

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 6: I WANT SOMETHING IN A CAGE



I WANT SOMETHING IN A CAGE

~Summary~

-by L.E. Greeve

"I Want Something in a Cage" is written by L.E. Greeve. The lesson is about a **pet shop owner** named **Mr Purcell**, and he is the **protagonist** of the lesson. The lesson opens with Mr Purcell **experiencing** some strange events following the **arrival of a strange visitor** to his shop. He **purchased two doves** and left the shop. When the customer left the shop, there **remained a musty** smell of an **abandoned, haunted house**. Later the narrator introduced the **character and appearance** of **Mr Purcell** to his readers. Mr Purcell is a **small fussy man**. He had a **melon-shaped tummy**. He wore **spectacles** in his eyes. His large glasses gave him the **impression** of a **wise and genial owl**.

Mr Purcell used to open his pet shop every day. He'd then take a seat behind the corner on a **high stool**. The next thing he did was open the **morning newspaper** and read the **news for the day**. He would show varied **expressions** on his face while he was **reading the newspaper**. When he spotted a **heated argument** in the newspaper, he would occasionally frown and **raise** his **eyebrows**. Also, he would not leave even a single word from the newspaper. In the meantime, his shop's pets, such as **birds, monkeys, cats, and dogs**, would make funny noises and wander around inside the gilded cages. The pets within the cages appeared to be **terrified** and **desired** to be let out. On the other hand, the customers who visited the shop would admire the pets and say that the pets inside the cages looked **damn cute**. While hearing it, Mr Purcell would **smile, rub his hands** and **nod** at the **customers**.

On a fine morning, Mr Purcell opened his pet shop like every other day. The day was very **hard**. The wintry air blew through the **glass window**. The **climate** outside the city was very **drastic**. While proceeding about his everyday routine, such as reading the newspaper, he noted that the **frosty weather** in the city was mentioned. When the customers enter Mr Purcell's shop, the bell over the door would jingle to show their arrival. But on that fine **morning**, he recalled that the doorbell failed to ring, and when he raised his head, he saw a strange man standing inside.

From the first instant, Mr Purcell had the instinct that the man hated him. On the other side, it was his responsibility to **welcome the customers**. So he greeted the **strange man**. But he never looked at him and instead focused on the **creatures in his shop**. Mr Purcell immediately said, "**How can I help you?**" After that, the man became aware of his presence and looked closely at him. Later the man said he needed something in a cage. Mr Purcell was unsure of what he was **attempting** to convey. After thinking for a while, Mr Purcell said that he had small white rats. When the man heard that, he quickly said, "**No.**"

Later the man explained that he needed something that could fly. After hearing the man's talk, Mr Purcell understood he was talking about birds. Mr Purcell exclaimed, "**A bird!**" Later the strange man looked at a suspended cage and pointed his finger at it. It was a pair of snowy white doves. The man inquired as to how much it would cost. Mr Purcell immediately stated that it would cost five-fifty **dollars**. The man was upset when he heard that. He said that he required a pair of doves and that he only had five dollars. Later Mr Purcell did a quick **mental calculation** about the profit he was going to earn, and he said that he would sell it for five dollars. Then, the man kept the five dollars on the counter.

Mr Purcell then stood on **tiptoe** and handed the **caged bird** to the man. He stared at the lovely pair of doves. He afterwards inquired of the storekeeper whether he knew how long it took for him to earn the five dollars. Mr Purcell wished he could send him out, but he couldn't because he was a customer. As a result, he replied, "**How long does it take to earn this amount?**" The man immediately responded that it took him ten years to earn five dollars. He earned fifty cents a year. He worked hard in **prison** to make this amount. After hearing that, Mr Purcell **wiped** the **sweat** from his **brows**. Later, he considered telling him how to take care of the **doves**. On the other hand, the man did not listen to him.

The man walked out of the store. Mr Purcell immediately moved **closer to the window** and **observed the man's activity**. The man came to a **halt** and opened the **gilded cage**. Then he drew out the birds, and they started to fly away from the cage one by one. He felt happy while seeing the birds flying in the wintry air. Later, he dropped the cage and walked away. On seeing the **behaviour** of the man, Mr Purcell was confused and sad. He was sad because he had sold the pair of doves for five dollars, and also, the behaviour of the man led him to feel **vaguely insulted**.

~Conclusion~

Because Mr Purcell is the owner of a pet shop, he is accustomed to keeping the animals caged. This is why, he fails to understand the man's unusual gesture of freeing the birds. To the strange customer, freeing two creatures from captivity is an act of liberation. He has himself lived in captivity for ten long years and he values freedom. This explains his unusual demand of wanting something in a cage and then setting it free.

NCERT SOLUTIONS**Questions (Page No. 38-39)**
(Comprehension Check - I)

Question 1. Write 'True' or 'False' against each of following statements.

- a. Mr Purcell sold birds, cats, dogs and monkeys.
- b. He was very concerned about the well-being of the birds and animals in his shop.
- c. He was impressed by the customer who bought the two doves.
- d. He was a successful shop owner, though insensitive and cold as a person.

Answer:

- a. True
- b. False
- c. False
- d. True

Question 2. Why is Mr Purcell compared to an owl?

Answer: Mr Purcell is compared to an owl because of the large glasses which magnified his eyes like an owl's eyes.

Question 3. From the third paragraph pick out

- a. words associated with cries of birds,
- b. words associated with noise,
- c. words suggestive of confusion and fear.

Answer:

- a. words associated with cries of birds: whispered, squeal, cheeps, twitter, squeaks
- b. words associated with noise: rustling, stir, scampered
- c. words suggestive of confusion and fear: blindly seeking, bewildered

Question 4. "...Mr Purcell heard it no more than he would have heard the monotonous ticking of a familiar clock." (Read para beginning with "It was a rough day...")

- a. What does 'it' refer to?
- b. Why does Mr Purcell not hear 'it' clearly?

Answer:

- a. 'It' refers to the noise produced by the birds around him.
- b. Mr Purcell doesn't hear 'it' clearly because he was so used to hearing those sounds that it was normal to him like a clock's ticking.

Questions (Page No. 42) (Comprehension Check - II)

Question 1. Do you think the atmosphere of Mr Purcell's shop was cheerful or depressing? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer: I think the atmosphere of Mr Purcell's shop was depressing. It was lifeless. It was full of the strange sounds made by the birds chirping and moving. Mr Purcell was used to the sound but the customers used to wonder how he put up with such disturbing noises.

Question 2. Describe the stranger who came to the pet shop. What did he want?

Answer: The stranger who came to the shop was wearing a cheap new suit. He was a prisoner earlier. He came to Mr Purcell's shop and asked for "something in a cage". He wasn't clear about what he exactly wanted but said it should have wings and should be in a cage.

Question 3.

- a. The man insisted on buying the doves because he was fond of birds. Do you agree?
- b. How had he earned the five dollars he had?

Answer:

- a. No, the man insisted on buying the doves not because he was fond of birds. He just wanted birds in a cage.
- b. He had earned five dollars he had in a prison where he had to work very hard. He used to get only 50 cents per year.

Question 4. Was the customer interested in the care and feeding of the doves he had bought? If not, why not?

Answer: No, the customer was not interested in the care and feeding of the doves he had bought because he did not want to actually keep them as pets. He did not even listen to what Mr Purcell was saying about feeding the doves. He spent his hard-earned money on the doves just to set them free from their cages.

Questions (Page No. 42) (Exercise)

Discuss the following topics in groups.

Question 1. Why, in your opinion, did the man set the doves free?

Answer: The man set the doves free because being a prisoner earlier, he understood what it feels like to be caged. He knew the value of freedom. He spent all his 10 years' hard-earned money on buying two doves and then he set them free into the sky.

Question 2. Why did it make Mr Purcell feel "vaguely insulted"?

Answer: It made Mr Purcell feel “vaguely insulted” because he reduced the price of the doves only because he could still earn profit whereas the stranger, who only had that money, spent it all just to set the two birds free from the cage.

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