

# ENGLISH

CHAPTER 2: "WE'RE NOT AFRAID TO DIE...IF WE CAN ALL BE TOGETHER"



# "WE'RE NOT AFRAID TO DIE...IF WE CAN ALL BE TOGETHER".

~Summary~

**-by Gordon Cook and Alan East**

## The Voyage Begins

In July 1976, the narrator, a 37-year-old businessman, his wife Mary, 6 year old son Jonathan and 7 year old daughter Suzanne started their sea voyage from Plymouth, England. They wished to go round-the-world on a long sea journey just as Captain James Cook had done 200 years earlier. The narrator and his wife had spent 16 years preparing for the round-the-world voyage and improving their marine skills. Their boat Wave walker was a 23 metre, 30-ton boat that was professionally built and they had tested it in the roughest weather they could find.

The first part of their planned three-year, 105000 kilometre journey passed pleasantly as they sailed down the West Coast of Africa to Cape Town. Then they took two crewmen--the American Larry Vigil and the Swiss Herb Seigler--before heading east from Cape Town, to help them tackle one of the world's roughest seas, the southern Indian Ocean.

## The Problems Begin During the Voyage

On the second day out of Cape Town, they encountered strong winds and high waves. The windstorms continued for the next few weeks. The size of the waves was upto 15 metres. On December 25, they were 3500 kilometres east of Cape Town, but the weather was very bad. Despite the bad weather, they celebrated Christmas Day wonderfully. New Year's Day saw no improvement in the weather and it worsened with the passing of time.

### "We're Not Afraid to Die...if We Can All Be Together"

On 2nd January, the waves were gigantic. They were sailing with a small storm jib, but still they were going very fast. The boat moved to the top of each wave but the gigantic waves and dangerous wind continued to terrorise them. To minimise the damage, they dropped the storm jib and lashed a heavy rope in a loop across the stern. Then they fastened everything, went through their life-raft drill, attached lifelines and put on oilskins and life jackets and prepared themselves for the worst case scenario.

## Disaster Strikes

The first indication of impending disaster came at about 6 pm, with an ominous silence. The wind stopped and the sky immediately grew dark. Then a loud roaring sound was heard. The narrator thought that he saw a cloud coming towards them. With horror, he realised it was not a cloud

but the biggest wave that he had ever seen. It appeared vertical and double the height of all other waves.

The wave hit the boat and a tremendous explosion shook the deck. Water poured into the boat. The narrator's head smashed against the steering wheel of the boat and before he knew it, he was thrown into the sea. He thought that he was going to die but suddenly his head popped out of the water. He saw that the boat had almost capsized. Suddenly, a wave hurled it upright and the narrator was tossed onto the boat. His left ribs were cracked; his mouth was filled with blood and some teeth were broken. Somehow he managed to find the wheel, lined up the stern for the next wave and hung on.

### Frantic Survival Attempts

The narrator knew that the boat was flooding with water, but he dared not abandon the wheel to investigate. Suddenly, Mary came and informed him that the boat was sinking as water was pouring in. He handed the wheel to her and crawled towards the hatch. Larry and Herb pumped the water out like madmen. The wooden beams had broken. The whole starboard side had bulged inwards. Clothes, crockery, charts, tins and toys moved around noisily in water. The boat had been damaged. He somehow managed to reach the children. Sue had a big bump on her head to which he did not pay much attention. He found a hammer, screws and canvas. Somehow he managed to stretch the canvas and secure waterproof hatch covers across the gaping holes. Some water continued to come in but most of it could be prevented from entering the boat. But this was not the end of their troubles.

### Damaged and Lost Equipment

The handpumps started jamming with the trash floating around the cabins. Soon their electric pump got short-circuited and the water rose threateningly.

He found that their two spare handpumps had been pulled away by currents along with the forestay sail, the jib, the lifeboats and the main anchor.

He managed to find another electric pump to drain out the water. The night was an endless, bitterly cold routine of pumping, steering and working the radio. However, there was no response to their Mayday calls as they were in a remote corner of the world. Sue's head had swollen alarmingly. She had two black eyes and a deep cut on her arm. She didn't tell the narrator more of her injuries as she didn't want to worry him when he was trying to save them all.

## Pinpricks in the Vast Ocean

On the morning of January 3, the pumps had reduced the amount of water on board. Each of them took rest for two hours by turns. They had survived for 15 hours since the wave hit the Wave walker, but the boat was not strong enough to take them to Australia.

The narrator knew that the boat wouldn't hold together long enough. He checked his charts and calculated that the only one hope for them was if they could reach Ile Amsterdam, a French scientific base, one of the two pinpricks in the vast ocean. Mary found some corned beef and cracker biscuits and they ate their first meal in almost two days.

However, their relief was short-lived. The weather again started deteriorating and by the dawn on 5th January, their situation was again desperate.

## "We aren't Afraid to Dying... if We can all be Together"

The narrator went to comfort the children. He tried to assure them that they were going to make it. Jon said that they were not afraid of dying if they can all be together. This gave the narrator hope and a reason to fight the sea. He tried his best to protect the weakened starboard side of the boat. However, later in the evening, as more water came into the boat, they felt defeated again. On 6th January, the weather improved. The narrator again tried to calculate their position. While he was at work, Sue came to him and gave him a card. She had drawn caricatures of Mary and the narrator.

The card said that she loved them both and hoped for the best. The narrator was filled with optimism. Somehow, they had to make it.

## The Most Beautiful Island in the World!

The narrator made several calculations using a spare compass, made some adjustments and asked Larry to steer a course of 185 degrees. He said that, if they were lucky, they would see the island at about 5 pm. Dejected, he went down to his bunk and fell asleep.

It was about 6 pm when he woke up. He thought that they must have missed the island. Just then, Jon and Sue came to him and gave him a hug because he was the "best daddy in the world". The narrator was confused. Sue announced that the island was just in front of them. He rushed out to the deck and saw the most beautiful island in the world! It was Ile Amsterdam, a piece of volcanic rock with little vegetation.

When his feet touched land the next day, he thought of the cheerfulness and optimism of all the people on the boat which made them pass through the worst stress.

### Conclusion of "We're not afraid to die...if we can all be together"

To sum up, we are not afraid to die if we can all be together summary, we can say the collective power of unity and the never-failing confidence of the sailors made it possible for them to survive and come out from the jaws of death.

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## NCERT SOLUTIONS

### Questions (Page No. 18)

### (Understanding The Text)

Question 1. List the steps taken by the captain

- i. to protect the ship when rough weather began.
- ii. to check the flooding of the water in the ship.

Answer:

- i. To protect the ship when rough weather began, the captain planned to slow the ship down. The storm jib was dropped and the mooring rope which was heavy was lashed in a loop over the stem. Everything was double fastened and went through the life-raft drill.
- ii. Herb and Larry started to pump the water out. The canvas was stretched by the captain and the waterproof hatch covers were secured across the gaping holes. When the electric pump short circuited and two hand pumps blocked, he noticed another electric pump, started it by connecting it to an earth pipe.

Question 2. Describe the mental condition of the voyagers on 4 and 5 January.

Answer: On 4 January, after pumping out water continuously for 36 hours, the voyagers felt relieved. They consumed their first meal in two days. Their break was short lived. On 5 January, they faced a dangerous situation. The fear of death appeared huge and they underwent great mental stress.

Question 3. Describe the shifts in the narration of the events as indicated in the three sections of the text. Give a subtitle to each section.

Answer: The first section explains a peaceful journey from Plymouth in England to 3500 km east of Cape Town in Africa. The narrator is fully confident and relaxed. They faced huge waves as the weather deteriorated. To save themselves, they took precautionary measures and struggled with the disaster. The narration becomes grim, but exudes the confidence, fighting spirit and strong will power. The Wave walker rode out of the storm by 6 January morning and by evening they sighted the Ile Amsterdam Island. Now the narrator is relaxed. Relief, joy and confidence are apparent.

### Questions (Page No. 18)



## (Talking About The Text)

Discuss the following questions with your partner.

Question 1. What difference did you notice between the reaction of the adults and the children when faced with danger?

Answer: There are lots of differences among the way in which the children and adults reacted when faced with danger. Stress owing to the circumstances was felt by the adults who later prepared themselves to face it. When the rough weather began, enough precautions were taken to protect the ship. Everyone was equipped with water proof clothes, lifelines and life jackets. Herb and Larry worked optimistically and cheerfully for three continuous days to pump the water out from the ship. The narrator at the wheel was replaced by Mary who steered the ship when the deck was smashed. She served them meals after a struggle of two days against all odds. As a captain, the narrator performed his role with determination, courage, responsibility and resourcefulness. He undertook the repair work by providing apparatus and directions which were required to protect the ship. He helped in steering the ship towards the island. The children suffered patiently and silently. Sue, with her troubles, did not bother her father. Jon behaved courageously and was not scared to die if everyone perished together.

Question 2. How does the story suggest that optimism helps to endure "the direst stress"?

Answer: The story suggests that optimism helps to endure "the direst stress". The behaviour of four adults throughout the crisis bears it out. Herb Seigler and Larry Vigil were the two crewmen. As the deck was smashed by the huge waves, water entered the ship from the openings and holes. From the evening of 2 January, Herb and Larry started to pump out water. They worked feverishly, excitedly and continuously for about 36 hours. As a result of pumping continuously, they reached the last few centimeters of water on 4 January. They stayed optimistic and cheerful while facing dangerous situations. The narrator did not lose his presence of mind, hope or courage while facing problems. He was not worried about the equipment loss and used whatever was present there. His practical knowledge and self-confidence helped them to steer out of the storm and reach the Ile Amsterdam Island. In those difficult hours, Mary remained at the wheel. She did not lose courage or hope either.

Question 3. What lessons do we learn from such hazardous experiences when we are face-to-face with death?

Answer: Hazardous experiences expose us face to face with death as they impart a few crucial lessons of conduct. Our life is not always a bed of roses. We must respond to risks and danger with fortitude and patience. The real test of character is adversity. The purity of gold is decided

by putting it on fire. So, hazardous experiences of life bring the best out of us. Before death, cowards die many times. Negative feelings like fear lead to inactivity and abject surrender to situations. Such soldiers or sailors lose the war against the difficulties in life. On the other hand, people with courage, self-confidence, presence of mind and resourcefulness face the dangers bravely and out of all disasters.

Their caring and sharing attitude inspires others to face difficult situations boldly and steer through them.

Question 4. Why do you think people undertake such adventurous expeditions in spite of the risks involved?

Answer: Human beings are adventurous by nature. Higher the risk, more the thrill. The thrill of exploring lands, discovering beauty and wealth which lies hidden in far off lands inspires brave people to stake their life to rest and repose. Maybe they value one hour of glory rather than an uneventful long life of inactivity and sloth. At times, adventures are risky and prove deadly. The failure of a few people does not discourage true lovers of adventure. They learn lessons from errors and shortcomings of others and make new attempts with a better zeal. An adventurous expedition lies in adapting the situations and overcoming the problems. The victory of an adventurous expedition brings wealth, fame and name. History books are full with accounts of well-known explorers such as Vasco da Gama, Columbus, Captain Scott and Captain Hook.

### Questions (Page No. 18-19) (Thinking About Language)

Question 1. We have come across words like 'gale' and 'storm' in the account. Here are two more words for 'storm': typhoon, cyclone. How many words does your language have for 'storm'?

Answer: Our language has the following words for 'storm':

Toofan, Aandhi, Chakravat, Jhanjavat

Question 2. Here are the terms for different kinds of vessels: yacht, boat, canoe, ship, steamer, schooner. Think of similar terms in your language.

Answer: Similar terms in my language for vessels which are used to travel on water are –

Nava, Nauka, Jahaj, Pot

Question 3. 'Catamaran' is a kind of a boat. Do you know which Indian language this word is derived from? Check the dictionary.



Answer: 'Catamaran' is a word derived from Tamil which means 'tied wood'. It is a boat or yacht containing twin hulls in parallel. It is defined as 'a fast sailing boat with two hulls' in the dictionary.

Question 4. Have you heard any boatmen's songs? What kind of emotions do these songs usually express?

Answer: The boatmen's songs invite other sailors to awaken, arise and come to the sea to explore its wealth. These are inspirational songs that provide moral support to the disappointed and sad boatmen.

### Questions (Page No. 19) (Working With Words)

Question 1. The following words used in the text as ship terminology are also commonly used in another sense. In what contexts would you use the other meaning?

knot

stern

boom

hatch

anchor

Answer:

1. Knot

- in a rope/string – a joint which is made by tying two ends or pieces of string or rope etc. For example – to tie a knot.
- of hair – Twisting the hair into a round shape at the back of the head. For example – Ria tied her hair in a loose knot.
- in wood – a round hard spot in wood where once a branch was present.
- Group of people – a small group of people standing together. For example – Little knots of children gathered at the school gate.
- in muscles – a hard, tight feeling in the stomach or throat which are caused by anger, nerves etc.

2. Stern

- I felt the knot of fear in his throat, often disapproving and serious expecting others to obey you. For example – His voice was stern.

b. Difficult and serious for example – We faced stern opposition.

### 3. Boom

a. In Economy/ Business – an increase in economic activity or trade, a period of success and wealth. For example – a boom in the sales of plots.

b. Popular period – a time period during which a sport or music suddenly became popular and successful. For example – The way to satisfy the boom of cricket is to provide more playgrounds.

c. A deep loud sound. For example – the distant boom of the horn.

d. In harbour/ river – A floating barrier which is placed in the harbour entrance to prevent ships from going out or coming in.

e. In Microphone – A long pole which carries a microphone.

### 4. Hatch

a. an opening in the wall between the dining room and a kitchen through which food is passed. For example – a serving hatch.

b. a door in a spacecraft or an aircraft.

c. an escape hatch – a door in a ceiling or floor or an opening. For example – a hatch to the attic.

d. When a young fish, bird or insect comes out of the egg.

e. to create an idea of a plan in secret, a thing or a person who gives a safety feeling. For example – a person in the family who can be relied on for security, stability or support.

### 5. Anchor

a. to fix something in a position firmly so that it cannot move. For example – Ensure that the apparatus is anchored securely.

b. to base something on something else firmly. For example – Prem's novels are anchored in the life of humans.

c. A person who reports, reads the news on television or radio. For example – The evening news was anchored by Rihana for five years.

Question 2. The following three compound words end in -ship. What does each of them mean?

airship

flagship

lightship

Answer:

1. Airship – A large aircraft that has no wings, which is filled with gas that is driven by engines and lighter than air.
2. Flagship –
  - i. In the navy, the main ship among the fleet of ships.
  - ii. The important service, product or building owned or produced by an organization. For example, the company is opening a new flagship store in Germany.
3. Lightship – A small ship which stays in a particular place at sea and has a powerful light to guide or warn other ships.

Question 3. The following are the meanings listed in the dictionary against the phrase 'take on'. In which meaning is it used in the third paragraph of the account:

take on sth: to begin to have a particular quality or appearance; to

assume sth

take sb on: to employ sb; to engage sb

to accept sb as one's opponent in a game, contest or conflict

take sb/sth on: to decide to do sth; to allow sth/sb to enter

e.g. a bus, plane or ship; to take sth/sb on board

Answer:

In the third para of the chapter, 'take on' is made use of in the meaning of 'take sb on' that is to engage sb; to employ sb

Some of the words are – We took on two crewmen .... To help us .....

## Questions (Page No. 19-20)

## (Things To Do)

Question 1. Given on the next page is a picture of a yacht. Label the parts of the yacht using the terms given in the box.

bow	cabin	rudder	cockpit
stern	boom	mainsail	mast

Answer:

