

CLASS VIII – ENGLISH I – COMPREHENSION AND COMPOSITION - ASSIGNMENT

1. Read the passage and answer the questions:

It was 1915. The First World War was going on. A unit of British Army was lost in the Sinai Desert. They lost all communication, Had very short supply of food and other things. Food was **scarce** and a glass of water was a cry. Apart from **tormenting** hunger and thirst the army had the fear to be spotted and bombed by German planes. Moreover, there was the fear of Bedouin attack. Often Bedouins attacked, **plundered** and killed people in this desert area. Whether Germans or the Bedouins attacked or not, they were **on the verge of** death for want of food and water.

Captain Cazal was leading this small army of nearly hundred soldiers. He was desperate to save his soldiers but could not trace the route nor saw any hope. In such a situation one of the guards of the camp **ushered** a very old Bedouin from the desert and reported that he wanted to meet the captain.

Soon it was known that his name was Sheikh Rafai Rabai and he had a letter to deliver to the captain. The letter was addressed to Captain Cazal. The Captain was surprised. Who would send him letter in the midst of desert? How could the sender know his position? The letter bearer said with relief, “I have been waiting long for you to deliver the letter. At last I have found you.” He produced a very old envelop properly sealed and handed it over to the puzzled captain.

Out of curiosity the captain opened the envelop and discovered very old yellowed paper with writings.

It was indeed a letter addressed to Captain Cazal, but it was written in French and was sent from France. The writer was none but Napoleon! Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte marched into Egypt 116 years ago. How could he write to Captain Cazal? Captain Cazal was not even born then!

Utterly puzzled Captain Cazal asked the old man how he got the letter. Rafai declared he had the letter from Emperor Bonaparte. He added it was true. The emperor personally gave him the secret letter and asked him not to hand over to anyone but Captain Cazal in the Sinai Desert. He insisted that it was the captain’s letter.

The Captain knew French and so he read the content of the letter. It was indeed written by Napoleon Bonaparte! There he directed the captain to take quick action on receiving the letter he was sending through an Arab boy. The letter instructed him to dig the sand below the camp. Food and ammunition are stored there. He must dig them out and after using and taking the store, left out things should be destroyed so that enemy army could not get any help. Napoleon also advised Captain Cazal to advance directly toward Egypt following a route through the middle of the desert. He further advised to avoid two other routes to reach Egypt. Not only that , there was a sketch or map of the routes to help him trace the right route.

Captain Cazal thought hard. Then a flash of light came. His grandfather was a captain in Napoleon’s army and during an expedition with his army he died in this very Sinai desert in the year 1799. Perhaps the letter was addressed to him by the Emperor.

However, puzzled the captain was, he made his companions to dig the sand at a particular place there and to his great surprise he discovered lots of canned food and drink. The food and drink were all fresh! The

captain checked the labels and found they were not French. The Germans and the Turks who camped at the very spot had left them there a month ago. Now the camp was under Captain Cazal's control. But how could the letter written hundred years ago mention the stored food? Captain Cazal came to conclusion that perhaps hundred years ago, the French army of Napoleon camped at the very sight after defeating the English army and stored food there.

Still to be clear about the matter he asked Rafai how exactly he got the letter. Then Rafai explained that he was in Napoleon's army. When he was 25 Napoleon called him and sent him to Sinai Desert with this letter. Rafai located the spot of the camp but found it empty and **deserted**. He did not find Captain Cazal. Since then he had been carrying the letter to deliver it to the proper person. Years passed. How many he could not say because he could not count. Since then every two months he came to the site of the camp with the hope to find Captain Cazal and at last he could. Now he was **relieved** of his burden and would go home light-hearted.

The truth is that when he came first with the letter he was 25. For 116 years he was searching for the captain and when he met Captain Cazal he was 141 years old!

It might sound improbable but it is historically true and there are records and proofs of this strange incident.

(Source: Ripley's Believe it or Not)

Answer the questions in your own words:

- a) What happened to Captain Cazal's army before Rafai arrived?
- b) Why was the Captain surprised on Rafai's arrival?
- c) Who wrote the letter? To whom? When?
- d) Why did the letter puzzle Captain Cazal?
- e) What proof can you give that Rafai was really sent by Napoleon?
- f) From which year to which year did Rafai search for Captain Cazal? Which highly appreciable particular quality of the person do you find?
- g) Write down meaning of the following as they are used in the passage: scarce, tormenting, plundered, on the verge of, ushered, deserted, relieved.
- h) In not more than 50 words describe the strange happening in the Sinai desert.

2. Read the following passage and answer the questions:

Like several other things dream is one thing that has often puzzled man. There are different ways dreams are interpreted. Some say it is the work of sub-conscious mind. Some say dream is spiritual inspiration. Some say dream opens man's mind to future. Some other say dream is the work of an idle brain and it is rubbish. Still dream remains a dream!

People mock at a person for being a dreamer. A dreamer is often identified with idling, impracticalness, parasitical living and is despised of. Whatever be the attitude of people sometimes a dream puts us in a very uneasy situation as we cannot explain with reasons. Such is the story of Romanus II.

This Romanus was a poor sepoy in the royal palace in Byzantium. He was very dreamy. Often he dreamt that he was seated in the very throne of the Emperor and enjoying all luxuries of the royal palace. One day he happened to see the beautiful empress and was much moved with wonder and appreciation. That night he dreamt he was seated on the royal throne and the Empress was seated beside him. He was so overwhelmed with the dream that he shared it with his fellow guard. Now his fellow guard was not a man with a clean heart. He went straight to the Emperor and narrated Romanus' dream with colourful details of his own. Romanus was immediately arrested and thrown into prison. His offence was he dared to think the empress as his love in his dream. Moreover his dream with the royal throne was highly suspicious one. Soon the poor guard was given death sentence for his offence.

The Empress happened to hear of this dream and felt pity for the poor guard, though she did not know him. He pleaded with the Emperor for his life and the Emperor announced life long imprisonment instead of death sentence. So Romanus' life was saved but he was spending his days in the dark prison.

Two years passed. The Emperor died. The Empress had not forgotten the poor guard. She made him free and appointed him for her personal affairs. Soon she discovered Romanus was very intelligent, thoughtful, efficient and above all very loving. She began to love him. Without much delay she married Romanus as she needed a reliable one as the administrator of the state. The palace guard Romanus took the title Romanus II and became the Emperor of the Byzantine Empire. His rule was appreciated by all.

Thus a simple dreamer dreamt to be king and did become the king. That was in the year 1605.

Answer the questions:

- a) How is dream seen by different people?
- b) What is meant in the statement "*Still dream remains a dream.*"?
- c) Why was Romanus given death sentence? d) How was Romanus' life saved?
- e) Why do you think the empress show pity on Romanus?

f) When and why did the empress begin to love Romanus?

Composition:

THE HOTTEST DAY YOU EXPERIENCED

Hints:

1. How were the days before
2. The temperature – atmosphere around , how the day began.
3. How the heat affected everything – plants, people, domestic animals
4. Sounds
5. Smells
6. How you felt and what you did.
7. How the day ended.