

Mijbil the Otter

I

Author's decision to keep a pet otter

The author went to southern Iraq early in the new year of 1956. He decided that he would keep a pet otter instead of a dog. His place of living Camusfearia had much water around it. So it would be suitable for it.

The author and his friend in Basra

The author's friend heard it. He suggested him to take one otter from the Tigris marshes. There the otters were in plenty. He and his friend were going to Basra to collect one. His friend's mail had reached the Consulate- General. But his mail had not.

An otter given to him by the Arabs

The author cabled the message to England. There was a delay of a few days due to fault in the line or holidays. At last the mail arrived. He went to his room to read it. There he saw two Arabs with the otter. They said it was for him.

II

Strangeness of the otter

With that otter, the author says, his life underwent a change. This phase of his life still continues. The creature given to him looked like a small dragon. The otter had pointed scales of mud armour on his back. Between tips there was a soft velvet fur. He was like that of a chocolate-brown mole. There was a lot of dust and mud on him. He took months to shed his mud over his body.

Otter identified and domesticated

The author called the otter Mijbil. His race was unknown to science. Zoologists gave him the name *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli* or Maxwell's otter. At first Mijbil was aloof. He chose to sleep on the floor. The next night he came to the author's bed. He slept in his knees. In the day he took a keen interest in his surroundings. The author made him a body- belt. He took him to the bathroom. The otter was wild with joy in the under water of the bathtub.

Otter in the bathtub

Two days later, Mijbil escaped from the author's bedroom. He went to the bathroom. He entered the bathtub. He turned the tap. There flowed full tap water. Later he showed anger when the tap did not open.

Mij fully at home

Soon Mij followed the author when he called his name. He spent hours moving a rubber ball round the room. He would throw it also like a soccer player. The real play of an otter is when he lies on his back. He plays with small objects between his paws. His favourite toys were marbles.

III

Preparing to take Mij back home

Days passed peacefully at Basra. The author feared to transport Mij to England and to Camusfeama. The British airline would not fly animals. So he booked a flight to Paris on another airline and another to London. Mij was put into a box to be habitual to it.

The otter and his box

It was flight time. The author returned from his meal. He found complete silence from the box. Blood had trickled from the airholes of the box and dried. He at once opened the box. Mij lay tired and blood-covered. He had torn the inner lining of the box. It was just ten minutes to the flight. The airport was five miles distant. The author put Mij back into the box.

The author in the aeroplane

The author sat in the car holding the box. The driver sped through the streets of Basra like a bullet. The aircraft was waiting to take off. The author rushed in. He covered the place near his seat with newspapers. He gave a parcel of fish to the airhostess for the otter. He told her of the last event of the otter. She suggested him to keep Mij on his knee.

Mij out of the box

Soon Mij was out of the box. He disappeared very soon. There were cries and shrieks inside the aeroplane. A woman stood and called "A rat! A rat!" The author saw Mij's tail beneath the legs of an Indian. The author's face got covered in curry. The airhostess assured the author that she would find the animal. The author returned to his seat. Very soon Mij came to him on his own.

IV

Playing by Mij with ping-pong balls

Mij and the author remained in London for nearly a month. He would play with toys, ping-pong balls, marbles, rubber fruit etc. He played with a suitcase with the ping-pong ball. He would catch ball off the suitcase cover. He would hide from it and walk off it. This would become his favourite game.

Mij's playing in the outings

The author exercised Mij on a lead outside. Mij developed certain habits on those walks in the London streets. He went with him like children playing, running and touching things in the streets. He would take the author near the primary school outer wall. He would then gallop on it. This interested the pupils and the staff to distraction.

Queries about Mij

Mij's presence made the Londoners guess about his kind. Otters belong to small group of animals called Mustellines. These are shared by the badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink and others. The author received several questions. It could be 'a baby seal', 'a walrus', 'a hippo', 'a beaver', 'a bear cub', 'a leopard'. But Mij was nothing but an otter.

Question by a labourer

The author awarded the highest score to a question from a labourer. He was digging a hole in the street. He saw the author with the otter. He laid down his tool. He came near him and glared. He then growled out, "Here, Mister—what is that supposed to be?"

NCERT Solutions

Oral Comprehension Check Page 106

Question 1.

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

Answer:

The writer had gone to Southern Iraq in the year 1956. He took a fancy to the idea that instead of keeping a dog as a pet, he would go for an otter. Camusfearna was surrounded by water, so it would be an eminently suitable spot for this experiment.

Question 2.

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

Answer:

The writer went to Basra to collect and answer his mail from Europe. He had to wait there for 5 days as his mail did not arrive.

Question 3.

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

Answer:

His friend bought the otter for him and sent it to the place where he was staying. The author liked it. This is seen in "The second night Mijbil came on to my bed in the small hours and remained asleep in the crook of my knees...." "I made a body-belt for him...".

Question 4.

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

Answer:

The otter was named by zoologists as *Lutrogale Perspicillata Maxwelli*. Hence, it was called Maxwell's otter in short.

Question 5.

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

1. aloof and indifferent
2. friendly
3. hostile

Answer:

What happened when Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom? What did it do two days after that? In the beginning, the otter was aloof and indifferent.

Question 6.

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

Answer:

When the author first took Mijbil to the bathroom, the otter first went wild with joy in the water. He plunged and rolled in it. He jumped up and down the length of the bathtub. He made enough slosh

and splash. After two days, the otter suddenly disappeared and went to the bathroom to play in the water and opened the tap on his own.

Page 108

Question 1.

How was Mijbil transported to England?

Answer:

Mijbil was packed in a box as the airlines had directed the author. As British airlines did not allow pets on board the author had to book a ticket on a different airline from Iraq to Paris and then Paris to London.

Question 2.

What did Mij do to the box?

Answer:

The box was lined with a metal sheet. Mij didn't feel comfortable in the box and tried to escape. In his attempt to escape, Mij tore into the metal lining of the box and in the process hurt himself.

Question 3.

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

Answer:

As there was no other way to carry Mij to London, Maxwell put in the box again. He must have felt pity on the way the otter hurt himself. Moreover, he must be worried as well.

Question 4.

Why does Maxwell say the airhostess was "the very queen of her kind"?

Answer:

The airhostess was very sympathetic after listening to Maxwell's story. She understood how he might be feeling and then gave him permission to take the otter out of the box. Due to all this, Maxwell referred her as "the very queen of her kind".

Question 5.

What happened when the box was opened?

Answer:

As soon as the box was opened, Mij ran out. Then it ran all over the place scaring all the passengers. It created a chaos and most of the people in the plane got scared.

Page 110

Question 1.

What game had Mij invented?

Answer:

Mij invented a game of playing with the ball in a unique way. One of the author's suitcase was damaged and had a slope on the top part. Mij would put the ball on the high end and run to catch it as it slid to the lower end.

Question 2.

What are 'compulsive habits'? What does Maxwell say are the compulsive habits of

1. school children

2. Mij?

Answer:

Compulsive habits are usually strange act or behaviour which a person does without clear reason. For example a cricket player may put on his right shoes first as he believes it would bring him good luck or a kid jumping over a fence, instead of going through the passage way. Usually compulsive behaviour of children are full of childhood mischief and those of adults are of incorrigible type.

1. As per this story, children must place their feet squarely on the centre of each paving block; must touch every seventh upright of the iron railings, or pass to the outside of every second lamp post.

2. Mijbil while on its way to home would jump over the boundary wall railing and run at full speed throughout its length.

Question 3.

What group of animals do otters belong to?

Answer:

Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called Mustellines. The other animals of this group are badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink and others.

Question 4.

What guesses did the Londoners make about what Mij was?

Answer:

As otters are not found in England so Londoners made the wildest possible guesses about Mij. Their guesses ranged from a baby seal, a squirrel, a hippo to a brontosaurus.

Thinking about the Text

(Page 110, 111)

Question 1.

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

Answer:

Mij invented his own game out of ping-pong ball and a worn down suitcase. He loved water, and once he understood that on opening the tap water came out of it, he would get into the tub and played with water.

He had gradually formed a special attachment with Maxwell. It grew desperate when Maxwell left it in a box and wanted to come out as soon as possible.

Question 2.

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

Answer:

Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called Mustellines, shared by badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink and others. They are found in large numbers in marshes. Arabs keep them as pets and tame them. Otters love to spread water and splash in it. Maxwell's otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists *Lutrogale Perspicillata Maxwelli*.

Question 3.

Why is Mij's species now known to the world as Maxwell's otter?

Answer:

Maxwell's otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists *Lutrogale Perspicillata Maxwelli*, hence, it is known as Maxwell's otter in short.

Question 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	

Answer:

What Mij Does	How Mij Feels or Thinks
Plunges, rolls in the water and makes the water splosh and splash	He thinks it is a hippo and is very happy.
Screws the tap in the wrong way	He chitters with irritation and disappointment.

Nuzzles Maxwell's face and neck in the aeroplane	He feels much comfort and content after its distressed chitter.
---	--

Question 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

1. makes Mij seem almost human, like a small boy.
2. shows that he is often irritated with what Mij does.
3. shows that he is often surprised by what Mij does.
4. of Mij's antics is comical.
5. shows that he observes the antics of Mij very carefully.
6. shows that he thinks Mij is a very ordinary otter.
7. shows that he thinks the otter is very unusual.

Answer:

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. True
6. False
7. True

Extra Questions

Very Short Answer Type

Question 1.

Where did Gavin Maxwell live?

Answer:

Gavin Maxwell lived in Camusfeama.

Question 2.

What did the author decide to experiment?

Answer:

The author decided to have an otter as a pet instead of a dog.

Question 3.

Why was his place a suitable place for that experiment?

Answer:

The author's place was a suitable place for that experiment because otters love to see flowing water and feed on fish.

Question 4.

What did the author's friend advise him?

Answer:

The author's friend advised him to get an otter from the Tigris marshes.

Question 5.

Why did the author go to Basra?

Answer:

The author went to Basra to the Consulate—General to collect and answer his mail from Europe.

Question 6.

Why did the author cable to England?

Answer:

The author cabled to England to get information about the status of his mail.

Question 7.

Why did the author wait for three days?

Answer:

The author waited to telephone for three days as there were problems with it.

Question 8.

When did the author receive his mail?

Answer:

Five days later, the author received his mail.

Question 9.

What did the author find in his bedroom?

Answer:

The author found two Arabs in his bedroom.

Question 10.

What did the author see in the bathroom?

Answer:

The author found Mijbil upon the bath tub.

Question 11.

Where did Mijbil go?

Answer:

Mijbil went inside the bathroom to have fun with water.

Question 12.

What did the otter want to do?

Answer:

Mijbil, the otter was trying to turn the tap so that water could come out of it.

Question 13.

How did Mijbil spend his time?

Answer:

Mijbil spent his time in playing with rubber ball.

Question 14.

Who was in the box.

Answer:

Mij, the otter was in the box.

Question 15.

What did the author find in the box?

Answer:

The author found complete silence in the box.

Question 16.

What was the condition of Mijbil in the box?

Answer:

Mijbil's condition was miserable.

Question 17.

How did Mijbil spend his time in London?

Answer:

Mijbil spent his time playing with a selection of toys—ping-pong balls, rubber fruit and terrapin shell.

Question 18.

What did Mijbil invent?

Answer:

Mijbil invented a new game with the ping-pong ball.

Question 19.

How did he play with his new game?

Answer:

Mijbil placed the ball on the light end and tried to grab it from the other end.

Question 20.

What did the labourer want to know?

Answer:

The labourer wanted to know the species of Mijbil.

Short Answer Type

Question 1.

What special characteristic of Mijbil did Maxwell learn after he took it to the bathroom?

Answer:

When Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom, he learnt that he went wild with joy in water, plunging and rolling in it and splashed water.

Question 2.

Why did the writer stay in Basra?

Answer:

The writer and his friend were going to Basra to the Consulate—General to collect and answer their mails. They found that the mail of his friend was available but the author had to stay in Basra for five days.

Question 3.

What did the otter look like?

Answer:

The otter looked like a very small dragon. Its appearance was very pretty. It was coated with pointed scales of mud on its back. It spread mud all round.

Question 4.

How did Maxwell get the otter?

Answer:

Maxwell wanted to keep an otter as a pet instead of dog. He expressed his wish before his friend who managed to get an otter and sent it to Maxwell through two Arabs. Thus Maxwell got his tamed otter.

Question 5.

Why was the otter called Maxwell's otter?

Answer:

The otter was not a common wild creature. It belonged to an unknown race of otters that was later christened by zoologists as *Lutrogale perspicillata Maxwelli*; As it came into light as Maxwell's pet, it was named as Maxwell's otter.

Question 6.

Why did Maxwell call the airhostess "the very queen of her kind"?

Answer:

Maxwell was worried about Mijbil's welfare. Mijbil was exhausted and wounded. His condition was very miserable in the box. Maxwell wanted Mijbil to be free. The airhostess allowed him to have Mijbil on his knee. Out of gratitude for her sympathy and kindness, the author said so.

Question 7.

What happened when Maxwell decided to transport Mijbil to England by air?

Answer:

When Maxwell decided to transport Mijbil to England, Mijbil was kept into a box. He tore off the box and wounded himself. Then Mijbil disappeared down the aircraft, terrorizing the other passengers. After that, he settled on Maxwell's knee and gave no further inconvenience to others.

Question 8.

Write a short paragraph from the text to show that Mijbil was an intelligent animal.

Answer:

One day Mijbil escaped from Maxwell's room and went to the bathroom. When the writer reached

there he found that the otter had turned the tap in less than a minute and he had managed to get full flow of water for a bath.

Question 9.

What game did Mijbil invent?

Answer:

Mijbil discovered that if he placed the ball on the high end of the damaged suitcase, 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.

Question 10.

What guesses did the Londoners make about what Mijbil was?

Answer:

The writer was not surprised to know that the Londoners could not recognize an otter. They thought he was a baby seal, a squirrel, a walrus, a hippo, a beaver, a bear cub, a leopard.

Question 11.

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

Answer:

Maxwell was staying in a cottage in Camusfearna. There was a lot of water around the cottage. He thought to have an otter as a pet instead of a dog. An otter likes flowing water. So the author thought that Camusfearna would be suitable spot for that experiment.

Question 12.

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

Answer:

He goes the Basra to the Consulate—General to collect and answer his mail from Europe. His mail did not arrive in time. He cabled to England, and when, three days later, nothing had happened, he tried to telephone. The call had to be booked twenty-four hours in advance. On the first day the line was out of order; on the second day, exchange was closed for a religious holiday. On the third day there was another breakdown. His mail arrived five days later. He had to wait for five days.

Question 13.

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

Answer:

Maxwell expressed his desire to have an otter as a pet to his friend. His friend kept it in mind and sent an otter through two

Question 14.

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

Answer:

This race of animals was unknown to the scientists in the beginning. After its discovery it was christened by zoologists *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli* or Maxwell's otter.

Question 15.

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

- aloof and indifferent
- friendly
- hostile

Answer:

In the beginning the otter was aloof and indifferent.

Question 16.

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

Answer:

When Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom he went wild with joy in the water, plunging and rolling in it, shooting up and down the length of the bathtub underwater, and making enough slosh and splash for a hippo. Two days after, Mijbil escaped from the bedroom and entered the bathroom. He struggled with the chromium tap till it had a full flow.

Question 17.

How was Mij to be transported to England?

Answer:

The British airline to London did not permit to fly animals. The author had to book a flight to Paris on another airline. The airline insisted that Mij should be packed into a box not more than eighteen inches square. The author acted accordingly and transported Mij to England.

Question 18.

What did Mij do to the box?

Answer:

The author put Mij into the box an hour before he started for the airport so that Mij would become accustomed to it and left for a meal. When he came back he found complete silence in the box. He saw blood stains around the airholes. Mij had torn the lining of the box to shreds. He got himself hurt.

Question 19.

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

Answer:

Maxwell put the otter back in the box because he was already late for the airport. It was just ten minutes time for the flight, and the airport was five miles distant. He felt bad in doing so. He did not want to keep the miserable otter in the box but there was no other option due to time constraint.

Question 20.

Why does Maxwell say the airhostess was "the very queen of her kind"?

Answer:

The author told the airhostess about the incident that took place half an hour before at home and took her into his confidence. The airhostess was a considerate lady. She cooperated with the author and suggested him to keep his pet on his knee. This made the author call her "the very queen of her kind".

Question 21.

What happened when the box was opened?

Answer:

The airhostess suggested the author that he could keep the pet on his knee. The author opened the

box. Mij was out of the box in a flash. He disappeared at high speed down the aircraft. There was chaos all around in the plane.

Question 22.

What game had Mij invented?

Answer:

Mij had invented a game of his own with a ping-pong ball. During the journey, the suitcase of the author was damaged. It got a slope on one end. Mij discovered that if he placed the ball on the high end it would run down the length of the suitcase.

Question 23.

What are 'compulsive habits'? What does Maxwell say are the compulsive habits of

(i) school children

(ii) Mij ?

Answer:

Compulsive habits are those acts which result from an irresistible urge. School children on their way to and from school must place their feet squarely on the centre of each paving block; must touch every seventh upright of the iron railings, or pass to the outside of every second lamp post. Mij had also developed certain compulsive habits. There was a single-storied primary school opposite to the author's home. There was a two feet high wall also. On his way to the home, Mij would tug the author to that wall, jump on to it, and gallop the full length of its thirty yards.

Question 24.

What groups of animals do otters belong to?

Answer:

Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called 'Mustellines'. The zoologists call it *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli*.

Question 25.

What guesses did the Londoners make about what Mij was?

Answer:

The average Londoner did not recognise an otter. They made a lot of guesses about what Mij was. For some it was a baby seal, a walrus, a hippo, a beaver and for others a bear cub, a leopard or a brontosaurus etc. For them Mij was anything but an otter.

Long Answer Type

Question 1.

"The airhostess was the very queen of her kind" Do you agree? Comment.

Answer:

The airhostess was the very queen of her kind. I fully agree with the author's statement. The chief duty of an airhostess is to make the passengers feel comfortable during the journey. The airhostess on Maxwell's plane does all she can do for him. That is why Maxwell calls her the very queen of her kind.

She calmly listens to the author, allows him to keep the animal on his knees and tries to catch it when it escapes. In doing so she does not lose her patience. The author also tries to catch the animal and

in doing so, he lands himself on a passenger. His face is covered with curry. Once again the airhostess comes to Maxwell's help. Thus we see that the airhostess was really a nice lady/kind lady.

Question 2.

What do you know about Mijbil's journey to London?

Answer:

The author had to come back to London from Basra. The British Airlines does not allow to fly animals so he had to book his ticket in another airline. The airline authorities insisted the author to pack Mijbil in a box. The author had a box and put Mijbil in it an hour before he started for the airport so that Mijbil would become accustomed to it and left for a hurried meal. When he came back he found Mijbil wounded in the box. He had ten minutes left to catch the flight, so he kept it back to the box.

In the flight, the author told the airhostess about the miserable condition of Mijbil and took her into confidence. She was a considerate lady and suggested that he could keep Mijbil on his knee. The author opened the box. Mijbil was out of the box in a flash and disappeared down the aircraft. The author dived to catch Mijbil and he missed; but he found his mouth covered with curry. The airhostess helped in the search. The author came back to his seat and found Mijbil near his knee.

Question 3.

If you were in place of the airhostess and some incidents might have happened with you in the flight, how would you describe your experience?

Answer:

If I were in place of the airhostess and the same incidents might have happened with me in the flight, my experience might be the same as of the airhostess. But I would like to say something in this matter. As an airhostess, I would never permit to open the box of the otter (animal). I would be punctual for my duties. I know that kindness has a unique importance in our life. But duty is above all. I would think about the bad impacts of a free otter in the plane. It might be a great risk for all the passengers. In that condition, my reaction might be different. When the author would ask me to let him open the box, I would make him understand about the risk. In the name of rules and regulations basic values are ignored but people like the airhostess in "Mijbil the Otter" as a ray of hope.

Question 4.

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

Answer:

Mij was an intelligent, friendly and fun-loving animal. When the author received it, for the first twenty-four hours it remained aloof and indifferent but later on he took interest in his surroundings. He became friendly to the author. He enjoyed his bath. One day he disappeared from the bedroom and entered the bathroom where he tried to open the tap.

His intelligence is further revealed when he invented a game of his own of ping-pong ball. Mij discovered that if the ball was placed on the high end of the suitcase, it would rather run down the length of the suitcase. He enjoyed playing with ball and marbles. Mij had developed certain compulsive habits like school children. He used to gallop at full speed on the thirty yards wall of a primary school.

Question 5.

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

Answer:

Some of the things we come to know about otters from this text are as under:

- (i) they are intelligent, friendly and fun-loving creatures.
- (ii) they love to see water flowing.
- (iii) they don't like static water.
- (iv) they love galloping and jumping.
- (v) they like to be in water.

Question 6.

Why is Mij's species now known to the world as Maxwell's otter?

Answer:

Maxwell brought an otter back from Iraq and raised it in Scotland. He took the otter, called Mijbil, to the London zoological society, where it was decided that this was a previously unknown sub-species of smooth coated otter, and it was named after him. Since then Mij's species is known as Maxwell's otter.

Reference to Context

Read the following passages and answer the questions that follow:

Question 1.

Early in the new year of 1956 I travelled to Southern Iraq. By then it had crossed my mind that I should like to keep an otter instead of a dog, and that Camusfeama, ringed by water a stone's throw from its door, would be an eminently suitable spot for this experiment. (Page 104)

- (i) When did the author travel to Southern Iraq?
- (ii) What did the author desire to keep instead of a dog?
- (iii) Pick out the words from the passage that mean same as 'thought, came to mind'.
- (iv) What did the writer decide to experiment?

Answer:

- (i) In the new year of 1956 the author had travelled to southern Iraq.
- (ii) The author desired to keep an otter instead of a dog.
- (iii) 'crossed my mind'.
- (iv) The writer decided to have an other as a pet instead of a dog.

Question 2.

When I casually mentioned this to a friend, he as casually replied that I had better get one in the Tigris marshes, for there they were as common as mosquitoes, and were often tamed by the Arabs. We were going to Basra to the Consulate – General to collect and answer out mail from Europe. At the Consulate-General we found that my friend's mail had arrived but that mine had not.

- (i) Who is T in this passage?
- (ii) What did the author mention to a friend?
- (iii) What did his friend advise him?
- (iv) Pick out the word from the passage that means same as "Post".

Answer:

- (i) T here in the passage is used for Gavin Maxwell.
- (ii) The author mentioned that he wanted to keep an otter as a pet.
- (iii) His friend advised him to get an otter from Tigris marshes.
- (iv) 'Mail'.

Question 3.

I cabled to England, and when, three days later, nothing had happened, I tried to telephone. The call had to be booked twenty-four hours in advance. On the first day the line was out of order; on the second the exchange was closed for a religious holiday. On the third day there was another breakdown. My friend left, and I arranged to meet him in a week's time. Five days later, my mail arrived.

- (i) What did the author cable to England?
- (ii) What happened after three days?
- (iii) When did the author receive the mail?
- (iv) Pick out the word from the passage that means same as 'sent a message by telegram'.

Answer:

- (i) The author cabled to England to get information about, his mail.
- (ii) The author did not receive any mail after three days.
- (iii) Five days later the author received the mail.
- (iv) cabled.

Question 4.

The creature that emerged from this sack on to the spacious tiled floor of the Consulate bedroom resembled most of all a very small, mediievally conceived, dragon. From the head to the tip of the tail he was coated with symmetrical pointed scales of mud armour, between whose tips was visible a soft velvet fur like that of a chocolate-brown mole. He shook himself, and I half expected a cloud of dust, but in fact it was not for another month that I managed to remove the last of the mud and see the otter, as it were, in his true colours.

- (i) Write the name of creature which came out from the sack?
- (ii) What was there on its tips?
- (iii) How did the creature/otter look?
- (iv) Pick out the word from the passage that means same as—'clean'.

Answer:

- (i) The creature was an otter which came out of the saSk.
- (ii) There was a small chocolate brown mole.
- (iii) The creature looked like a small mediievally conceived dragon.
- (iv) 'remove'.

Question 5.

Mijbil, as I called the otter, was, in fact, of a race previously unknown to science, and was at length christened by zoologists *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli*, or Maxwell's otter. For the first twenty-four hours Mijbil was neither hostile nor friendly; he was simply aloof and indifferent, choosing to sleep on the floor as far from my bed as possible. The second night Mijbil came on to my bed in the small hours and remained asleep in the crook of my knees until the servant brought tea in the morning, and during the day he began to lose his apathy and take a keen, much too keen, interest in his surroundings.

- (i) How did the zoologists name Mijbil?
- (ii) How did Mijbil behave in the beginning hours?
- (iii) Where did Mijbil sleep on the second night?
- (iv) Pick out the word from the passage that means the same as— 'enemy'.

Answer:

- (i) Zoologists name Mijbil as *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli*.
- (ii) Mijbil behaved in a manner which was neither friendly nor hostile in the beginning hours.

- (iii) Mijbil slept on the second night on the author's bed in the crook of his knees.
- (iv) 'hostile'.

Question 6.

Two days later, Mijbil escaped from my bedroom as I entered it, and I turned to see his tail disappearing round the bend of the corridor that led to the bathroom. By the time I got there he was up on the end of the bathtub and fumbling at the chromium taps with his paws. 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.

- (i) What did Mijbil do two days later?
- (ii) Where did Mijbil go?
- (iii) What was Mijbil doing.
- (iv) Pick out the word from the passage that means the same as—"trying to do something in a clumsy manner".

Answer:

- (i) Mijbil escaped from the author's bedroom two days later.
- (ii) Mijbil went inside the author's bathroom to have fun with water.
- (iii) Mijbil was fumbling at the chromium taps with his paws.
- (iv) 'fumbling'.

Question 7.

Very soon Mij would follow me without a lead and come to me when I called his name. He spent most of his time in play. He spent hours shuffling a rubber ball round the room like a four-footed soccer player using all four feet to dribble the ball, and he could also throw it, with a powerful flick of the neck, to a surprising height and distance. But the real play of an otter is when he lies on his back and juggles with small objects between his paws. Marbles were Mij's favourite toys for this pastime: he would lie on his back rolling two or more of them up and down his wide, flat belly without ever dropping one to the floor.

- (i) Identify 'Mij' and T.
- (ii) How did Mij spend his time?
- (iii) How did Mij look like while playing?
- (iv) Pick out the word from the passage that means the same as—"moving with dragging".

Answer:

- (i) 'Mij' was the author's pet and T refers to Gavin Maxwell.
- (ii) Mij spent most of his time in play.
- (iii) Mij looked like a four footed soccer player while playing.
- (iv) 'shuffling'.

Question 8.

The days passed peacefully at Basra, but I dreaded the prospect of transporting Mij to England, and to Camusfeama. The British airline to London would not fly animals, so I booked a flight to Paris on another airline, and from there to London. The airline insisted that Mij should be packed into a box not more than eighteen inches square, to be carried on the floor at my feet. I had a box made, and an hour before we started, I put Mij into the box so that he would become accustomed to it, and left for a hurried meal. (Page 107)

- (i) What did the author dread?
- (ii) Name the airline mentioned in the passage.
- (iii) How did the writer go to London?
- (iv) Pick out the word from the passage that means same as -'terribly afraid of'.

Answer:

- (i) The author dreaded the prospect of transporting Mijbil to England.
- (ii) It was the British Airline.
- (iii) The writer went to London via Paris on another airline.
- (iv) 'Dreaded'.

Question 9.

When I returned, there was an appalling spectacle. There was complete silence from the box, but from its airholes and chinks around the lid, blood had trickled and dried. I whipped off the lock and tore open the lid, and Mij, exhausted and blood spattered, whimpered and caught at my leg. He had torn the lining of the box to shreds; when I removed the last of it so that there were no cutting edges left, it was just ten minutes until the time of the flight, and the airport was five miles distant. I put the miserable Mij back into the box, holding down the lid with my hand.

- (i) Who was in the box?
- (ii) What did the author find in the box?
- (iii) Why did the author put him back in the box?
- (iv) Pick out the word from the passage that means the same as—'shocking'

Answer:

- (i) Mijbil, the otter, was in the box.
- (ii) The author found complete silence in the box.
- (iii) The author put him back in the box because his condition was miserable and there were only ten minutes left for his flight.
- (iv) 'appalling'.

Question 10.

I sat in the back of the car with the box beside me as the driver tore through the street of Basra like a ricocheting bullet. The aircraft was waiting to take off; I was rushed through to it by infuriated officials. Luckily, the seat booked for me was at the extreme front. I covered the floor around my feet with newspapers, rang for the air hostess, and gave her a parcel of fish (for Mij) to keep in a cool place. I took her into my confidence about the events of the last half hour. I have retained the most profound admiration for that air hostess; she was the very queen of her kind. She suggested that I might prefer to have my pet on my knee, and I could have kissed her hand in the depth of my gratitude. But, not knowing otters, I was quite unprepared for what followed.

- (i) Who is 'I' and with what did he sit in the car?
- (ii) What did the air hostess suggest to the author?
- (iii) What was the author completely unprepared for?
- (iv) Pick out the word from the passage that means the same as—"very angry"

Answer:

- (i) I, means the author Maxwell, sat in his car with a box which contained Mijbil.
- (ii) She suggested the author that he could have his pet on his knee, if he so preferred.
- (iii) The author was completely unprepared for Mijbil terrifying the co-passengers and disappearing.
- (iv) 'infuriated'.

Question 11.

Mij was out of the box in a flash. He disappeared at high speed down the aircraft. There were squawks and shrieks, and a woman stood up on her seat screaming out, "A rat! A rat!" I caught sight of Mij's tail disappearing beneath the legs of a portly white-turbaned Indian. Diving for it, I missed, but found my face covered in curry. "Perhaps," said the air hostess with the most charming smile, "it would be better if you resumed your seat, and I will find the animal and bring it to you."

- (i) Where was Mij? Where did it disappear?
- (ii) Why did the woman scream?
- (iii) What did the air hostess say?
- (iv) Pick out the word from the passage that means the same as—'invisible'.

Answer:

- (i) Mij was out of the box. He disappeared down the aircraft.
- (ii) The woman screamed that a rat had entered in the aircraft.
- (iii) The air hostess requested me to resume my seat so that she would find the animal.
- (iv) 'disappeared'.

Question 12.

Mij and I remained in London for nearly a month. He would play for hours with a selection of toys, ping-pong balls, marbles, rubber fruit, and a terrapin shell that I had brought back from his native marshes. With the ping-pong ball he invented a game of his own which could keep him engrossed for up to half an hour at a time. A suitcase that I had taken to Iraq had become 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.

- (i) How did Mij spend his time in London?
- (ii) What did Mij invent?
- (iii) From where was terrapin shell obtained?
- (iv) Pick out the word from the passage that means the same as—"completely interested in".

Answer:

- (i) Mij spent his time in playing with a selection of toys – ping-pong balls, marbles, rubber fruit, etc.
- (ii) Mij invented a new game with the Ping-pong ball.
- (iii) It was brought back from the native place of the otter.
- (iv) engrossed.

Question 13.

But the question for which I awarded the highest score came from a labourer digging a hole in the street. I was still far from him when he laid down his tool, put his hands on his hips, and began to stare. As I drew nearer I saw his expression of surprise and affront, as though he would have me know that he was not one upon whom to play jokes. I came abreast of him; he spat, glared, and then growled out, "Here, Mister—what is that supposed to be?"

- (i) Why did the author face questions from the labourer?
- (ii) Who asked the question in the passage?
- (iii) Why did he have an expression of surprise and affront?
- (iv) Pick out the word from the passage that means the same as—grumble.

Answer:

- (i) The author faced question from the labourer because the people of London were unknown to otter.
- (ii) The labourer asked the questions in this passage.
- (iii) The labourer had never seen that animal (otter). He looked at it with an expression of surprise.
- (iv) 'growled'.