
CBSE Class 10 English Language and Literature
NCERT Solutions
First Flight 8
Mijbil the Otter

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1. What 'experiment' did Maxwell think Camusfearna would be suitable for?

Ans: Maxwell thought that he would keep an otter as a pet instead of a dog. This would be a new experiment for him, as people seldom keep them as pets. Camusfearna, ringed by water a very short distance from door, would be a suitable spot for the experiment.

2. Why does he go to Basra? How long does he wait there, and why?

Ans: He goes to Basra, to the Consulate General, to collect and answer his mail from Europe. He had had to wait there for five days for multiple reasons. Firstly, his mail didn't reach on time. Then he tried to make a telephone call. This incident is of those days when one had to book an international call 24 hrs in advance. The telephone line was not working properly on the first day. Next day it was some public holiday so the exchange was closed. Then there was some other breakdown. Finally, after a torturous wait of five days, his mail arrived.

3. How does he get the otter? Does he like it? Pick out the words that tell you this.

Ans: When he received his mail, he carried it to his bedroom to read. There, he saw two Arabs and beside them was a sack that twisted from time to time. They handed him a note from his friend saying that he had sent him an otter.

Yes, he likes it. We know this because he uses the term 'otter fixation' to refer to his feeling towards the otter. He felt that this 'otter fixation' or this strong attachment towards otters was something that was shared by most other people who had ever owned one.

4. Why was the otter named 'Maxwell's otter'?

Ans: The otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli* or Maxwell's otter.

5. Tick the right answer. In the beginning, the otter was

- aloof and indifferent
- friendly
- hostile

Ans: In the beginning, the otter was aloof and indifferent.

6. What happened when Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom? What did it do two days after that?

Ans: Otters live in water and it is their favorite playground. When Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom, it went wild with joy in the water for half an hour. It was plunging and rolling in it, shooting up and down the length of the bathtub underwater. Two days after that, it was confident enough to go to the bathroom on its own. By the time he got there, Mijbil was up on the end of the bathtub and fumbling at the chromium taps with its paws. In less than a minute, it had turned the tap far enough to produce some water and after a moment, achieved the full flow.

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1. How was Mij to be transported to England?

Ans: As British airlines did not allow animals to be taken by plane so the author decided to take it by another airline to Paris. Maxwell booked a flight to Paris and from there he would go to London. The airlines insisted that Mij should be packed in a box, not more than eighteen square inches, that could be placed on the floor, near his feet.

2. What did Mij do to the box?

Ans: The box was lined with metal sheet. Mij didn't find it comfortable to be there so tried to escape. In its attempt to escape Mij tore into the metal lining of the box. As a result it hurt itself and started bleeding.

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3. Why did Maxwell put the otter back in the box? How do you think he felt when he did

this?

Ans: As there was no other way to carry Mij to London so the author had put it back into the box. He must have felt pity, the way the otter had hurt itself. Moreover, he must be worried as well.

4. Why does Maxwell say the air hostess was “the very queen of her kind”?

Ans: Maxwell said that the air hostess was “the very queen of her kind” because she was extremely friendly and helpful. He took her into confidence about the incident with the box. She ,very generously, suggested him to put the otter on his knees. Hearing this, Maxwell developed a profound admiration for her as she understood the pain of both, the otter and its owner.

5. What happened when the box was opened?

Ans: When the box was opened, Mij darted out of the box and vanished. There were cries all around. A woman stood up on her seat screaming. Maxwell saw Mij’s tail disappearing beneath the legs of an Indian passenger. He dived for it, but missed. The air hostess suggested him to be seated and that she would find the otter. After a while, Mij returned to him. It climbed on his knees and began to rub its nose on his face and neck.

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1. What game had Mij invented?

Ans: Mij had invented a game with a ping-pong ball. He made a damaged suitcase his playground. He would put the ball at one end of its sloping lid and then grab it as it ran to the other end.

2. What are ‘compulsive habits’? What does Maxwell say are the compulsive habits of

(i) school children

(ii) Mij ?

Ans: Compulsive habits are usually strange act or behavior which a person does without clear reason.

(1) On their way to and from school, children make it a habit to place their feet exactly on the center of each paving block.

(2) Similarly, Mij had made it a habit to jump on to the school wall and go galloping all along its length of thirty yards.

3. What group of animals do otters belong to?

Ans: Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called Mustelines, shared by the badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink and others.

4. What guesses did the Londoners make about what Mij was?

Ans: According to Maxwell, the average Londoner does not recognize an otter. The Londoners, who saw Mij, made different guesses about its identity. They made wildest possible guesses, among other things, that it was a baby seal, a squirrel, a walrus, a hippo, a beaver, a bear cub, a leopard or a brontosaurus.

Thinking about the Text

1. What things does Mij do which tell you that he is an intelligent, friendly and fun-loving animal who needs love?

Ans: Mij is an intelligent animal. It invented its own game with ping-pong balls. It learned to screw the tap till water began to flow and then it would play and splash in the water. Though it was aloof and indifferent in the beginning, it soon became very friendly. It got attached with Maxwell. It responded when Maxwell called out his name. Maxwell left it in a box and it got hurt while trying to come out of it. After Maxwell took it out, it clung to his feet. It was a fun-loving animal. It enjoyed playing all kinds of games. It would play with a selection of toys, ping-pong balls, marbles, rubber fruit, and a terrapin shell. It got love and affection from Maxwell.

2. What are some of the things we come to know about otters from this text?

Ans: Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called Mustelines, shared by the badger, mongoose, weasel, mink and others. Maxwell's otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli* or Maxwell's otter. They are often tamed by the Arabs. It is a characteristic of the otters that every drop of water must be spread around the place. For them, water must be kept on the move because they love to be in water. Otters love playing various games, especially with a

ball.

3. Why is Mij’s species now known to the world as Maxwell’s otter?

Ans: Maxwell’s otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists *Lutrogale perspicillata* Maxwell or Maxwell’s otter.

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4. Maxwell in the story speaks for the otter, Mij. He tells us what the otter feels and thinks on different occasions. Given below are some things the otter does. Complete the column on the right to say what Maxwell says about what Mij feels and thinks.

What Mij does	How Mij feels or thinks
Plunges, rolls in the water and makes the water splosh and splash	_____
Screws the tap in the wrong way	_____
Nuzzles Maxwell’s face and neck in the aeroplane	_____

Ans:

What Mij does	How Mij feels or thinks
Plunges, rolls in the water and makes the water splosh and splash	went wild with joy
Screws the tap in the wrong way	irritated and disappointed
Nuzzles Maxwell’s face and neck in the aeroplane	distressed chitter of recognition and welcome

5. Read the story and find the sentences where Maxwell describes his pet otter. Then choose and arrange your sentences to illustrate those statements below that you think are true.

Maxwell’s description

- (i)** makes Mij seem almost human, like a small boy.
 - (ii)** shows that he is often irritated with what Mij does.
 - (iii)** shows that he is often surprised by what Mij does.
 - (iv)** of Mij’s antics is comical.
 - (v)** shows that he observes the antics of Mij very carefully.
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(vi) shows that he thinks Mij is a very ordinary otter.

(vii) shows that he thinks the otter is very unusual.

Ans: (i) He spent most of his time in play.

(iii) I watched, amazed; in less than a minute he had turned the tap far enough to produce a trickle of water, and after a moment or two achieved the full flow.

(v) A suitcase that I had taken to Iraq had got damaged on the journey home, so that the lid, when closed, remained at a slope from one end to the other. Mij discovered that if he placed the ball on the high end it would run down the length of the suitcase. He would dash around to the other end to ambush its arrival, hide from it, crouching, to spring up and take it by surprise, grab it and trot off with it to the high end once more.

(vii) It is not, I suppose, in any way strange that the average Londoner should not recognize an otter, but the variety of guesses as to what kind of animal this might be came as a surprise to me. Mij was anything but an otter.

Thinking about the Language

I. From the table below, make as many correct sentences as you can using would and/or used to, as appropriate. (Hint: First decide whether the words in italics show an action, or a state or situation, in the past.) Then add two or three sentences of your own to it.

Emperor Akbar	would used to	be fond of musical evenings.
Every evening we		take long walks on the beach
Fifty years ago, very few people		own cars.
Till the 1980's, Shanghai		have very dirty streets.
My uncle		spend his holidays by the sea.

Ans: 1. Emperor Akbar used to be fond of musical evenings.

2. Every evening we used to take long walks on the beach.

3. Fifty years ago, very few people used to own cars.

4. Till the 1980's, Shanghai used to have very dirty streets.

5. My uncle would spend his holidays by the sea.

6. My uncle used to take long walks on the beach.

7. My uncle used to be fond of musical evenings.

II. Noun Modifiers

1. Look at these examples from the text, and say whether the modifiers (in italics) are nouns, proper nouns, or adjective plus noun.

(i)	An <i>otter</i> fixation	(iv)	The <i>London</i> streets
(ii)	The <i>iron</i> railings	(v)	<i>soft velvet</i> fur
(iii)	The <i>Tigris</i> marshes	(vi)	A <i>four-footed</i> soccer player

Ans: (i) Noun

(ii) Noun

(iii) Proper noun

(iv) Proper noun

(v) Adjective plus noun

(vi) Adjective plus noun

2. Given below are some nouns, and a set of modifiers (in the box). Combine the nouns and modifiers to make as many appropriate phrases as you can. (Hint: The nouns and modifiers are all from the texts in this book.)

temple	three girls	triangle	dresses
person	thoughts	boys	roar
gifts	scream	farewell	expression
time	subject	landscape	handkerchief
crossing	flight	chatterbox	profession
physique	coffee	view	celebration

college	rough	hundred	stone	ordinary
love	uncomfortable	white	slang	slack
bare	railroad	tremendous	family	marriage
plump	invigorating	panoramic	heartbreaking	birthday
incorrigible	ridiculous	loud	first	

Ans: Temple – white temple, stone temple, first temple

Person – incorrigible person, ridiculous person
Gifts – hundred gifts, ordinary gifts, birthday gifts
Time – college time, rough time, first time
Crossing – railroad crossing, first crossing
Physique – plump physique, ordinary physique
Three girls – first three girls, incorrigible three girls
Thoughts – incorrigible thoughts, uncomfortable thoughts, ridiculous thoughts, heartbreaking thoughts, first thoughts, ordinary thoughts
Scream – tremendous scream, loud scream
Subject – college subject, ordinary subject
Flight – rough flight, first flight
Coffee – invigorating coffee, ordinary coffee
Triangle – love triangle
Boys – college boys, incorrigible boys, rough boys, hundred boys
Farewell – college farewell, heartbreaking farewell
Landscape – bare landscape, rough landscape, white landscape
Chatterbox – incorrigible chatterbox
View – tremendous view, panoramic view, ordinary view
Dresses – hundred dresses, ordinary dresses, birthday dresses, marriage dresses
Roar – tremendous roar, loud roar
Expression – bare expression, slang expression, slack expression
Handkerchief – white handkerchief, ordinary handkerchief
Profession – family profession, first profession, ordinary profession
Celebration – tremendous celebration, family celebration, birthday celebration

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III.1. Match the words on the left with a word on the right. Some words on the left can go with more than one word on the right.

(i)	a portion of	blood
(ii)	a pool of	cotton
(iii)	flakes of	stones
(iv)	a huge heap of	gold

(v)	a gust of	fried fish
(vi)	little drops of	snow
(vii)	a piece of	water
(viii)	a pot of	wind

Ans:

(i)	a portion of	fried fish
(ii)	a pool of	blood
(iii)	flakes of	snow
(iv)	a huge heap of	stones
(v)	a gust of	wind
(vi)	little drops of	water
(vii)	a piece of	cotton
(viii)	a pot of	gold

2. Use **a bit of/a piece of/a bunch of/a cloud of/a lump of** with the italicized nouns in the following sentences. The first has been done for you as an example.

(i)	My teacher gave me some <i>advice</i> .	My teacher gave me a bit of advice.
(ii)	Can you give me some <i>clay</i> , please.	_____
(iii)	The <i>information</i> you gave was very useful.	_____
(iv)	Because of these factories, <i>smoke</i> hangs over the city.	_____
(v)	Two <i>stones</i> rubbed together can produce sparks of fire.	_____
(vi)	He gave me some <i>flowers</i> on my birthday.	_____

Ans:

(i)	My teacher gave me some <i>advice</i> .	My teacher gave me a bit of advice.
(ii)	Can you give me some <i>clay</i> , please.	Can you give me a lump of clay, please.
(iii)	The <i>information</i> you gave was very useful.	The piece of information you gave was very useful.

(iv)	Because of these factories, <i>smoke</i> hangs over the city.	Because of these factories, a cloud of smoke hangs over the city.
(v)	Two <i>stones</i> rubbed together can produce sparks of fire.	Two pieces of stones rubbed together can produce sparks of fire.
(vi)	He gave me some <i>flowers</i> on my birthday.	He gave me a bunch of flowers on my birthday.
