



Stay Home Reader

Stories for Fun and Skills



VIVA EDUCATION



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HOW THIS BOOK WILL HELP YOU

Staying home and practising social distancing are simple yet decisive ways in which we all contribute to the epic battle against the Covid-19 pandemic. School closure is indeed the heavy price students and teachers have to pay as a result. However, this is no reason for learning to stop. As a committed provider of educational content, Viva Education has taken extraordinary steps to make learning accessible to every student via online means. We have released the vast range of online learning material on VivaDigital.in to learners and educators for unrestricted use.

Continuing this effort, we are proud to present our *Stay Home Readers* for classes 1 to 8, which have been specially compiled for home learning and remote teaching. Engagement is the key to better home learning, and this series adopts the route of stories to effective language-skill building. The content is enjoyable, stimulating and requires hardly any teacher supervision. We wish you safety and good health as you enjoy learning with these readers.

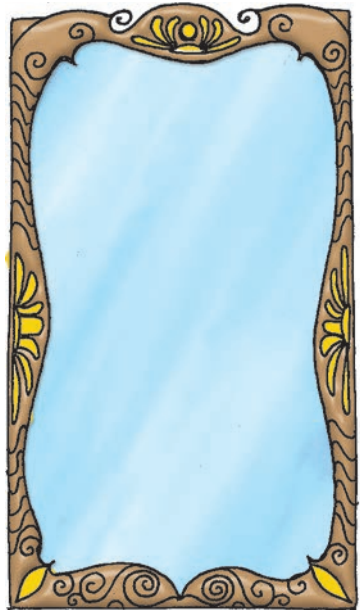
1

The Magic Mirror

The following story (not a true one) is very cleverly written and makes interesting reading. It points out a moral which we should all bear in mind.

King Bardolph was probably the most handsome monarch who had ever ruled over the fine and prosperous country of Carsovia. He was tall and dark and broad and upright. His black hair was thick and curly, his eyes blue, his teeth white, his complexion ruddy and his strong legs were as straight as fir trees.

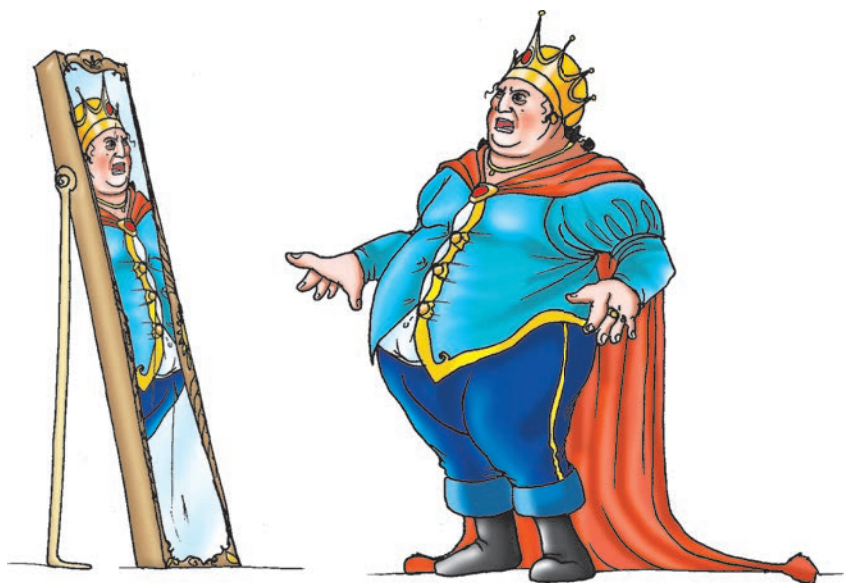
In his throne-room, facing the throne, was a very bright, clear mirror; and although he was by no means vain, King Bardolph



would often stand in front of this mirror and regard, with much satisfaction, his very comely reflection.

But as the years rolled on the king grew lazy. He gave up his hunting and his riding; he walked no more; he breakfasted in bed, and then turned over and took a nap until noon. When he *did* go out, he lolled back in his fine carriage and yawned.

After leading this indolent life for some time, King Bardolph came one morning, and stood before his splendid mirror. As he gazed at his reflection, he started back with



horror. What could be wrong with the mirror? Looking back at him from its smooth, polished surface was a fat, blotchy, red-faced man with puffy eyes, a mottled nose and a rounded stomach.

“Bless my buttons!” gasped Bardolph, “what a horrid-looking fellow! The mirror must be bewitched, for I’m sure that can’t be *me*. I may be a trifle plump, but that creature is hideously fat, and certainly eats too much. Now, I don’t eat too much. Let me see, what did I have for breakfast? Dear, dear, dear what *was* it now? Er – six eggs, seven sausages, half a chicken, four rolls, some butter, some honey and a couple of flagons of canary wine. Now *that’s* not too much for a king. No, it certainly can *not* be me. Some wizard has bewitched the thing.” And pulling a little doubtfully at his lips, he rang a bell.

When a footman entered, King Bardolph said, “Take this mirror up to the storeroom, and bring another to put in its place.”

After breakfast next morning, the king strolled over to the new mirror, and looked eagerly in it. To his anger and surprise, the same unwholesome fat-looking personage stared back at him.

Bardolph rang the bell furiously, and when the footman entered timidly, he roared, "Take this mirror away, and see that a good one is in its place by morning."

Upon the morrow, King Bardolph hurried over his breakfast, and then walked up to the new mirror, as quickly as his breathlessness would allow. As he saw the same horrid-looking fellow gazing back at him, he raised his clenched fists above his head and bellowed madly.

At that moment, Diplo, his wisest and most trusted counsellor, entered the throne-room. The king beckoned him, and when he had reached the mirror, King Bardolph said, pointing at the image in the glass, "Diplo, is that me?"

"Is that *I*, Your Majesty means," ventured Diplo.

The king stared at him in angry puzzlement for a moment, and then he smiled and said, "Yes, of course, my wise Diplo, but kings make their own grammar. What I wish to know is – Am I like *that*?" And he flicked an impatient finger towards the mirror.

Diplo smiled. "Certainly not, Your Majesty," he replied.

"Then what in the name of thunder is the matter with the thing?" asked the angry monarch.

"The glass is faulty," replied Diplo. "Come with me, Your Majesty," he continued, and taking the king by the arm, he led him to a little window in the topmost turret of the palace.

Diplo pointed out over the blue distant hills. "Over there, O King," he said, "the sorcerer Mohrab, long ago, hid the Mirror of Truth. The man who wishes to see himself as he

really is, must seek this magic mirror himself, and having found it, may look within and learn the truth.”

“I will set off in my carriage tomorrow, after breakfast,” said Bardolph.

“That would be useless,” replied Diplo. “He who seeks the Mirror of Truth must seek it afoot. Moreover,” went on Diplo, “it is only to be found one hour after dawn. Thereafter, for the remainder of the day and night, it is invisible.”

The king sighed deeply. “Ah, well,” he said presently, “what must be, must be. Tomorrow I will arise betimes and seek this magic glass.”

And so, upon the morrow, King Bardolph arose from his silken bed before dawn, and upon unaccustomed feet searched the hills. But he sought in vain, and returned wearily homeward.

Diplo met him and said, “Do not lose heart, O King; you will find, if you seek well; try again.” And so upon the morrow, and for many morrows, for weeks indeed and months, King Bardolph sought and sought among the distant hills, in the fresh cool dawns for the magic mirror. At the end of six months he was once again fine, slim, handsome, straight and ruddy.

Diplo came to him and said, “Your Majesty, I dreamed a dream last night, and in it I thought that the sorcerer Mohrab came to me and told me where the Mirror of Truth lies hidden. Tomorrow I shall come with you and show you the place.”

And so upon the morrow the two set off together. Diplo found it difficult to keep pace with the king’s swift strides, but at last they reached the hills, just as the red face of the sun climbed over the misty peaks. The king stood staring at

the beauty of the dawn, and seemed to have forgotten his errand, forgotten Diplo, forgotten everything.

A cry from the ground startled him to awareness. He looked down and there at his feet crouched Diplo, pulling from under the bushes a fine shining mirror. Diplo sprang to his feet, and crying triumphantly, “The Mirror of Truth!” held it in front of the king.

The king stared into its smooth polished surface. He saw within it the loveliness of the eastern sky, and the splendour of the newcomer sun. But he saw also a fine, handsome face, with ruddy complexion and crisp, curly, black hair.

“At last!” he cried, “the Mirror of Truth. I *knew* I was like that.” Then, taking the mirror from Diplo, he turned it round and looked at its back. In the middle of the ebony was a long, jagged scratch.

King Bardolph looked wonderingly at the scratch for a long time, and then he said slowly, “Why, Diplo, my old mirror had a scratch on its back like that.”

Diplo laughed softly. “No doubt, Your Majesty,” he said; and then after a little pause he went on, “for this *is* your old mirror.”



“Then how did it get here?” asked the astonished King.

“I got it from the storeroom before we started,” replied Diplo, “and carried it here secretly.”

“You sly dog!” cried Bardolph, not knowing whether to be angry or to laugh. “Then there is not such thing as a Mirror of Truth?”

“On the contrary, Your Majesty,” replied Diplo with a wise smile, “all mirrors are Mirrors of Truth; and all mirrors now will show you the same reflection as the one you are holding.”

“Diplo,” said the king, as they made their way back to the palace, “you deserve a reward for your cleverness. What shall it be?”

“A walk with Your Majesty,” replied Diplo, “to the hills each dawn, as long as we both shall live.”

“Granted!” cried King Bardolph with a great laugh.

From Forty More Tales by Stephen Southwold

Questions on the Story

1. Name the characters in the story.
2. What was the name of the kingdom ruled by King Bardolph?
3. Describe the king’s appearance.
4. What object in the king’s throne-room gave him great satisfaction?
5. How did the king’s appearance change over time?
6. Why was the king shocked when he looked at the mirror?
7. Why did the king think that the mirror was bewitched?

8. Whom did the king blame for bewitching the mirror?
9. What did the king order his footman to do?
10. Did the new mirror help the king look better?
11. What did the king ask his counsellor Diplo?
12. (a) What was wrong with the question the king asked?
(b) How did the counsellor correct him?
13. How did the king justify the mistake he made?
14. Why do you think Diplo said that the glass was faulty?
15. What story did he cook up to convince the king that his mirror image was faulty?
16. How did the king initially plan to search for the Mirror of Truth?
17. Why did Diplo insist that the king should start his journey at the dawn and afoot?
18. Did Diplo's trick work? How?
19. (a) Did the sorcerer Mohrab actually appear in Diplo's dream?
(b) Why did he say so?
20. How did the king change in six months?
21. How did Diplo produce the mirror in front of the king?
22. Why was the king surprised to see the scratch on the back of the mirror?
23. What was the king's reaction when he realised that he was outwitted by the counsellor?
24. What did Diplo mean when he said that all mirrors were Mirrors of Truth?
25. What reward did Diplo ask for?

2

The Indians¹ and the Bluebird

This story took place before the Panama Canal was created, and all ships sailing from Europe to the west coast of America crossed the Atlantic, rounded Cape Horn at the tip of South America, and then proceeded northwards along the coast until they reached their destination. This was a long and hazardous journey and generally took several months to complete.

It was in the year 1860 that I made my first voyage, having joined the crew of the sailing ship *Termagant*, a large three-masted schooner,



bound from London for the port of San Francisco on the west coast of the United States. Owing to a spell of calm weather, the first part of the trip across the Atlantic took much longer than expected, and by the time we had reached the “Roaring Forties”, and rounded “The Horn”, we had run very short of provisions. In some miraculous way, the cook managed, by strict rationing, to make what little food we had last until the ship was within a few days’ sailing distance of Frisco. At this point, however, there was not a scrap of food left in the larder, and in order to obtain something to eat, a few members of the crew landed early each evening on the neighbouring coast to shoot the various waterfowl, which were plentiful in that region. I was the youngest of

¹The original natives of North America were known as Red Indians. They are now referred to as Native Americans or American Indians.

the hands, and had been advised not to wander far from the others on these expeditions, as the native Indian tribes were said to be unfriendly to white people.

One evening, having gone ashore just before sunset, I was attracted by a passing bluebird of remarkable beauty. It flew further inland towards a forest, and I immediately set off in hot pursuit. At last, when near enough to take aim, I shot, and to my intense delight, saw it fall straight to earth. In order to reach the bird, I had to make my way round a marsh on the edge of the wood, but eventually I secured my prize and slung it over my shoulder. As you may well imagine, I was very pleased with myself, for this particular bird was a fine specimen, much bigger than any bird caught previously, and certain to provide a welcome and tasty meal on board the ship.

Soon after, I spotted a flock of birds in the distance, apparently of the same kind as I had shot, and regardless of the consequences, I headed quickly in their direction. When I was near enough to shoot, it was too dark to aim accurately and I only succeeded in startling the birds. They flew quickly towards the forest uttering their weird cries. In my eagerness to obtain another bird, I followed, and fired my last remaining cartridges at them, but with no success.

It was only on giving up the chase that I realised how dark it had become, and that I had travelled a considerable distance from the shore without noticing the direction I had taken. I looked up for guidance from the stars, when, behold! I saw a pair of eyes gazing down at mine.

There, close to me, lying along the branch of a tree, was an Indian. When I moved away I saw others hidden behind bushes or tree-trunks and pointing their arrows at me. I at once determined to make a wide curve to avoid these gentry;



but wherever I turned, I found my way was cut off unless I went deeper into the forest. On I scrambled, making repeated efforts to turn right or left, but always finding myself faced by an Indian with pointed arrow. In one last desperate attempt, I dashed fully twenty yards but I was pulled up by an arrow, which whished dangerously close and struck a tree directly in my line of flight. I halted abruptly, changed my course and with a few more steps, suddenly came upon an Indian encampment with its wigwams, squaws and campfires.

It became plain to me then, that I was trapped and in the power of a tribe of Indians. My pursuers closed round me and conducted me to the tent of one whom I supposed to be the chief. Several of them mounted guard over me, and the others went into the wigwam chatting eagerly, as I imagined, over my fate. Their voices grew louder and louder, until at last, one gave a sharp word of command and silence followed.

The chief, in long feathered headdress, came out and approached me, and I noticed, by the light of the fire, that

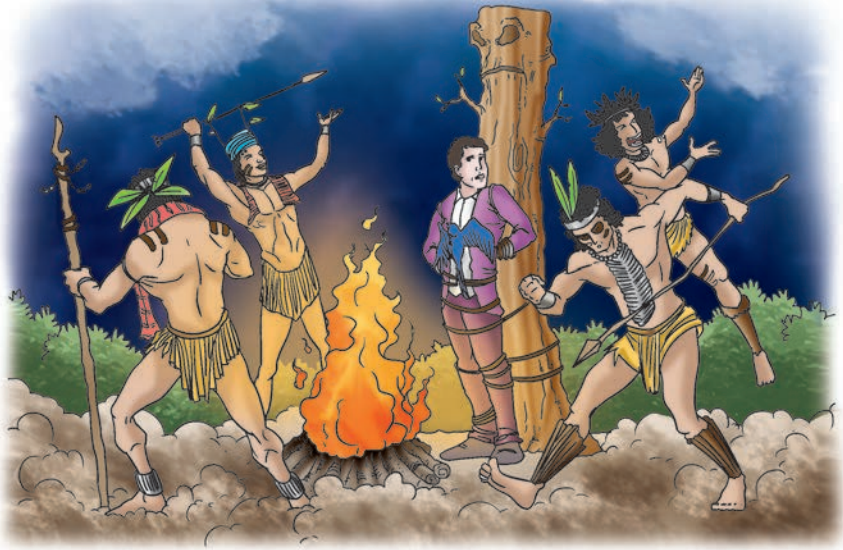
on the front of his leather tunic there was a fine embroidered design of just such a bird as I carried slung over my shoulder. The design was worked with dyed porcupine quills and various coloured threads.

My offence at once dawned on me. I had slain the totem, or the creature specially sacred to this tribe. I searched my memory to recall what fate awaited such an evil-doer. Would they burn me to death, or bury me alive, or chop me to pieces? I looked with horror at the carefully plaited scalp locks which adorned the chief's war club. Would mine soon be amongst them?

Suddenly a strangely-attired creature, decked in a variety of skins and feathers, appeared and at once took command of the situation. What strange barbaric feast or sacrifice was being prepared, and the part I should be called upon to play in it, I could not guess. Great logs of wood were hurled on the fire till the flames leaped high in the dark night. To add to the general excitement, the drums were beaten and the women set up a dismal wail.

This scene continued for at least half an hour. Then a young brave, uttering a wild cry, leapt in my direction, at the same time swinging a heavy club. Truth to tell, I thought my last hour had come. Instead of striking me as I expected, he began to dance round me, making frightful faces and gestures. As he swayed and swept hither and thither, he seemed carried away by a frenzy of wild feeling.

After some moments, this jumping performer was joined by another, and they swept and revolved round me, their faces rapt with excitement; but they never touched each other or me. Another short interval and three more men joined them; then more and more, until I was the centre of a bewildering circle of dancers.



The women, meanwhile, were preparing some hot and very intoxicating drink, of which the men took gulps from time to time. The drums continued to boom and thunder with ever quickening beat, and the wailing of the women could be heard above the din.

After some considerable time, an idea flashed into my mind. The bluebird, which was still hanging round my shoulder, might be the centre of attraction. Was it possible that this fine show was in honour of its death, and was I a mere trifle, a beast of burden carrying a sacred idol? I determined to put my theory to the test. I raised my hands, loosened the string, laid the bird down at my feet, and then, thinking it the best policy to startle the Indians, I leapt high in the air, and to the tune of “Auld Lang Syne”, which I sang at the top of my voice, I began to dance a Highland Fling, of which I had a vague remembrance.

The more sober and the less excited of the Indians watched me carefully, but the greater number continued their wild dance. At first I jigged and wheeled about in a small



circle, and then by degrees I widened it, the hope of freedom springing in my heart. On and on I danced, getting further and further from the fire and the chief's tent. Occasionally a fierce glance terrified me, and a club swung in my direction, but I was now quite certain that the bluebird was the reason for this fantastic ceremony.

Ten minutes later, I had danced to the outer edge of the Indians, and was looking about anxiously for an avenue of escape. Selecting a broad footpath, I waited my opportunity, and then dashed off as fast as I could. Soon, I was crashing my way through the dark forest, fearful lest the Red men would pursue and recapture me.

Fortunately, by the time day had dawned, I had regained the coast, and saw the ship at anchor in the bay. My absence had been noted and it was not long before I fell in with the search-party sent to my assistance. Once more, saved despite my rashness, I set sail on the good ship *Termagant*.

From The Bluebird and the Indians by E.C. Matrovers

Interesting Facts about Native Americans

1. The original natives of North America were known as Red Indians. They are now referred to as Native Americans or American Indians. They roamed about in freedom until the white settlers from Europe arrived and made their homes there. Since the occupation of the land by the “**palefaces**”, they have lived in special allotted territories called **reservations**.
2. The chief hunting tribes were the **Apache**, **Blackfeet**, **Cherokee**, **Cree**, **Iroquois**, **Mohawk**, **Navajo** and **Sioux**. The **Pawnee** and **Pueblo** tribes were noted for farming and the **Hopi** tribe was famous for the making of baskets, carpets and pottery.
3. Native Americans wore leggings and moccasins of antelope skin, and adorned their heads with eagle feathers. In winter, they added a loose mantle of bison skin. The women of the tribe wore long, belted, skin robes and carried their babies strapped to their backs.
4. The following were the four chief types of dwellings used by the various tribes:
 - (a) The **wigwam** was a tent hung with bark and hides and shaped like a beehive.
 - (b) The **tepee** was a pointed tent made of skins wrapped round a few poles.
 - (c) The **longhouse** was a large wooden hut.



- (d) The **pueblo** was a peculiar stone and clay building of terraced houses with doorways in their flat roofs. Ladders were laid against the walls and these were drawn up when an enemy attacked them.

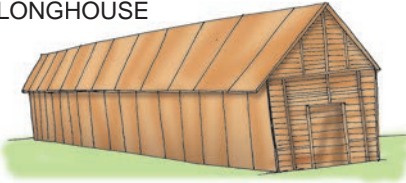
WIGWAM



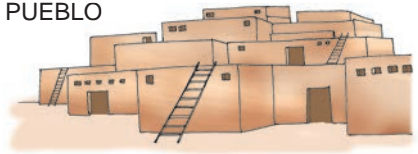
TEPEE



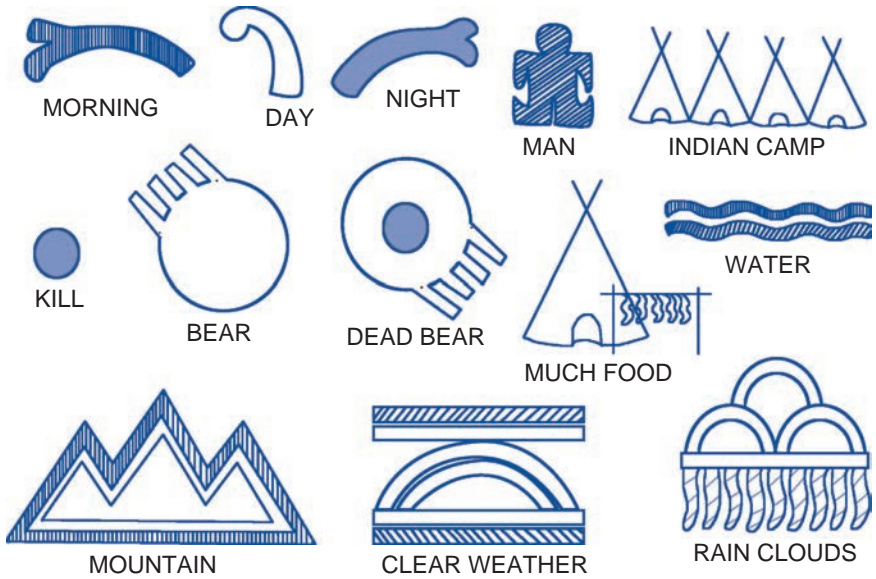
LONGHOUSE



PUEBLO



5. The Native Americans were skilled hunters and clever trackers. The old warriors taught the young boys, so that, at an early age, they became skilled at archery, and expert at paddling their frail canoes in dangerous streams and rapids. Their food consisted chiefly of deer and buffalo meat, and some tribes grew corn and potatoes. **Wampum** (ornamental beads made from shells) was widely used as money.
6. Western culture learnt the use of things like moccasins, snowshoes, toboggans, hammocks, tobacco and potatoes from the Native Americans. They did not write their language in letters, but made drawings and painted pictures on the skins of their tepees and wigwams.



7. From early childhood Native Americans were taught to endure pain and suffering without crying, and they seldom showed signs of joy and happiness. They believed magical powers to be present in the sun, moon and stars and the **medicine man** (witch-doctor) was supposed to be able to control these powers. A **powwow** is a celebration of the Native Americans in which people from different tribes gather for the purpose of singing and dancing and honouring their ancestors.

8. The Native Americans had a very strict code of honour and pride amongst themselves, and severely punished anyone who broke the tribal laws. The carved **totem poles**, with their peculiar



designs, were thought to protect them from danger and hunger, and they were held sacred. The **calumet** or “**Pipe of Peace**”, smoked and passed round as a token of friendship, was a long pipe adorned with plaited hair and feathers. The “**Happy Hunting Ground**” of the Native Americans was the paradise in which they expected to live after death.

9. Long before the Morse code was invented with its dots and dashes, the Native Americans used smoke signals to send messages. They often raided the settlements of the early pioneers and ambushed the **covered waggons** on the trail. When the Native American tribes were on the warpath, they fought with great cunning. The warriors took their victims’ scalps to display as a sign of their courage and daring in battle. This was known as scalping. Their weapons were the tomahawk, club, flint-knife, and bow and arrow.
10. **Sacagawea** was a Native American woman belonging to the Lemhi Shoshone tribe. She accompanied the Lewis and Clark Expedition which aimed at mapping and exploring the western portion of the USA. She acted as the party’s guide and interpreter.

Questions on the Story

1. Describe the route taken by sailors to get to the west coast of America from Europe before the creation of short cuts like the Panama Canal.
2. In what year did the narrator’s first voyage take place?
3. Name the ship.

4. For which port was she bound?
5. Which route was taken by ships in those days?
6. What caused them to run short of provisions?
7. How did the crew obtain food?
8. What prize did the narrator secure one evening?
9. What did he do with it?
10. What caused him to stray towards the forest?
11. Who chased and surrounded him?
12. What did he come upon in the heart of the forest?
13. What peculiar design had the chief on his leather tunic?
14. What punishment did the narrator expect to receive?
15. Describe the scene round the campfire.
16. What idea flashed suddenly through the narrator's mind?
17. What song did he sing?
18. What dance did he try to do?
19. When did he reach the coast after his escape?
20. Who came to his assistance?

Questions on the Interesting Facts

1. (a) What is the name given to white people by some Native Americans?
(b) What is the name given to the special territories in which Native Americans live?
2. Name five famous Native American tribes.
3. What are the following?
(a) a tepee (b) a longhouse

4. Name three types of Native American dwellings.
5. What was a wampum?
6. Name some of the things the use of which Native Americans taught to westerners.
7. (a) Who was the “medicine man”?
(b) What is a powwow?
8. (a) What was the purpose of the totem pole?
(b) What was the “Happy Hunting Ground”?
9. Why did Native American warriors “scalp” their victims?
10. Who was Sacagawea?

▣ Development Exercises

1. (a) Trace the *Termagant's* outward voyage on the map.
(b) Trace the usual present-day shipping route between Liverpool and San Francisco.
2. The Native Americans were the original natives of North America. Who were the original natives of the following?
 - (a) Australia
 - (b) New Zealand
 - (c) South Africa
3. The crew ran short of provisions and rationing was introduced. What is the purpose of rationing?
4. The bluebird appeared to be the special sign of that particular tribe. Of what countries are the following creatures the national emblems?

lion, eagle, bear, kangaroo, beaver, springbok, elephant, rooster, dragon

5. Complete the following table. No. 1 is done for you:

father	:	mother	:	son
stepfather	:	stepmother	:	_____
grandmother	:	grandfather	:	_____
aunt	:	uncle	:	_____
king	:	queen	:	_____

6. Maize is popularly known as “Indian Corn”. What national names are used for a special kind of the following?

_____	stew	_____	rarebit
_____	bun	_____	cakes
_____	sausage	_____	toffee
_____	delight	_____	butter
_____	cheese	_____	onions
_____	tart		

7. The Native Americans had different kinds of homes such as the tepee, wigwam, longhouse and pueblo. Who live in the following?

igloo, kraal, dower, tent, caravan, manse,
monastery, convent

8. From the picture words on page 25 can you write the following sentences in the language of the American Indians?

(a) Although it was a stormy morning the man killed a bear in the mountains.

(b) At night, when the weather cleared, they had plenty of food in the Indian camp.

3

The Nervous Lawyer



A French lawyer had been hastily summoned to the bedside of an old friend in order to draw up his last will and testament. After a three-mile journey, the lawyer, a very nervous and excitable man, arrived just in time; the will was duly signed, and a little later the patient passed away.

Meanwhile the lawyer sat cowering over the fire, aghast at the scene that was passing before him and striving now and then to keep up his false courage by a glass of wine. Already his fears were on the alert and the idea of contagion flitted to and fro through his mind. In order to quiet these thoughts, he lit his pipe and began to prepare for returning home. At that moment the doctor in attendance turned round to him and said:

“Dreadful time, this! The trouble seems to be spreading.”

“What trouble?” exclaimed the lawyer, with a movement of surprise.

“Two died yesterday and three today,” continued the doctor without answering the question. “Very serious epidemic, sir – very.”

“But what trouble is it? What disease has carried off my friend so suddenly?”

“What disease? Why, scarlet fever, to be sure.”

“And is it infectious?”

“Unfortunately, very much so.”

“Then I am a dead man!” exclaimed the agitated lawyer, putting his pipe in his waistcoat pocket, and beginning to walk up and down the room in despair. “I am a dead man! Now, doctor, don’t deceive me – don’t, will you? What – what are the symptoms of scarlet fever?”

“High temperature and a sharp burning pain in the side,” answered the doctor.

“Oh! What a fool I was to come here!” shouted the now trembling lawyer.

In vain did the housekeeper and the doctor strive to soothe and pacify him – he was not a man to be reasoned with; he answered that he knew the state of his own health better than they did, and insisted upon going home without delay. That was easier said than done, as the carriage in which he had come had returned to the city. At this late hour it would be difficult to hire a vehicle of any description because the whole neighbourhood was abed and asleep. What was to be done? There was no other way out of the situation but to take the doctor’s horse, which stood at the door patiently waiting for his master.

Well, as there was no other remedy, our lawyer mounted this raw-boned steed and set forth upon his homeward

journey. The night was cold and gusty and the wind blew right in his teeth. Overhead, the leaden clouds were beaten to and fro and through them the newly risen moon seemed to be tossing and drifting along like a tiny boat in the surf, now swallowed up in a huge billow of cloud, and again lifted upon its bosom and dashed with silvery spray. The trees by the roadside groaned with a sound of evil omen; and before him lay three dreary miles, beset with a thousand imaginary perils. Obedient to the whip and spur, the steed leaped forward by fits and starts – now dashing away in a tremendous gallop and now relaxing into a long, hard trot; while the rider, filled with dread of the disease and fear of impending death, urged on the animal as if he were being pursued by the Evil Spirit himself.

In this way, by dint of whistling and shouting and beating the horse right and left, one mile of the fatal three was safely passed. The scared lawyer had so far subsided that he suffered the poor animal to walk uphill; but suddenly his fears were revived with tenfold violence by a sharp pain in the right side, which seemed to pierce him like a needle.

“It is upon me at last!” groaned the fear-stricken man. “Must I die in a ditch after all?” Then he yelled to the horse, “Hi! get up – get up!”

Away went the horse and rider at full speed – hurry-scurry – up hill and down – panting and blowing like a whirlwind. At every leap the pain in the rider’s side seemed to increase. At first it was a pin-point – then it spread to the size of a sixpence – then it covered a place as large as the palm of your hand. The disease was gaining upon him fast. The poor man groaned aloud in agony; faster and faster sped the horse over the frozen ground – farther and farther spread the pain over his side. To complete the dismal picture,

the storm commenced – snow mingled with rain. But snow and rain and the cold were nought to him; for, though his arms and legs were frozen to icicles, he felt it not; the fatal symptom was upon him; he knew that he was doomed to die – not of cold, but of scarlet fever!

At length, he knew not how, more dead than alive, he eventually reached the gates of the city. A band of stray dogs, that were howling at a street corner, seeing the lawyer dash by, joined in the hue and cry, and the mongrels ran barking and yelping at the animal's heels. It was now late at night and only here and there a solitary lamp twinkled from an upper storey window. But on went the lawyer, up this street and down that, till at last he reached his own door. There was a light in his wife's bedroom. The good woman came to the window, alarmed at such a knocking and howling and clattering at her door so late at night.



“Let me in! Let me in! Quick! Quick!” he exclaimed, almost breathless from terror and fatigue.

“Who are you, that come to disturb a lone woman at this hour of the night?” cried a sharp voice from above. “Begone about your business at once and let quiet people sleep.”

“Oh, hurry, hurry! Come down and let me in! I am your husband. Don’t you know my voice? Quick, I beseech you – or I will die here in the street.”

After a few moments of explanation and delay, the door was opened and the lawyer stalked into his own house, pale and haggard in aspect and as stiff and as straight as a ghost. Cased from head to foot in an armour of ice, as the glare of the lamp fell upon him he looked like a mailed knight of bygone days. But in one place his armour was broken. On his right side was a circular spot, as large as the crown of a hat and about as black!

“My dear wife!” he exclaimed, with more tenderness than he had shown for years, “reach me a chair. My hours are numbered. I am a dying man!”

Alarmed at these exclamations, his wife quickly stripped off his overcoat. Something fell from beneath it, and was dashed to pieces on the hearth. It was the lawyer’s pipe! He placed his hand upon his side, and lo! it was bare to the skin! Coat, waistcoat and linen were burnt through and through, and there was a huge blister on his side.

The mystery was soon explained, symptom and all. The lawyer, in his excitement, had put his pipe into his pocket without knocking out the red hot ashes.

*Adapted from Outre-Mer: A Pilgrimage Beyond the Sea
by H.W. Longfellow*

❑ Questions on the Story

1. Why was the French lawyer summoned to his friend's bedside?
2. What was the lawyer's fear after his friend's death?
3. What was the disease that took the lawyer's friend's life?
4. (a) Why did the lawyer ask the doctor about the symptoms of the disease?
(b) What were the symptoms?
(c) How did the lawyer feel after hearing the symptoms?
5. Why did the lawyer regret the visit to his friend's place?
6. Why did the lawyer insist on returning home without any delay?
7. (a) Why was it difficult for the lawyer to find transport to return home?
(b) How did he finally solve this problem?
8. Describe the weather during the night of the lawyer's journey.
9. What sounded like an evil omen?
10. Was the journey home comfortable for the lawyer? Why?
11. What felt like a prick of the needle to the lawyer?
12. "It is upon me at last!" Why did the lawyer say this?
13. What is the meaning of "whirlwind"?
14. Describe the way the disease spread in the lawyer's body.

15. Why didn't the lawyer feel cold in the rainy and snowy weather?
16. What was the lawyer's condition when he reached the gates of the city?
17. How did the dogs scare him when he reached the city gates?
18. Why was the lawyer's wife alarmed at the knock on the door?
19. (a) Did the lawyer's wife recognize him first?
(b) What did she tell him?
20. How did the lawyer finally manage to enter his house?
21. Describe how the lawyer looked when the light of the lamp fell on him.
22. What was there on the right side of his coat?
23. Do you think the lawyer's wife was brave? How did she deal with the emergency?
24. What was the mystery behind the lawyer's disease?
25. How would you judge the character of the lawyer?

4

The Young Poet



In the following extract from Young Walter Scott by E.J. Gray, the young budding writer, still a schoolboy, receives some encouragement from the reception given to his very first lines of verse.

Walter limped to his place in the Rector's class and sat down. He was ninth. There were one hundred and seven boys behind him. He did not know just how it had happened, but Latin as Dr Adam taught it seemed to be the easier and more interesting, and he had mounted to the first form almost before he knew where he was. Now that he was here he was going to take good care to stay. He had a reputation to maintain now. The Rector had said of him, "Many of the lads understand the *Latin* better, but Gualterus Scott is behind few in following and enjoying the author's *meaning*."

James Buchan was *dux*. He had kept first place ever since Wattie had been coming to the High School. No use trying to dislodge him. Ninth was good enough. Ninth, or maybe eighth.

Dr Adam came in with his gown billowing out behind him, his cheeks red and his hair slightly ruffled by the wind, and sat down at his desk on the platform. For a moment

his thin fine hands were busy among his papers and piles of books, then he looked up and gazed out lovingly over his flock.

Walter's breath quickened, he felt the class behind him stir attentively. Today was the day.

"Yes," pronounced the Rector, "I have read your verses, the verse of those of you who were interested enough to make this additional effort. I think you will find when you grow older that no effort which you put into your school work ever fails to bear fruit far beyond the due and fit but still limited rewards of the classroom. I have been teaching boys since I was a young man of nineteen and I am acquainted with the subsequent history of every lad who has passed under my control, and I say to you that I could have prophesied in advance what their several fates would be, for invariably those who were diligent in school have prospered in after life and those who were idle and inattentive in their lessons have failed signally in the greatest tasks of life."

The good doctor was off on his hobbyhorse. He would go on until he felt the attention of the lads slacken and then he would switch abruptly back to the matter in hand. His wise grey eyes with the twinkle at the corners saw every shade of expression that passed over their faces.

"I have read your papers carefully, in which you have turned passages of Virgil into English verse, and I have chosen two, one to receive the prize and one to receive honourable mention."

Now was the moment.

"The prize is awarded to Colin Mackenzie for Dido's speech. After I have read the piece, the author of it will please step forward to the platform."



He read the poem carefully, with the kinds of emphasis necessary to make the metre come out right, and Walter said to himself thoughtfully that it was very fine indeed. He wouldn't have thought old Colin had it in him.

He looked very handsome when he went up to receive his prize, which all, craning their necks, perceived at once to be nothing but a calendar. His face, pale from excitement, was in striking contrast to his dark eyes and dark hair; he was tall and slender and even in his school clothes he had a look of elegance.

As he climbed over Wattie to get back to his place, Walter gave him a congratulatory thump on the shoulder.

The Rector picked up another sheet of paper.

“Gualterus Scott receives honourable mention for a description of Mount Etna:

“In awful ruins Etna thunders high,
And sends in pitchy whirlwinds to the sky
Black clouds of smoke. . . .”

Wattie felt silly, sitting there while his poem was being read out. His face flamed and his fingers were damp in his pockets. And yet, deep in his heart was a solid core of contentment. Never before had anything sounded quite so good in his ears.

“The stones made liquid as the huge mass flies,
(The end was almost reached now)
Then back again with greater weight recoils
While Etna thundering from the bottom boils.”

He limped forward and received his paper and a handshake from the Rector. The class clapped and stamped – more, he felt, because they seized any excuse for making a racket than because they wished to pay honest tribute to literary achievement – until they were firmly ordered to cease.

He presented the poem to his mother that evening. After she had read it over twice and commented on its merits, she wrote on it, “My Walter’s first lines, 1782,” and put it away carefully in a drawer in her bureau.

“Why’d you write that?” he asked curiously.

“Because I think they’ll not be your last. These were a translation. One of these days you’ll be writing something out of your own head.”



Interesting Facts about Sir Walter Scott



1. Scotland, despite its small size on the map, can boast of many writers whose works are still known and read all over the world including Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott. Scott was born in **Edinburgh** in 1771, although his ancestors hailed from the Borders, the region with which we usually associate him. While a baby, young Walter suffered a severe bout of infantile paralysis which left his right leg partially lame for the rest of his life. From an early age Scott was deeply fascinated by the past, by tales of feuds and battles, knights in shining armour and ladies in distress, by the Jacobite Rebellions and by Bonnie Prince Charlie.
2. After a period at the Royal High School of Edinburgh, Scott entered college to study law, and, in the summer of 1792, he passed his final examinations to qualify as an **advocate**. By this time Scott's learning was tremendous – he had read everything of note in English literature, while he also read easily in French, German, Spanish and Italian. Latin he also knew soundly, though it was always a source of regret to

him that he never took up Greek. As well as book learning, however, Scott liked to see things for himself, and each year he would explore the countryside, if not in the Borders, in the Highlands. He would mix with the common people there who could tell him tales of long ago, and recite to him the old traditional **ballads** which he collected and later published.

3. Not satisfied, however, with merely writing down other people's poetry, Scott set out to compose his own. Before long he had won a great reputation as a narrative poet all over the British Isles. He was introduced to Robert Burns, was entertained by King George IV, and was actually asked if he would become Poet Laureate. He refused this high honour, however, and the English poet **Robert Southey** was appointed instead. By 1811, Scott was making by his poetry over £1,000 a year, a very great income in those days. His poems are long but full of action and very exciting, the most famous being *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake*.
4. In 1811, Scott, now enjoying great fame and wealth, paid out the colossal sum of £4,000 for a piece of land near Melrose (a small town in the Scottish Borders), beautifully situated, on which he intended to build a new home. **Abbotsford**, as he called it, is still a fascinating place to visit. The great house, which replaced the older farmhouse, was begun in 1822 and represents all Scott lived for. It is a real treasure-chest of the past, containing such things as the Wallace chair, made from wood taken from the house in which the great Scottish patriot Sir William Wallace was betrayed, Bonnie Prince Charlie's drinking cup

as well as a lock of his hair, Napoleon's pistols, the swords of Rob Roy the Highland outlaw and of the famous Marquis of Montrose, Burn's tumbler and a writing desk made from pieces of wood from the ships of the Spanish Armada.

5. In due course Scott turned to writing **historical novels**, a task for which he was especially suited. First, he had this intense interest in the past, which was allied with great learning. Secondly, he possessed a great and human understanding of people. For this last gift his training as an advocate and subsequent experience in court, where he came into contact with all sorts of memorable characters, were partly responsible. The years that followed saw some truly great novels flow from his pen, beginning with *Waverley* (1814), an exciting story of the Forty-five Rebellion and Bonnie Prince Charlie. At first, Scott was content to leave these novels unsigned, but, before long, people realised only he could have been the author.
6. *The Waverley Novels*, as they are called, are among the most famous works in prose in the whole field of English literature. *Waverley* itself was followed in turn by *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Antiquary* (1816), *Old Mortality* (1816), *Rob Roy* (1818), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), and *Ivanhoe* (1820). One great book followed another, and Scott was now at the height of his reputation; indeed, he was made a baronet in 1818. These novels are distinguished first and foremost by the unforgettable characters they contain, such as the ruthless Balfour of Burley in *Old Mortality* and the demented, wild-eyed Meg Merrilees of *Guy Mannering*. Scott's power of vivid description is

another great quality; scenes such as the marshalling of the two armies at the Battle of Bothwell Bridge or the storming of the castle in *Ivanhoe* are breathtaking in their descriptiveness.

7. Sir Walter, as he became, was always very interested in animals, especially dogs. He writes that he found his dogs – Maida, a big deerhound, Hamlet, a black greyhound and the dandies, Pepper, Mustard and Ketchup – a great source of comfort to him during a hard day’s work. He would pause for a while in the middle of a sentence, lay down his pen and pat them fondly as they lay about his feet. Of course, they also accompanied him as he walked slowly along the banks of the Tweed or in the shadow of the Eildon Hills. In Abbotsford to this day a beautiful painting of Scott with Maida beside him by the famous artist Sir Henry Raeburn hangs on the wall of the drawing room.
8. Many of Scott’s most famous novels were written in great bodily pain, a sickness which afflicted him increasingly from 1817 onward. Many a lesser man would have given in to this, but showing great spirit, Sir Walter struggled on. An even greater disaster, however, occurred in 1826 when Scott’s publisher, the firm of James Ballantyne, went bankrupt to the extent of over £250,000, and Scott himself was almost ruined. It was then that he wrote the famous sentence “My own right hand shall pay my debt”, meaning that he would write on until he had paid back all he felt he owed. A further misfortune was the death of his wife the same year. Despite all these tremendous shocks, Scott’s courage triumphed in the end, for, with such books as *Woodstock*, *The Fair Maid of Perth*, the popular

Tales of a Grandfather, and *Anne of Geierstein* all his debts were, by the time of his death, successfully paid.

9. In struggling to pay off his debts, Scott literally worked himself to death; but not before this picture of the great man bravely fighting against hard times had caught hold of the imagination of the general public. So much so that when the government heard of Sir Walter's plans to spend the winter of 1831 abroad in a last desperate attempt to improve his health, they put a frigate of the Royal Navy at his disposal. The journey ended, however, with a rapid worsening of Scott's condition. The whole country prayed for his recovery, but he knew within himself that he was dying and longed to get home to Abbotsford. Built into the wall that flanks the road from Galashiels to Melrose there is a small plaque which records that it was at that point Sir Walter halted the carriage to gaze for the very last time down his beloved valley of the Tweed.
10. Sir Walter Scott died on September 21st, 1832, and was buried in the ruined **Abbey of Dryburgh**. A visitor to his grave today will probably be struck by the peaceful beauty around and also by the fact that this ancient abbey is indeed a fitting last resting place since it breathes an atmosphere of the past, just such an atmosphere as this **Wizard of the North** came to cherish so fondly.

❑ Questions on the Story

1. What was Walter's place in class?
2. To what did he attribute his improvement?

3. How did the Rector describe Walter's knowledge of Latin?
4. Who was *dux*?
5. Was the verse competition compulsory?
6. At what age did Dr Adam begin teaching?
7. In what way could he forecast how his pupils would fare when they left school?
8. Who was the Latin author to be translated?
9. One was to receive a prize; what was the other to receive?
10. Who won the prize?
11. What passage had the winner translated?
12. Describe how the Rector read the winning poem.
13. What was presented as first prize?
14. What was the contrast in the winner's appearance that struck Walter?
15. What was the subject of Walter's poem?
16. What was the main reason for the class making a noise?
17. How many times did Walter's mother read his poem?
18. In what year was the poem written?
19. Where did Mrs Scott put the poem?
20. What did she forecast?

Questions on the Interesting Facts

1. Name two major Scottish writers.
2. What was the profession Scott chose to follow?

3. (a) Name three honours that came Scott's way.
(b) Who was appointed Poet Laureate instead of Scott?
(c) Name three of Scott's narrative poems.
4. Near what Border town is Abbotsford situated?
5. What objects of historical interest can be seen there?
6. Give two reasons for Scott eventually turning to historical novels and for his great success in that field.
7. (a) What was the name given to his first great novel?
(b) Give one reason why Scott's novels are so famous.
(c) Name one of his famous characters.
8. (a) What breed of dog was Maida?
(b) Who painted the great picture of Scott and Maida?
(c) Where can this be seen today?
9. Describe briefly each of the three misfortunes which befell Sir Walter from 1817 to his death.
10. (a) In what way did the government show great respect for Scott?
(b) What occasion does the wall-plaque record?
(c) Where is Sir Walter Scott buried?

Development Exercises

1. Burns is regarded as the great Scottish poet, Scott as the great Scottish novelist. Find out where Burns was born. Limiting your answer to the lives

of the men themselves, what strikes you as a great difference between the two writers?

2. What counties make up the region of Scotland called the Borders?
3. Give the names of two English ballads and two Scottish ones.
4. Scott refused to accept the position of Poet Laureate. Who is the present Poet Laureate of England?
5. Abbotsford is the house associated with Sir Walter Scott. What famous people are associated with the following buildings?
 - (a) 10 Downing Street
 - (b) The White House
 - (c) No. 221B Baker Street
 - (d) Chartwell
 - (e) Sandringham House
6. Who was the commander of the English fleet which defeated the Spanish Armada?
7. “Old Mortality” is a story about the Covenanters. Who were the Covenanters?
8. Meg Merrilees is one of Scott’s most famous characters. Who created the following characters?
 - (a) Fagin
 - (b) Gulliver
 - (c) Macbeth
 - (d) Peter Pan
 - (e) Huckleberry Finn
 - (f) Gandalf