

Chapter – 5

Princess September

Comprehension Check

Q1. How many daughters did the royal couple have?

Answer. The royal couple had nine daughters.

Q2. Why were they named after the months of the year?

Answer. They were named after the months of the year because the King and the Queen had many daughters, and it confused the Queen to have to remember so many names.

Q3. The King had a peculiar habit. What was it? Why is it called peculiar?

Answer. The King's peculiar habit was that instead of receiving gifts on his birthday, he gave them. It is called peculiar because usually, people receive gifts on their birthdays.

Q4. (i) What was Princess September's reaction to the loss of her parrot?

(ii) What was her mother's reaction to it?

(iii) What do the reactions indicate about the nature and temperament of each?

Answer. (i) Princess September burst into a flood of tears at the loss of her parrot. She kept crying and nothing comforted her.

(ii) Her mother declared it as nonsense, and said that she should go to bed without any supper.

(iii) The Princess' reaction indicates that she was a young, sensitive child. That is why she cried over the loss of her parrot. It was a very important thing for her. The loss of her parrot filled her with grief. Her mother's reaction indicates that she was a little harsh. She did not understand her daughter's grief and console her. She did not think that the dying of the parrot was in any way a significant incident to shed tears.

Q5. What pulled the Princess out of her gloom?

Answer. When the Princess was lying on her bed crying, she saw a little bird hop into her room. She wiped her tears and heard the beautiful song that the bird sang. This brought the Princess out of her gloom.

Q6. How did the Maids of Honour come to know that the Princess and the bird had become intimate friends?

Answer. When the Maids of Honour brought in the princess' breakfast, they saw the bird eat rice out of her hand, and have its bath in her saucer. This showed them that the princess and the bird had become intimate friends.

Q7. The new bird was full of new songs but the old parrots always repeated themselves. What did they say?

Answer. All the old parrots could say 'God save the king' and some of them could even say 'Pretty Polly' in seven languages.

Q8. What is the King's opinion about his Councilors? Why did he form that opinion?

Answer. The King said that the parrots repeating 'Pretty Polly' in seven different languages reminded him of his Councilors who said the same thing in seven different ways, and meant nothing whichever way they said it. This was similar to the way the parrots kept repeating what they had learnt, without knowing the meaning of what they said.

Q9. (i) The eight Princesses made an offer to Princess September. What was it?

(ii) Why, in your view, did they do it?

Answer. (i) The eight princesses offered to buy a lovely green and yellow parrot for Princess September by putting in all their pocket money.

(ii) They did so because they were distressed by the fact that everybody was praising Princess September's bird, which could sing. Their parrots looked sad and repeated the same things. They wanted her to have the same pet as they had.

Q10. What did the sisters advise the Princess to do about her bird?

Answer. The sisters advised the Princess to keep her bird in a cage so that she could be sure of where it was.

Q11. In the following sentence elaborate the parts given in bold. Under the circumstances it was a very unfortunate remark for the bird to make.

Answer. Under the circumstances After what her sisters advised her to do, the Princess was worried about the bird. She feared that the bird might forget her or start liking someone else. She felt that in such a circumstance, she would lose her little pet. A very unfortunate remark On returning, the bird said that it very nearly did not come back that

night as its father-in-law was giving a party and had wanted it to stay. This was the last thing that the princess wanted to hear as it only confirmed her fears.

**Q12. (i) What did Princess September do to ensure the safety of her pet?
(ii) How did the bird react to it?**

Answer. (i) To ensure the safety of her pet, Princess September put it in the cage.

(ii) The bird at first suspected nothing, and was surprised when she carried it over to the cage. After a moment or two, it asked what the joke was. When the Princess said that it would be much safer in the cage as there were many cats roaming about, it said that it did not mind for that one time, as long as she let it out in the morning.

Q13. Why did the bird refuse to be taken out in her cage?

Answer. The bird refused to be taken out in her cage because it was not the same thing as flying. It said that the rice fields, the lake and the willow trees looked quite different when seen through the bars of a cage.

Q14. (i) What persuaded Princess September to give the bird his freedom again?

(ii) How did the bird react to it?

Answer. (i) When one day she saw the little bird lying at the bottom with its eyes closed, she thought it was dead. She opened the door and took the bird out. Feeling its heart beating, she tried to wake it up and cried. One of her tears fell on the bird and it opened its eyes to see that it was out of the cage. It said that it could not sing unless it was free, and if it could not sing, it would die. This persuaded her to give it its freedom again. She wanted it to be happy as she loved it.

(ii) The bird said that it would come back because it loved her. It would sing the loveliest of songs for her. It would go far away, but would always come back and shall never forget her. Then, it flew away into the sky.

Q15. Princess September kept her window open day and night.

(i) How did it help the bird?

(ii) How did it help the Princess herself?

Answer. (i) Princess September kept her window open day and night. This helped the bird as it could come into her room and leave whenever it felt like.

(ii) Sleeping with the window open proved to be very good for the princess as she grew extremely beautiful because of this reason.

Q16. The eight sisters kept their windows shut. How did it affect them?

Answer. The eight sisters grew extremely ugly and disagreeable. This was because they kept their windows shut.

Exercise

Q1. Are the sisters unkind and cruel? Find evidence in the text to support your idea.

Answer. Yes, the sisters were unkind and cruel. When they saw that Princess September's bird could sing and their parrots could only repeat two lines, they became distressed. They even offered to buy a green and yellow parrot for her. When she denied their offer, they talked her into putting her bird in the cage. After she had put the bird into the cage, it stopped eating and singing. When she consulted her sisters, they said it would soon get used to the cage. They even said that she should be firm, and if it died, then it would be very ungrateful of it. If it was obstinate and died, then it would serve it right. When she set the bird free, they mocked her and said that the bird would never return. All these instances show that they were very unkind and cruel.

Q2. Which, to you, is the most important idea in this story, and why?

(i) importance of music

(ii) value of freedom

(iii) beauty of nature

Answer. The most important idea in the story is the value of freedom. No one should be denied his freedom. Absence of freedom suffocates a person, and prevents him from enjoying the beauty of life in its fullness. The bird in the story was happy flying. It sang beautifully and ate well. However, when it was caged, it became sad, and did not eat or sing. It said that to sing, it required its freedom, and if it could not sing, it would die. This indicates that the beauty of life is in freedom, and not in captivity.