

ENGLISH

CHAPTER 9: THE ACCIDENTAL TOURIST



THE ACCIDENTAL TOURIST

~Summary~

-by Bill Bryson

Forgetfulness of the Author

The narrator of the story states that he is not at all good at living in the real world. He wonders at how other people are able to do the things so easily which he is unable to perform. He has ended up being at the wrong place while searching for the washroom at a cinema or forgotten the number of his room several times when staying at a hotel.

Incident on a Big Trip with Family

Once the narrator and his family went to England on Easter. At the time of check-in at the airport, he remembered that he was a member of the airlines frequent flyer programme. When he tried to take his membership card out from his bag, he found that the zip of his handbag was jammed. He pulled the zip, harder and harder but it did not open. Finally, it opened and in the process, all the contents (newspaper cuttings, passport, magazines, etc) of the bag got spread everywhere on the floor in a very large area. He also injured his finger badly while opening the zip.

Incidents in the Aeroplane

The narrator always had mishappenings while travelling on an aeroplane. Once, he leaned to tie a shoelace and at the same time the passenger sitting ahead of him turned back his chair. Due to this, he got stuck in a miserable position and escaped from it with great difficulty. At another instance, he dropped soft drink twice on a lady sitting beside him. The lady looked at him with a stunned expression.

Narrator's Worst Experience on a Flight

Once, the narrator was writing his thoughts in a notebook on a flight. He was also sucking the other end of his pen from time to time. He started talking to an attractive lady seated on the next seat. When he went to the washroom, he saw that the pen had leaked and his mouth, chin, tongue, teeth and gums had got coloured navy blue.

Precautions Taken by his Wife

Knowing her husband's strange habits, the narrator's wife directs her children to help their father whenever they are travelling together. The narrator also does not eat or drink when travelling alone and sits quietly on his hands to keep them from flying mischievously.

Reason for not Gathering Flyer's Miles

The narrator used to fly around 100,000 miles a year but he hardly gathered over 200 air miles from 23 air lines. This was because he forgot to ask for the air miles or the airline staff did not record his airmiles.

Once while travelling to Australia, he hoped to get a lot of air miles but the clerk told him that he was not entitled. The ticket was in the name of B Bryson and card was having name W Bryson. Thus, he didn't get his air miles and wasn't able to fly to Bali first class.

Conclusion of The Accidental Tourist

The chapter – The Accidental Tourist teaches students that it is important to be organised and systematic in our lives, especially while travelling. We should be well-prepared otherwise we are likely to encounter unexpected mishaps like the author.

NCERT SOLUTIONS

Questions (Page No. 60)

(Think about it)

Question 1. Bill Bryson says, "I am, in short, easily confused." What examples has he given to justify this?

Answer: Bill Bryson says, "I am, in short, easily confused." He gives some examples to justify the said statement. He would go looking for the lavatory in a cinema, for instance, and end up standing in an alley on the wrong side of a selflocking door. He tells that his particular specialty was returning to hotel desks two or three times a day and asking what his room number was.

Question 2. What happens when the zip on his carry-on bag gives way?

Answer: The side of the bag flew open and everything within was extravagantly ejected over-newspaper cuttings and other loose papers, a 14- ounce tin of pipe tobacco, magazines, passport, English money, film. His documents came falling down, coins bounced onto the floor and his fingers began to bleed as he had gashed his finger on the zip.

Question 3. Why is his finger bleeding? What is his wife's reaction?

Answer: His finger is bleeding because he had gashed his finger on the zip. His wife did not show anger or exasperation. Instead, she looked at him with an expression of wonder and said that she could not believe that he did that for a living.

Question 4. How does Bill Bryson end up in a "crash position" in the aircraft?

Answer: Once on an airplane, the author leaned over to tie a shoelace. At the same moment someone in the seat ahead of him threw his seat back into full recline. That is when the author found himself pinned helplessly in the crash position. It was only by clawing the leg of the man sitting next to him that he managed to get himself freed.

Question 5. Why are his teeth and gums navy blue?

Answer: On a plane flight, the author was writing important thoughts on his notebook while sucking thoughtfully on the end of his pen. The pen had leaked. The author's mouth, chin, tongue, teeth and gums were now coloured navy blue.

Question 6. Bill Bryson "ached to be suave". Is he successful in his mission? List his 'unsuave' ways.

Answer: No, he is not successful in his mission to be suave. He does a lot of things in unsuave ways. He would rise from dinner tables looking as if he has just experienced an extremely localized seismic event, get in a car and close the door leaving 14 inches of coat outside, wear light-coloured trousers discovering at the end of the day that he has sat various times on chewing gum, ice cream, cough syrup and motor oil.

Question 7. Why do you think Bill Bryson's wife says to the children, "Take the lids off the food for Daddy"?

Answer: Bill Bryson's wife says to the children, "Take the lids off the food for Daddy" because she was afraid that if Bill would take off the lids, he might create another awkward situation. She knew that such situations keep happening with her husband quite often especially when he travels.

Question 8. What is the significance of the title?

Answer: The title 'The Accidental Tourist' is very precise and significant. The author, in his entire story, gives numerous instances which prove him to be an accidental tourist. He is a tourist who keeps facing humorous accidents and troubles. He travels a lot and yet makes undeliberate mistakes while doing things that others do without any evident difficulty.