

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 10: THE BANYAN TREE



THE BANYAN TREE

~Summary~

-by Ruskin bond

"**The Banyan Tree**" is a story about what the author saw, as a young boy. The author was staying at his grandfather's house. There was a big banyan tree in the yard.

The boy was fond of reading books. So, he created a **banyan tree library**, and he collected books like **Treasure Island**, **Huckleberry Finn** and **The Story of Dr Dolittle**. The boy became friends with a **squirrel**. He also fed it cakes and biscuits.

When the spring season began, the banyan tree started to produce small **red figs**. The tree branches were filled with different kinds of birds like **red-bottomed bulbul**, **parrots**, **myna**, and **crows**. All these birds used to fight with each other on the **branches**. The sounds that all these birds made, made the banyan tree the **noisiest** place in the garden.

The banyan tree story was about the fight of a cobra and a mongoose. Both animals are **powerful opponents**. The three spectators in the yard were, the **author** (boy), a **myna** and a **wild crow**. There was a fight between the cobra and the mongoose.



The fight was won by the mongoose

The cobra and the mongoose made **three attempts** to kill each other. In the third attempt, the mongoose was **dodging** the snake. Suddenly the **crow** flew down to attack the **snake**. Sadly, the crow was bitten by the snake, and it fell dead on the ground.

Still, myna was sitting on the **cactus** and watching the fight. After fighting for a long time, the cobra became **tired and weak**. The mongoose caught the cobra by its mouth and took it into the bushes in the yard. The myna flew down **bravely** and looked into the **bushes**. Then, she flew away with a **congratulatory squeal**. Finally, the fight was won by the mongoose.

~Conclusion~

Despite the Cobra being poisonous and hence more dangerous, the Mongoose won. This proves that it is one's wits and pace that help them to survive. The snake and the mongoose are a classic example of how wisdom and cleverness surpass physical strength. The Crow's death teaches us that the consequences of interfering in someone else's fight can be fatal.

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NCERT SOLUTIONS

Questions (Page No. 131-133)

(Working with the Text)

Question 1. Complete the following sentences.

- a. The old banyan tree “did not belong” to grandfather, but only to the boy, because

- b. 2. The small gray squirrel became friendly when -----

- c. 3. When the boy started to bring him pieces of cake and biscuit, the squirrel -----

- d. 4. In the spring, the banyan tree -----, and -----
----- would come there.
- e. 5. The banyan tree served the boy as a -----

- f. 6. The young boy spent his afternoons in the tree -----

Answer:

- a. The old banyan tree “did not belong” to grandfather, but only to the boy, because **his grandfather was sixty-five years old, who could no longer climb it.**
- b. The small gray squirrel became friendly **when he found that the boy did not arm himself with catapult or air gun.**
- c. When the boy started to bring him pieces of cake and biscuit, the squirrel **grew quite bold and was soon taking morsels from his hand.**
- d. In the spring, the banyan tree **was full of small red figs**, and **birds of all kinds** would come there.
- e. The banyan tree served the boy as a **library where he had made a crude platform to sit and read books.**
- f. The young boy spent his afternoons in the tree **when it was not too hot, leaning against it and reading story books.**

Question 2. Answer the following questions.

i. "It was to be a battle of champions." (8)

a. What qualities did the two champions have? Pick out words and phrases from the paragraph above this line in the text and write them down.

Mongoose	Cobra
(a)	(a)
(b)	(b)
(c)	(c)

b. What did the cobra and the mongoose do, to show their readiness for the fight?

ii. Who were the other two spectators? What did they do? (Did they watch, or did they join in the fight?) (10)

iii. Read the descriptions below of what the snake did and what the mongoose did. Arrange their actions in the proper order. (11, 16)

(i) ceased to struggle	• grabbed the snake by the snout
(ii) tried to mesmerise the mongoose	• dragged the snake into the bushes
(iii) coiled itself around the mongoose	• darted away and bit the cobra on the back
(iv) struck the crow	• pretended to attack the cobra on one side
(v) struck again and missed	• refused to look into the snake's eyes
(vi) struck on the side that the mongoose pretended to attack	• sprang aside, jumped in and bit

iv.

a. What happened to the crow in the end? (16)

b. What did the myna do finally? (17)

Answer:

i.

a.

Mongoose	Cobra
(a) superb fighter	(a) skilful
(b) clever	(b) experienced fighter
(c) aggressive	(c) swift

b. To show the readiness for their fight, the cobra hissed defiance with his forked tongue darting in and out, he raised three of his six feet off the ground and spread his broad, spectacled hood. On the other hand, the mongoose bushed his tail and the long hair on his spine stood up.

ii. The other two spectators were a myna and a jungle crow. They settled on the cactus to watch the outcome. They were not content only to watch the fight, they took part in the proceedings and hurled themselves at the cobra.

iii.

Snake	Mongoose
(ii) tried to mesmerize the mongoose	refused to look into the snake's eyes
(vi) struck on the side that the mongoose pretended to attack	pretended to attack the cobra on one side
(v) struck again and missed	sprang aside, jumped in and bit
(iv) struck the crow	darted away and bit the cobra on the back
(iii) coiled itself around the mongoose	grabbed the snake by the snout
(i) ceased to struggle	dragged the snake into the bushes

iv.

- a. Towards the end of the fight, the crow flung nearly twenty feet across the garden as the cobra whipped his head back and struck with great force. His snout thudded against the crow's body and it fluttered about for a while, then it lay still and dead.
- b. The myna dropped cautiously to the ground, hopped about, peered into the bushes from a safe distance and then with a shrill cry of congratulation flew away.

Questions (Page No. 133-135)

(Working with language)

Question 1.

- a. The word 'round' usually means a kind of shape. What is its meaning in the story?
- b. Find five words in the following paragraph, which are generally associated with trees. But here, they have been used differently. Underline the words.

Hari leaves for work at nine every morning. He works in the local branch of the firm of which his uncle is the owner. Hari's success is really the fruit of his own labour. He is happy, but he has a small problem. The root cause of his problem is a stray dog near his office. The dog welcomes Hari with a loud bark every day.

Answer:

- a. The word 'round' in the story denotes the different courses of the fight that took place between the snake and the mongoose.
- b. Hari **leaves** for work at nine every morning. He works in the local **branch** of the firm of which his uncle is the owner. Hari's success is really the **fruit** of his own labour. He is happy, but he has a small problem. The **root** cause of his problem is a stray dog near his office. The dog welcomes Hari with a loud **bark** every day.

Question 2. The words in the box are all words that describe movement. Use them to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

dived	gliding	sprang	darting
whipped...back		delving	

- a. When he began to trust me, the squirrel began ————— into my pockets for morsels of cake.
- b. I saw a cobra ————— out of a clump of cactus.
- c. The snake hissed, his forked tongue ————— in and out.
- d. When the cobra tried to bite it, the mongoose ————— aside.

- e. The snake ————— his head ————— to strike at the crow.
- f. The birds ————— at the snake.

Answer:

- a. When he began to trust me, the squirrel began **delving** into my pockets for morsels of cake.
- b. I saw a cobra **gliding** out of a clump of cactus.
- c. The snake hissed, his forked tongue **darting** in and out.
- d. When the cobra tried to bite it, the mongoose **sprang** aside.
- e. The snake **whipped** his head **back** to strike at the crow.
- f. The birds **dived** at the snake.

Question 3. Find words in the story, which show things striking violently against each other.

- a. The cobra struck the crow, his snout th — — — ing against its body. (15)
- b. The crow and the myna c — ll — — — in mid-air. (13)
- c. The birds dived at the snake, but b — — — d into each other instead. (14)

Answer:

- a. The cobra struck the crow, his snout **thudding** against its body.
- b. The crow and the myna **collided** in mid-air.
- c. The birds dived at the snake, but **bumped** into each other instead.

Question 4. Look at these sentences.

- In the spring, birds of all kinds *would* flock into the banyan tree's branches.
- I *would* spend the afternoons there.

'Would' tells us what the author *used to do*, or what *used to happen*.

- Grandfather, at sixty-five, *could* no longer climb the banyan tree.
- I *could* hide myself in its branches.
- I *could* look down through the leaves at the world below.
- I *could* read there.

'Could' tells us what the author was *usually able to do*, or grandfather is *now not able to do*.

Choose would and could to replace the italicised words in the following sentences.

Grandfather says, in the old days,

- elephants were able to fly in the sky, like clouds. They were also able to change their shapes. They used to fly behind clouds and frighten them. People used to look up at the sky in wonder.
- because there was no electricity, he used to get up with the sun, and he used to go to bed with the sun, like the birds.
- like the owl, he was able to see quite well in the dark. He was able to tell who was coming by listening to their footsteps.

Answer:

- elephants **could** fly in the sky, like **clouds**. They could also change their shapes. They **would** fly behind clouds and frighten them. People **would** look up at the sky in wonder.
- because there was no electricity, he **would** get up with the sun, and he **would** go to bed with the sun, like the birds.
- like the owl, he **could** see quite well in the dark. He **could** tell who was coming by listening to their footsteps.

Questions (Page No. 135-137)

(Speaking)

Question 1.

Look at these sentences.

- The tree was older than Grandfather.
- Grandfather was sixty-five years old.

How old was the tree? Can you guess?

- The tree was as old as Dehra Dun itself.

Suppose Dehra Dun is 300 years old. How old is the tree?

- Probably, the tree was 300 years old too.

When two things are the same in some way, we use as...as.

Here is another set of examples.

- Mr Sinha is 160 centimetres tall.
- Mr Gupta is 180 centimetres tall.
- Mrs Gupta is 160 centimetres tall
- Mrs Gupta is as tall as Mr Sinha.

Use the words in the box to speak about the people and the things below, using as...as or -er than

tall – taller	cold – colder	hot – hotter
strong – stronger	short – shorter	

(Notice that in the word 'hot', the letter 't' is doubled when -er is added.)

1. Heights



Zeba (155cm)



Ruby (150cm)



Rani (155cm)

2. Weight Lifters



Vijay (50kg)



Akshay (50kg)



Anwar (65kg)

3. City Temperatures

Shimla (6°)Gangtok (6°)Srinagar (2°)

4. Lengths

Romi's pencil
(3 inches long)Mona's pencil
(5 inches long)Raja's pencil
(3 inches long)

5. City Temperatures

Delhi (43°)Chennai (39°)Nagpur (43°)

Answer:

i.

- Zeba is as tall as Rani.
- Zeba is taller than Ruby.
- Rani is taller than Ruby.
- Ruby is shorter than Rani as well as Zeba.

i.

- Vijay is as strong as Akshay.
- Anwar is stronger than Akshay as well as Vijay.
- Neither Akshay nor Vijay is as strong as Anwar.

i.

- a. Shimla is as cold as Gangtok.
- b. Srinagar is colder than Shimla and Gangtok.
- c. Neither Gangtok nor Shimla is as cold as Srinagar.

i.

- a. Romi's pencil is as long as Raja's pencil.
- b. Mona's pencil is longer than Romi's pencil and Raja's pencil.
- c. Neither Romi's pencil or Raja's pencil is as long as Mona's pencil.

i.

- a. Delhi is as hot as Nagpur.
- b. Chennai is not as hot as Delhi or Nagpur.
- c. Delhi is hotter than Chennai.
- d. Nagpur is hotter than Chennai.

Questions (Page No. 138) (Writing)

Question 1. 'My Favourite Place'

Read again the paragraphs of the story in which the author describes the banyan tree, and what he used to do there. Is there a place in your house, or in your grandparents' or uncles' or aunts' houses, that you specially like? Write a short paragraph about it, saying

- where it is
- what you do there
- why you like it

You may instead write about a place you dislike or are afraid of.

Answer:

My favourite place in my house is the balcony that is attached to my bedroom. There is a huge window in my room that overlooks the garden outside. I usually stand in the balcony and enjoy the beautiful view of the garden. Every morning sunshine peeps through my window and lightens up my room. Sometimes, a cool breeze blows inside my room making it airy. I have a desk next to my window and I sit and do my homework and lessons there. I simply love my room, from where I can enjoy the beauty of nature every single day.

(Note: For the second part of the question, students can write about their personal experience).