

ENGLISH LITERATURE

(Class-VI)



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How Daddy Decided What He Wanted to Be

by Alexander Raskin

Pre-reading Task

1. What is your father's profession?
2. What profession would you like to choose?
3. What is the reason for your choice?

Read the following story and find out how the narrator's Daddy decided what he wanted to be.

When Daddy was little he was often asked: 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' Daddy always had an answer ready. But each time his answer was different. At first, Daddy wanted to be a nightwatchman. He liked to think that while the whole town was asleep, the nightwatchman was up. And he liked to think that he could make a noise when everyone was sleeping. He was quite certain he wanted to be a nightwatchman when he grew up. But then the ice-cream man came along with his bright green cart. Why, he could push a cart, he could eat all the ice-cream he wanted to!



'I'll eat a stick of ice-cream for everyone I sell!' Daddy thought. 'And I'll treat little children to free ice-cream.'

Little Daddy's parents were very surprised when they heard that their son wanted to be an ice-cream man. It was quite funny for them. But he thought it would be a very tasty way of being grown-up.

Then one day little Daddy saw a man at the railway station. The man kept playing with the cars and **locomotives**. But these were real cars and real locomotives! He'd jump on to the platforms and crawl under the cars, playing a strange and wonderful game.

locomotives: railway engines

'Who's that man?' Daddy asked.

'He's the shunter,' he was told.

Now little Daddy knew what he wanted to be! Just think! He would **shunt** railway cars! What in the world could be more interesting? Nothing, obviously. When Daddy said that he would be a shunter, someone asked him:

'But what about the ice-cream?'

This was a problem. Daddy had decided to become a shunter, but he did not want to give up the bright green ice-cream cart. At last, he found a way out.

'I'll be a shunter and an ice-cream man!'

Everyone was very surprised. But little Daddy explained it all quite clearly: 'That's not hard at all. I'll sell ice-cream in the morning. After selling it for a while, I'll go to the station. There I'll shunt some cars and go back to sell some more ice-cream. Then I'll go back to the station and shunt the cars again, and then I'll sell some more ice-cream. It won't be hard, because I'll park my cart near the station and I won't have far to go to the trains.'

Everyone laughed again. Then little Daddy got angry and said:

'If you're going to laugh at me, I'll be a nightwatchman, besides. After all, there's nothing to do at night.'

It was all settled. But then Daddy wanted to be a pilot. Then he wanted to be an actor. But after Grandpa took him to a factory

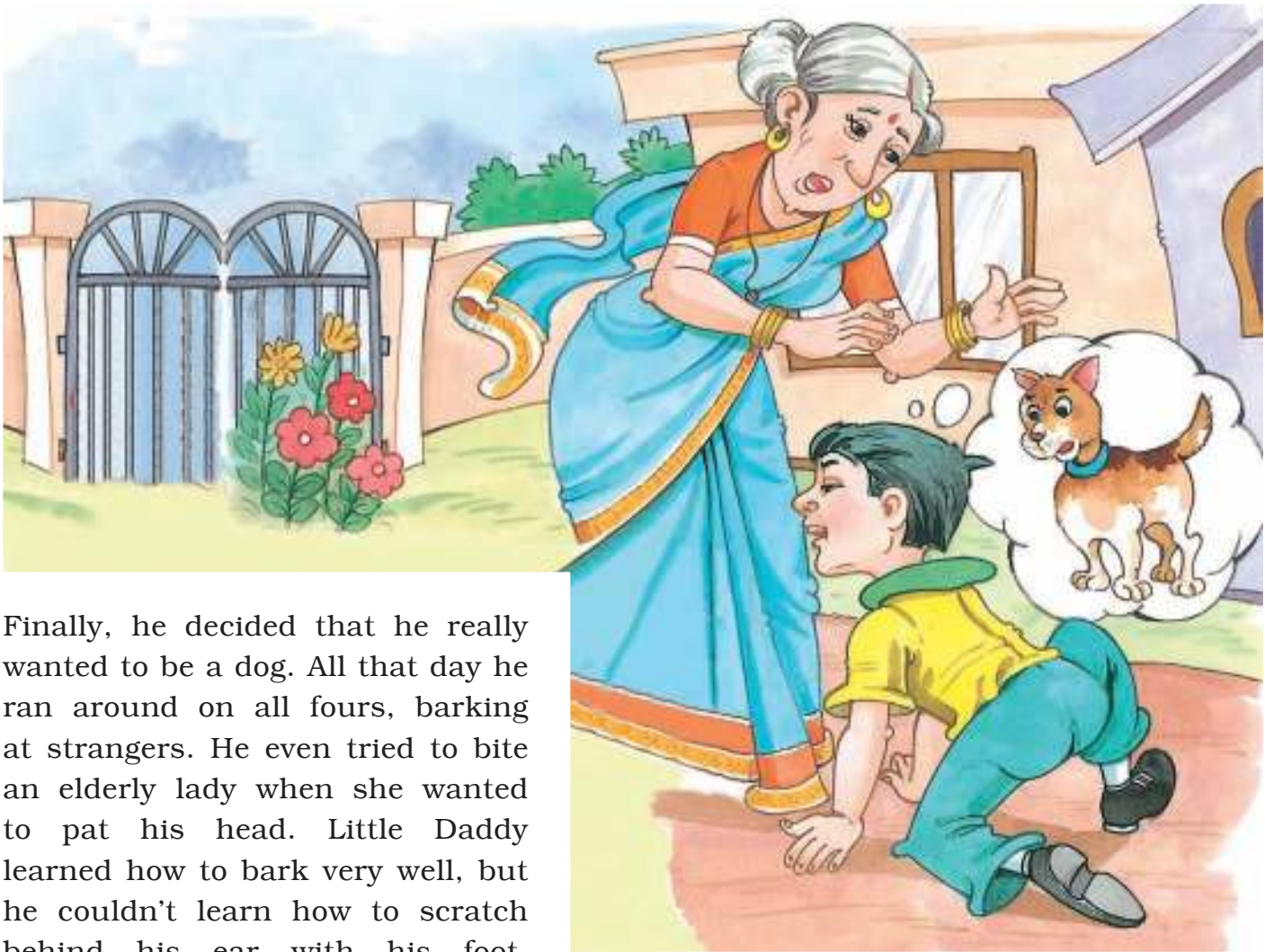
he decided to be a **turner**. Besides, he wanted to be a sailor. Or at least a shepherd and spend his days walking about with the cows, **cracking** his whip loudly.



shunt: to move a carriage from one track to another

cracking: making a sharp noise with a whip

turner: a person who operates a lathe



Finally, he decided that he really wanted to be a dog. All that day he ran around on all fours, barking at strangers. He even tried to bite an elderly lady when she wanted to pat his head. Little Daddy learned how to bark very well, but he couldn't learn how to scratch behind his ear with his foot, though he tried very hard. He thought that if he went outside and sat next to Rover he'd learn more quickly. That's exactly what he did.

Just then an officer came walking down the street. He stopped and looked at Daddy. He watched him for a while and then he asked:

'What are you doing?'

'I want to be a dog,' little Daddy said.

'Don't you want to remain human?'

'I've been a human being for a long time,' Daddy said.

'What sort of a human being are you, if you can't even be a dog? Is that what a human being is like?'

'Well, what is he like?' Daddy asked.

'You think about it yourself,' the officer said and walked away.

He wasn't laughing and didn't even smile. But little Daddy suddenly felt much ashamed of himself. And he began to think. He thought and thought and the more he thought, the more ashamed he was of himself. The officer had not explained anything to him, but he suddenly understood that he couldn't change his mind everyday. And, what was most important, he realised that he was too small to know what he wanted to be. The next time he was asked the same question he remembered the officer and said:

'I want to be a human being!'

No one laughed. And little Daddy understood that this was the best answer of all. He still thinks so. First of all, you have to be a good human being. This is most important for a pilot and a shepherd and an ice-cream man. And after all, a human being does not really have to know how to scratch behind his ear with his foot.

I Understanding the Story

A. Little Daddy wanted to pursue various professions. Complete the table below citing one reason for his choice of these professions:

	Daddy wanted to be a/an	Reason
1.	nightwatchman	
2.	ice-cream man	
3.	shunter	
4.	shepherd	
5.	dog	

B. Answer the following questions briefly:

1. Why did Daddy want to be a nightwatchman?
2. What was Daddy's plea in favour of being an ice-cream seller? How did his parents react to it?
3. What efforts did Daddy put in to be a dog?
4. Why was Daddy ashamed of himself after meeting the officer?
5. What did Daddy finally decide to be when he grew up?

C. Little Daddy thought—

- ✱ if he were a nightwatchman, he would keep awake all night and make a noise.
- ✱ if he were an ice-cream seller, he would eat all the ice-cream he wanted to.
- ✱ if he were a shunter, he would jump on to the platforms and crawl under the cars.

Think about yourself.

1. If you were an architect, you would _____

2. If _____ detective, _____

3. If _____ cricketer, _____

4. If _____ mariner, _____

5. If _____ dress designer, _____

II HOTS

Why do little children keep changing their mind every now and then?

III Life Skills

- A. Discuss with your partner what is the right age to decide what you wish to be when you grow up. What are the advantages of making an early decision?
- B. Is it practically possible (or even desirable) to practise two or three professions simultaneously? Discuss.

IV Values

'First of all, you should be a good human being.' What according to you should be the traits of a good human being?

V Writing Skills

After meeting the officer, Daddy feels ashamed of himself. He makes a resolution. Imagine yourself to be Daddy and write a dairy entry expressing your feelings.

About the Author

Alexander Raskin is a famous Russian writer. The story *How Daddy Decided What He Wanted to Be* is taken from a book of the same title. Raskin used to narrate his stories to his daughter Sasha when she was sick. The stories are interesting, realistic and funny. They contain every day scenes from Raskin's childhood.



The White Elephant

by Ruskin Bond

Pre-reading Task

1. Do you like animals?
2. Have you ever been to a zoo? What is your attitude towards the caged animals?
3. Do you watch them standing very close to them or from a safe distance?
4. What would you do if you found someone troubling or teasing an animal? Would you—
 - (i) not bother at all?
 - (ii) try to save the animal yourself?
 - (iii) inform P.F.A. (People For Animals) authorities?
5. Given below is a zig-zag puzzle. Find out the names of at least ten animals or birds hidden in it horizontally, vertically or diagonally.

a	c	x	m	e	a	a	c	e	l
b	s	p	b	l	a	c	w	g	i
s	e	a	l	e	a	a	p	o	o
d	c	l	l	p	a	s	l	a	n
f	o	m	r	h	i	n	o	t	o
r	w	g	p	a	r	r	o	t	n
o	k	o	z	e	b	r	a	k	p
g	t	o	r	t	o	i	s	e	e
z	j	s	l	p	a	w	o	l	f
m	q	e	o	n	a	u	t	z	l

Now read the story about a white elephant.

Long ago, a great herd of elephants lived in a forest near the Himalaya mountains. The finest elephant in the tribe was a rare white animal.

Unfortunately, the mother of this elephant was old and blind. Although her son gathered sweet wild fruits for her every day, he was often angry to find that the other elephants had stolen his mother's food.



'Mother,' he said, 'it would be better if you and I were to go and live alone in a distant cave I have discovered.'

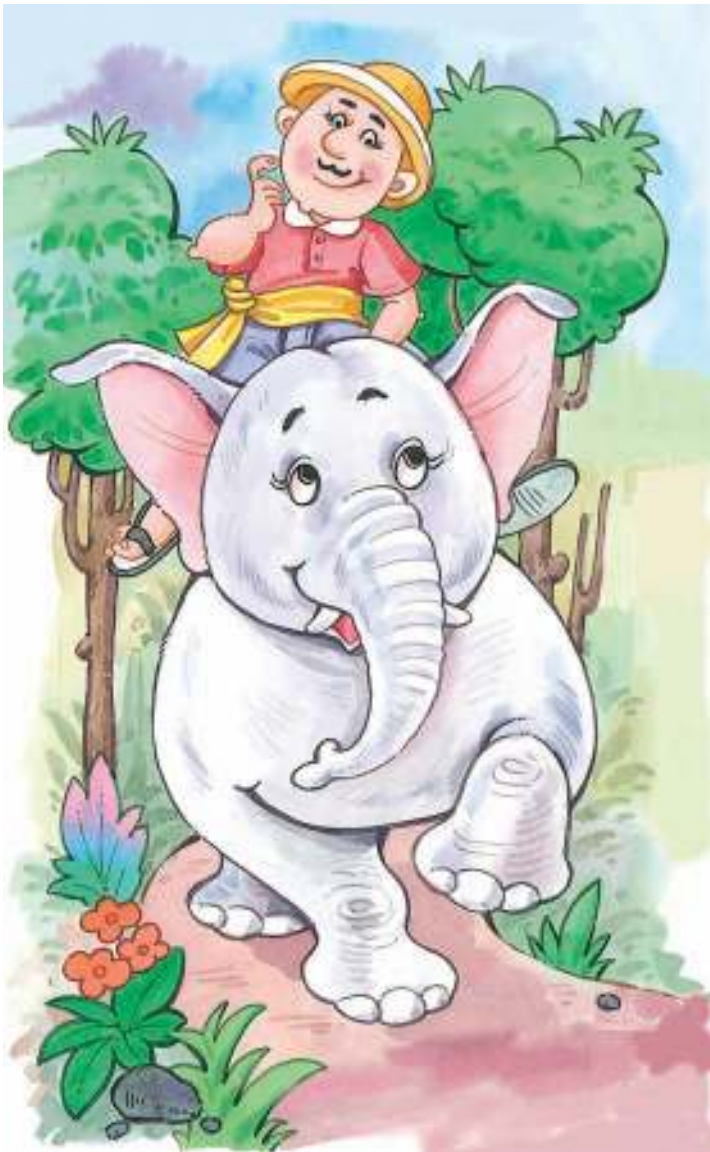
The mother elephant agreed and for a time the two of them lived happily in a peaceful spot near a **glade** of wild fruit trees until one evening they heard loud cries coming from the great forest.

'That is the voice of a man in **distress**,' said the white elephant. 'I must go and see if I can help him.'

'Do not go, my son,' said his mother. 'I am old and blind but I know the ways of human beings towards us. Your goodness will be rewarded by **treachery**.'

glade: an open place in a forest
treachery: an act of wilful betrayal

distress: extreme danger that needs urgent help



But the white elephant could not bear to think of anyone in trouble and he hurried down to the lake in the direction of the cries, where he discovered a man who was a forester.

‘Don’t fear me, stranger,’ he said. ‘Tell me how I can help you.’

The forester told the white elephant that he had been lost for seven days and nights and could not find his way back to Benaras where he lived.

‘Climb on my back,’ said the elephant cheerfully, ‘and I will carry you home.’

The elephant carried the man swiftly through the forest until they reached open country; then he left him on the **outskirts** of the city before returning to his cave.

The forester was a greedy and cunning man. He knew that the king’s favourite elephant had died. ‘The king would reward me richly,’ thought the man, ‘if I capture this fine animal for him.’ He straightaway asked for a royal audience.

The king was delighted when he heard the description of the white elephant, ‘I would love to possess such a fine creature. Go back to the forest with a band of my most skilful trainers and if they succeed in capturing this rare elephant, you shall be well rewarded.’

The forester had cunningly noted landmarks while riding back to Benaras and he led the trainers to the lake where the white elephant was gathering bamboo stems for his mother’s evening meal. When the elephant saw the forester with the band of trainers, he knew he had been **betrayed**.

He tried to escape but the trainers pursued him and soon succeeded in capturing him. Then they led him through the forest and entered Benaras in **triumph**.

outskirts: bordering areas

betrayed: deceived

triumph: victory

The poor mother elephant, waiting for her son to return, felt certain that he had been captured.

'What shall I do without him?' she cried. 'Who will bring me food and lead me to the lotus lake for water?'

The heart of her son was equally heavy. 'What will she do without me?' he thought, 'if only I had listened to her advice.'

In spite of his unhappy look, the elephant found favour with the king, who declared he would ride no other animal. The elephant's stable was richly decorated in his honour and the king rode him in state through the city.



But a few days later, the trainers came to the king in great distress saying, 'Your Majesty, the white elephant is very sick and will eat nothing.'

The king hurried to the stable and when he saw the elephant's look of **despair**, he said, 'Good animal, how you have changed! Why do you refuse to eat? Anything you wish will be granted to you.'

despair: loss of hope

'Great King,' answered the elephant **mournfully**, 'all I desire is to return to my poor blind mother in the forest, for while she is alone and **starving**, how can I eat?'

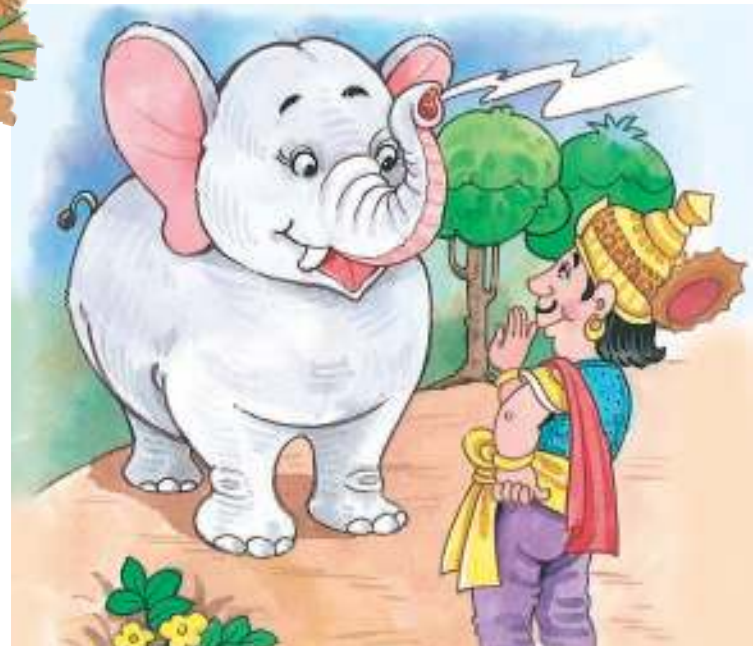


Now the king was a good king and although he badly wanted the elephant for himself, he said at once, 'Noble animal, your goodness puts mankind to shame. I give you your freedom to return to your mother at once.'

The elephant thanked the king with a loud trumpeting, and left the city and went crashing back through the forest. When he reached the cave, he found, to his joy, that his mother was still alive.

'Ah, my son!' she said when he told her his story. 'You should have listened to me. Human beings have always brought harm to our race.'

'Not all of them, mother,' he said triumphantly. 'The king is noble and generous or I should still be in **captivity**. Let's forget the treachery of the forester and think only of the king's goodness!'



I Understanding the Story

A. Answer the following questions in two or three sentences each:

1. How did the white elephant help the forester?
2. Why did the white elephant's mother advise him not to help the man in distress?

mournfully: sorrowfully

starving: suffering from hunger

captivity: imprisonment

3. How did the forester respond to the white elephant's good deed?
4. Why did the white elephant refuse to eat anything in the palace?
5. How did the king help the white elephant?

B. Given below are some incidents from the story. Enter the thoughts/reactions of each character to the given situation. In the space given below, write what personal qualities of the characters are revealed through these reactions. The first one has been done for you.

(a) Elephant's reaction

wants to help
the man

Incident

Voice of a man in distress

Mother's reaction

forbids him
to go

Elephant's character

helpful

Mother's character

suspicious,
experienced

(b) Forester's thoughts

Incident

The forester informs the king
about the white elephant.

King's thoughts

Forester's character

King's character

(c) Elephant's thoughts

Mother's thoughts

Incident

The king's men capture the white elephant.

Forester's reaction

King's reaction

(d) King's reply

Elephant's feelings

Incident

The elephant requests the king to help him.

King's character

Mother's feelings

II HOTS

'Noble animal, your goodness puts mankind to shame.' Discuss the characters of the forester and the white elephant in the light of this comment by the king.

III Life Skills

'Let us forget the treachery of the forester and think only of the king's goodness.' Discuss with your partner the importance of developing such a positive attitude towards life.

IV Values

Imagine yourself to be the king. Deliver a speech to your countrymen highlighting the importance of love for animals and condemning man's cruel treatment of animals.

V Writing Skills

On behalf of the mother elephant, write a request letter to the king pleading for the release of her son.

About the Author

Ruskin Bond is an Indian short story writer and novelist. He has played a pioneering role in the growth of children's literature in India. He writes about the simple hill folk of Uttaranchal living in close proximity with nature. He is a prolific writer. Do read the stories contained in *The Blue Umbrella* and *Uncles, Aunts and Elephants*. You will also love *The Adventures of Rusty* and *Crazy Times with Uncle Ken*.





Leisure

by W.H. Davies

Pre-reading Task

1. What do you do in free time?
2. List at least five things that you want to do but cannot do because of lack of time.
 - (i) _____
 - (ii) _____
 - (iii) _____
 - (iv) _____
 - (v) _____
3. Do you enjoy the fast and hectic life of a metro city or the slow and peaceful village life far away from a city?
4. Make a list of at least five places (hill stations) that you would like to visit.

- (i) _____
- (ii) _____
- (iii) _____
- (iv) _____
- (v) _____

Why would you like to go to these places?

Now read the poem.

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

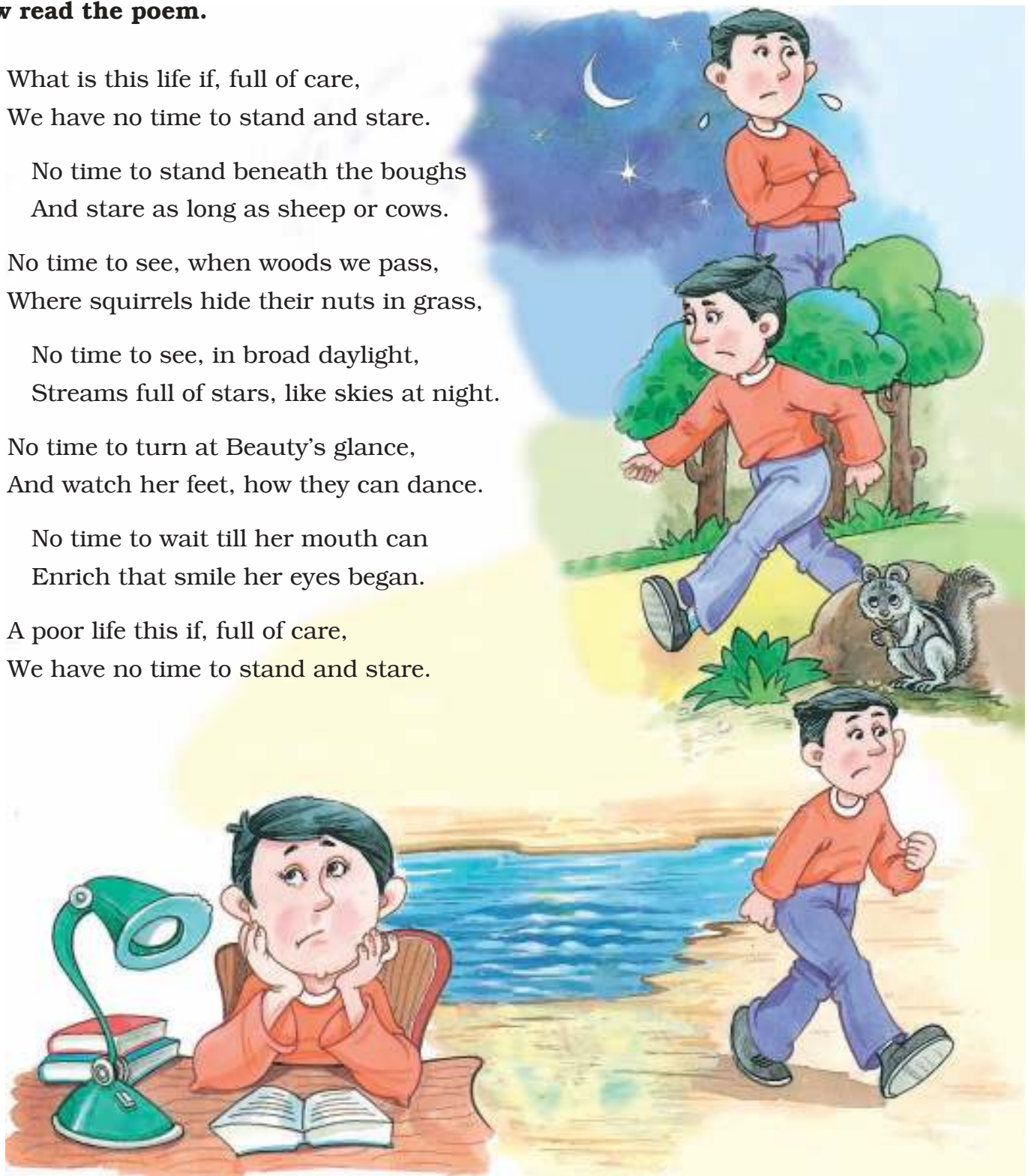
No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass,

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

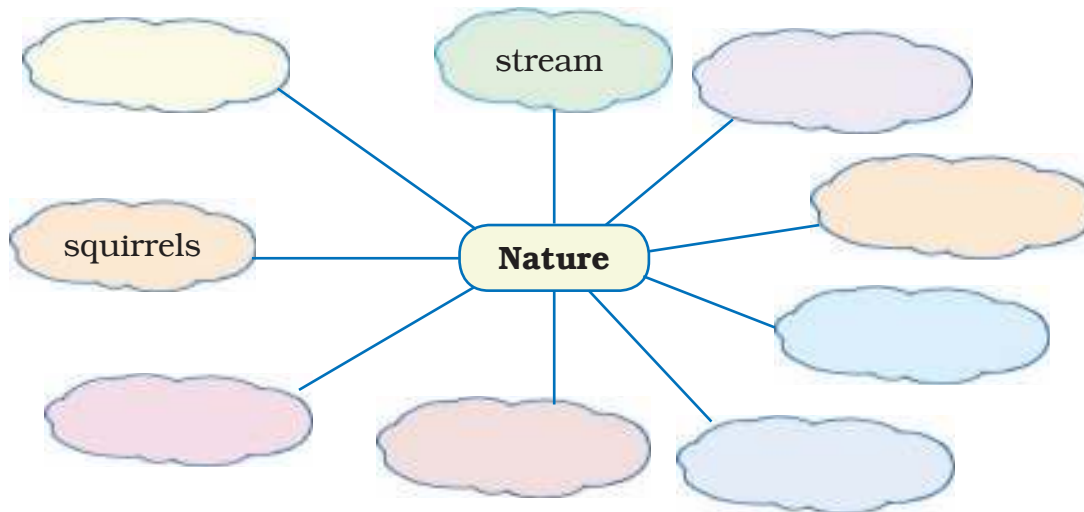


Note: W.H. Davies has personified the beauty of the world around us, which many often fail to observe because of a lack of leisure. Dancing feet and Enchanting smile symbolically refer to various aspects of the beauty around us.

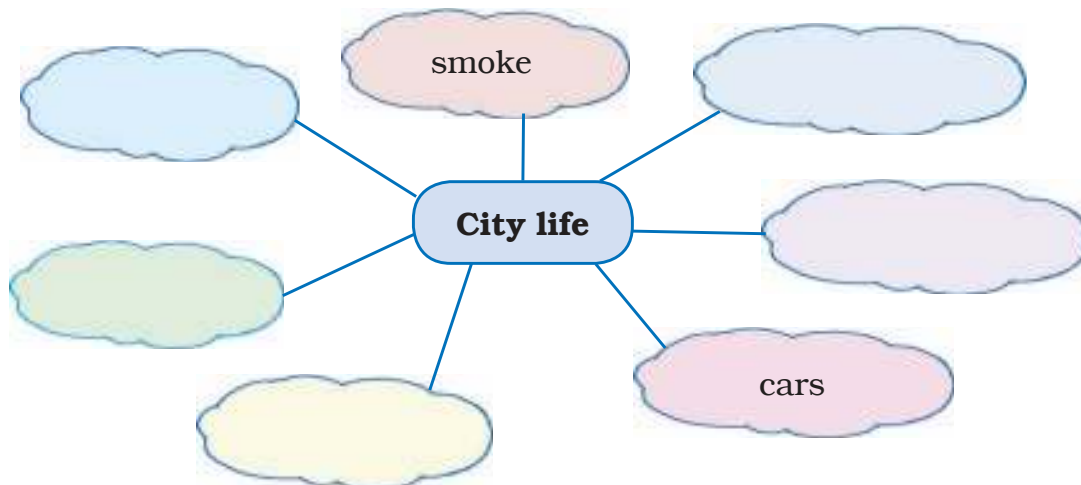
A. Answer the following questions briefly:

1. What does the speaker miss because of lack of time?
2. What do 'stars in the stream' (line 8) refer to?
3. List the pairs of rhyming words in the poem.

B. In the poem 'Leisure', the poet depicts various things and animals as attributes of nature. Read the poem and complete the chart given below by filling in the names of appropriate things/animals in the bubbles:



C. Now complete the chart given below by filling in the names of various animals/ things that you relate to city life.



Now bring out the contrast between the nature and city life.

II **HOTS**

The phrase 'no time' has been repeated in the poem. Why has it been repeated?

III **Life Skills**

Why do people in cities normally face shortage of time? Is all the work they are busy doing productive? Discuss with your partner.

IV **Values**

- A. Point out the beauties of nature that can be a source of pleasure for man in his day to day life.
- B. Whenever the poet sees the streams in broad daylight, he is reminded of the skies at night. Explain why. How do you feel when you see—
 1. squirrels dancing and running.
 2. ants moving in a line.
 3. the sky full of stars.
 4. birds flying in the sky.
 5. sunshine on water ripples.

V **Writing Skills**

Last summer you went to 'Jim Corbett National Park' with your friends. You enjoyed watching animals in their natural habitat. Write a letter to your brother describing to him the satisfaction you derived from watching them.

'No time to see, when woods we pass'

In the above extract, the sound /w/ occurs repeatedly. This occurrence of the same sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words is called **alliteration**. The use of alliteration gives a musical effect to the poem. Read the poem and find out two other examples of alliteration.

Given below is an amusing example of alliteration (in the form of a tongue twister). Try to speak it aloud three times without stopping.

“Betty bought some butter but the butter was bitter, so Betty
bought some better butter to make the bitter butter better.”

About the Author

W.H. Davies was an English poet born in a poor family in Wales. He has written mostly about nature or life on the road. He writes in a natural, simple, earthy style. His poem 'Leisure' depicts the predicament of the modern man who has gained the whole world but lost his own soul.

