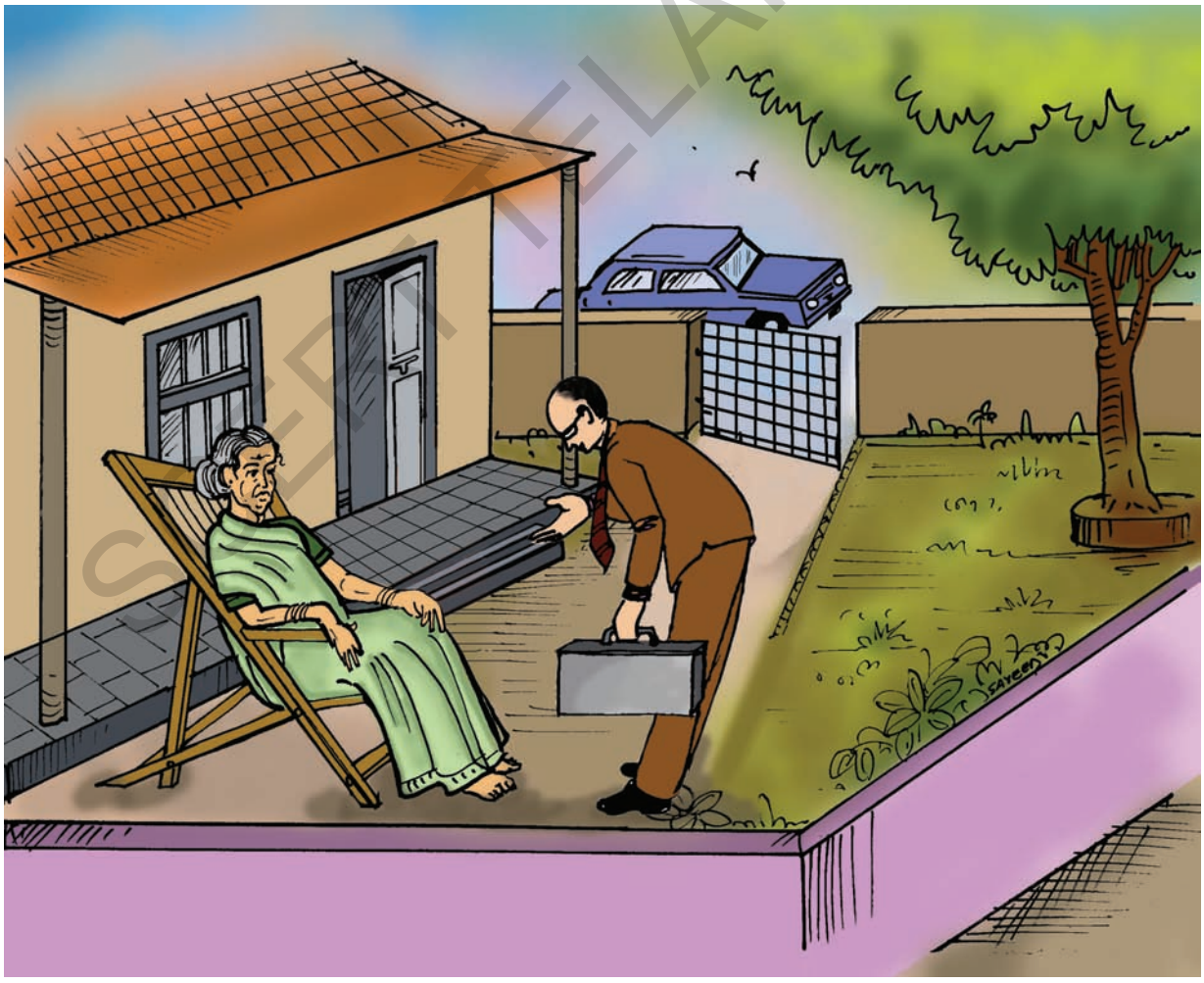
'It's me,' Gopi said. 'I had to come to Thiruvananthapuram. I thought I should drop in to see you, *Amma.*'

'Who is your *Amma*? What is her name? Where does she live? Is it far from here?'

'No, it is quite near.'

'I don't know how I can bring back her memory', Gopi's sister said to him exasperatedly.

Gopi placed his briefcase on the *thinna*. He opened it and pulled out the contents. Clothes, files, a shaving set….



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'Do you know my son, Gopi?' *Amma* asked him. 'He is in Delhi… a Government Officer. He has *Kesariyogam*…. He draws a salary of two thousand five hundred rupees. Do you know him?'

'Yes, I know him.'

'Tell him to send me a blanket. There is a cold mist in the mornings. If I catch cold it doesn't leave me for a long time. Tell him to send a blanket, won't you? A red one. I had a blanket, the one he brought for me when he was studying in Madras. It is all tattered now, just a ball of knotted yarn. Tell him to send me a red blanket, will you?'

'I'll tell him,' he nodded.

'Please don't forget to tell him. The mist is not good for me. I think I'll stretch myself out for a bit. I have been sitting too long in the armchair. I have a pain in the neck.

Gopi's sister put *Amma* to bed and came back to the *veranda*.

'You didn't come to see *Amma*, did you?'

'Delhi is too expensive. You know I have four children to look after now. I can't make both ends meet with my salary. And one has to keep up one's status. It will be a great help if I can raise some money by selling my share of the family property. I came to talk it over with you.'

'You'll sell your land and go away with the money. I know you won't come here anymore after that.'

'Don't say that. I'll come when I get time.'

'Your time!'

He saw the irritation on his sister's face.

'It took you more than five years to find time to come here. *Amma* is eighty three now. I don't think she will pull on much longer. It took you so long to visit her after the last time.'

'But *Amma* can't remember who I am', he said smiling feebly.

'But do you remember your *Amma*?'

- Written by Kamala Das (Madhavi Kutty)

(Translated from Malayalam by K.M.Sherrif)

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About the author

Kamla Das (1932-2009) is the daughter of the famous Malayalam poet– Balamani Amma and V.M. Nair. She is an internationally known poet, short story writer and novelist who writes effortlessly both in English and Malayalam. She has received many awards for her literary work. Some of them are Asian Poetry Prize, Kent Award for English Writing from Asian Countries, Asian World Prize, Sahitya Academy Award and Vayalar Rama Varma Sahitya Award .

Glossary

thinna (n)	:	sit out (elevated place on the veranda)
futile (*adj*)	:	unsuccessful
huddled (*v*)	:	held arms and legs close because of fear or cold
reluctantly (*adv*)	:	not willing to do something
screwing up eyes (*v*)	:	narrowing the eyes to look more carefully
on toes (*idm*)	:	busy, ready to work
mumbling (*v*)	:	speaking unclearly and quietly
exasperatedly (*adv*)	:	very annoyed
kesariyogam (*n*)	:	well settled (in Malayalam)
tattered (*adj*)	:	torn
irritation (*n*)	:	annoyance

Comprehension

Answer the following questions.

1. Why didn't the mother recognise Gopi? How did he feel?
2. Why do you think Gopi didn't get anything for his mother?
3. The mother could not remember Gopi. Do you think Gopi remembered his mother? What does it suggest?
4. What is meant by the expression 'the tattered blanket'?
5. Why didn't Gopi answer his sister's question, 'Do you remember your Amma ?
6. If you were Gopi's sister, how would you respond to his behaviour ?

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Vocabulary

I. Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate words.

irritation	huddled	awkwardly	futile
vacation	reluctantly	exasperatedly	mumbling

1. All my attempts to make him happy proved _____.
2. It was very cold. So, I _____ in a corner.
3. Forced by her parents, Sita _____ took the diploma course.
4. What are you _____? I can't hear you.
5. The news that he was denied promotion caused _____ to him.

II. Tick (✓) the words that are similar in meaning to the underlined words.

1. His mother made a futile attempt to get up.
   a. barren b. limited c. useless d. empty
2. It's all tattered now.
   a. spoiled b. old c. dirty d. torn
3. There is a cold mist in the mornings.
   a. ice b. snow c. fog d. win
4. It's just like a ball of knotted yarn.
   a. very small b. rounded tightly
   c. joined d. tied.
5. I can't make both ends meet with my salary.
   a. earn a lot of money b. spend a lot of money
   c. earn just enough money d. give all that one has

Grammar

Phrases and Noun Phrases.

I. Look at the following sentence from the text and observe the underlined part.

She saw a bald, fat, middle – aged man.

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Discussion :

Which word in the underlined part is important ?

The underlined part in the above sentence has more than one word. It is called **a phrase.**

The underlined part 'a bald, fat middle – aged man' functions as a Noun Phrase. Here the word 'man' is important and all other words add more information to that word. So it is called **a Noun Phrase.**

a	bald	fat	middle-aged	man
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
article	adj	adj	adj	noun

Identify some more noun phrases from the story and write them below.

1)_____ 2) _____ 3) _____

Complete the sentences with noun phrases using the words given in brackets.

1. I bought _____ (beautiful/a/umbrella/red).
2. We saw _____ in the zoo. (baby/a/elephants/of/couple).
3. Our grandfather lives in _____ (big/house/a/stone-built).
4. Ramya has _____ (nice/a/sari/silk).

Writing

Read the following paragraph, taken from the story.

> Delhi is too expensive. You know I have four children to look after now. I can't make both ends meet with my salary. And one has to keep up one's status. It will be a great help if I can raise some money by selling my share of the family property. I came to talk it over with you.

Now, write a short essay on how to keep up family ties despite economic pressures (You may use the hints given below).

- Impact of economic pressures
- Lack of time to spend with the family
- Lack of love and affection
- Absence of healthy human relationships

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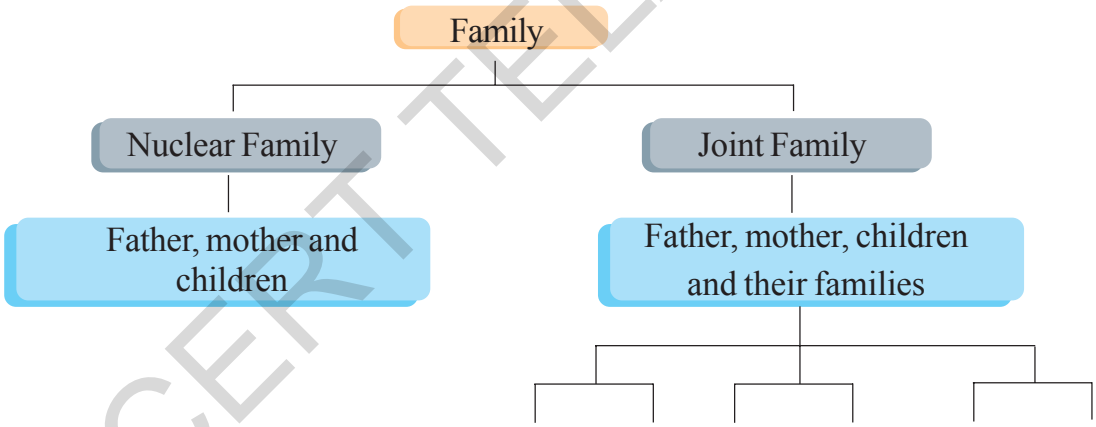
Listening

Listen to your teacher making an announcement and answer the following questions.

1. What is the announcement about?
2. What are the features of Prashanth?
3. Where do you generally listen to such announcements?
4. Think of some announcements you may make or listen at school.
5. What are the other ways to trace the missing persons or things?

Study Skills

Family related information.



Is yours a nuclear or joint family ?

Now write a paragraph describing the types of families using the information given in the above tree diagram.

Which type of family do you prefer and why?

_____

_____

_____

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B Reading

My Mother

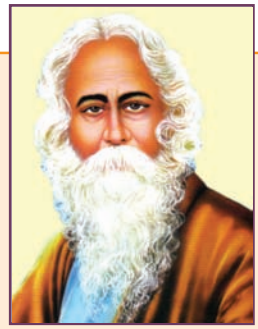
I cannot remember my mother,
only sometime in the midst of my play
a tune seems to hover over my playthings,
the tune of some song that she used
to hum while rocking my cradle.

I cannot remember my mother,
but when in the early autumn morning
the smell of the shiuli flowers floats in the air,
the scent of the morning service in the temple
comes to me as the scent of my mother.

I cannot remember my mother,
only when from my bedroom window I send my
eyes into the blue of the distant sky,
I feel that the stillness of my mother's gaze
on my face has spread all over the sky.

- Rabindranath Tagore

About the poet



Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) is popularly known as Vishwa Kavi and Gurudev. He was the founder of *Shantiniketan*, an experimental school. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature for his *Gitanjali*, the *Song of Offerings*. Each of his poems reflects Indian vision and love towards his Mother Land. He is considered the Voice of Indian Heritage and Spiritualism.

Glossary

hover (*v*)	:	remain in the air
shiuli (*n*)	:	small, white or orange flowers that bloom in autumn
scent (*n*)	:	perfume/good smell

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Comprehension

Answer the following questions.

1. How does the poet feel the presence of his mother?
2. What do you understand from the statement – 'I cannot remember my mother'?
3. Does the poem convey sadness? If yes, pick out the suggestive expressions.
4. What imagery do you find in each stanza? To which sense does it appeal to you?

Stanza	Images	Sense it appeals to
1	Mother rocking the cradle and singing a song	ears
2		
3		

5. Read the poem 'My Mother' again and complete the table.

Questions	Stanza 1	Stanza 2	Stanza 3
Who are the persons involved ?			
Where does the action take place?			
What is the mother associated with?			
What is the theme?			

6. We all love our mother, don't we? We love her because of certain qualities. Think and write about her qualities.

_____

_____

7. How would you choreograph the first stanza? (Group work)
   a. What settings do you arrange?
   b. What are the characters and their actions?
   c. What is the sequence of actions?

Stanza	Action of the main character	Action of the supporting team / characters
1		
2		
3		

Each group may choreograph different stanzas of the poem.

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C Reading

A Letter to a Friend

Hyderabad.
12-11-2012.

Dear Suresh,

This is Ramesh. I apologise for not meeting you during your visit to Hyderabad last week. Unfortunately, I had a meeting in my office. I remember how we enjoyed our childhood days in Manikonda village. Every day we played together in our garden. Our family was very big. There were twelve members in our family. I remember how we played in the moonlight. Our grandma used to give us fruits and biscuits. Our grandpa used to tell us fairy tales, about the princes, warriors and the village boys…….

Now I am working at Microsoft, a software company, Hyderabad, as a Computer Programmer. I am married and we have a child. My wife works at Dell, Hyderabad as a System Analyst. You know city life is quite busy. We start in the morning; leave our child at the baby care centre and come back in the evening with faded faces. We hardly find time to sit together. How disgusting! We work with computers, think like computers and live like computers. We have forgotten our family.

I remember how we played *gilli-danda*, hide and seek and *kabaddi*. We went for swimming in our local tank every Sunday. Here we live in an apartment where there is no room to play. Our flat is our world, just like a well for a frog! (The world remains unheeded.)

How happy we were in our school! We used to sit in the same row, did all the work together and took part in the events. I remember how Padmanabhaiah Sir, our class teacher, appreciated us when we got the first prize in District Science Fair. I remember how we went on a picnic to Koil Sagar. There we went boating. Our tour to Srisailam was memorable. Still I remember the green hills full of trees that almost touched the sky! I remember the roaring of the Krishna River at the dam. There is nothing here! I wonder at my child's silence. He always sits in front of the computer and plays games, never caring for anyone.

I remember the happy moments when our uncle visited us. He brought toys and fruits for us. Our aunt brought me a new dress for *Dasara*. How we enjoyed *Deepavali*! Still I hear the sound of crackers, I can see the rockets flying into the sky making the night full of light! Where are those days? My child doesn't know his uncle or aunt. For him, uncle and neighbour are the same.

Sometimes I think of our childhood days. I think of grandparents, uncles, brothers, sisters …….

We missed them. We missed the joy of the family. We missed their company. We are missing many things in this busy life.

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Suresh, I don't know where those gardens have gone, those fairy tales, those fruits, those words of love and affection…….. . We have lost our real life in this unreal world.

Anyhow I am happy that I have found time to write to you. Please come to me. Let's remember our childhood days of joy.

Your loving friend,
Ramesh.

Comprehension

Answer the following questions.

1. How did Suresh and Ramesh spend their childhood?
2. Why did Ramesh's family move to the city?
3. What change did you observe in Ramesh?
4. Do you think Ramesh is happy in the city? Why?
5. What made Ramesh write to Suresh?

Project Work

Observe any five families in your neighbourhood and draw your conclusions, advantages and disadvantages of living in a joint / nuclear family.

Self Assessment

How well have I understood this unit?

Read and tick (✓) in the appropriate box.

Indicators	Yes	Somewhat	No
I read and understood the text :			
A. The Tattered Blanket			
B. My Mother			
C. Letter to a Friend			
I was able to do the exercises given under 'Vocabulary'.			
I was able to use the Phrases and Noun Phrase.			
I was able to write a short essay given under 'Writing'.			
I was able to write a paragraph describing the types of families given under 'Study Skills'.			
I was able to understand and choreograph the poem 'My Mother'.			
I listened to and understood 'An Announcement on the Radio' and answered the questions given under 'Listening'.			
I was able to complete the 'Project Work'.			

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