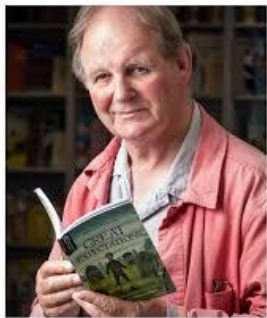




INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR

Grade VIII	Department: ENGLISH	Date of submission: April, 2025
Worksheet No: 2	Topic: The Best Christmas Present in the World- Michael Morpurgo	Note: English Notebook

About the author



Sir Michael Morpurgo is one of Britain's best loved children's authors. He has written over 150 books, has served as Children's Laureate, and has won many prizes, including the Smarties Prize, the Writers Guild Award, the Whitbread Award, the Blue Peter Book Award and the Eleanor Farjeon Lifetime Achievement Award. With his wife, Clare, he is the co-founder of Farms for City Children. Michael was knighted in 2018 for services to literature and charity.

SUMMARY

The Best Christmas Present in the World is a heart touching story by Michael Morpurgo. The narrator buys an old desk and finds a letter inside it, written by an English Soldier Jim Macpherson to his wife, Connie. The narrator goes to hand over the letter to Mrs. Macpherson. In the story, Connie is the name of the lady. Connie is the wife of Mr. Machpershon. He is very happy and describes the reasons for his happiness. He describes that everybody was ready and has been taking their positions. It was Christmas morning and the climate was very cold and frosty. He used the word 'Fritz' for German soldiers. They all were taking their positions in the trenches.

Suddenly came out of the trenches and waved the white flags. Mr. Machpershon described how Fritz started this episode. They came to No Man's Land and wished them "Happy Birthday Tommy". The word Tommy commonly refers to British soldiers. No man's land is the area between the borders of two countries that do not belong to either of the countries. It can also be a disputed area between two countries.

Fritz was wishing a happy Christmas to the British soldiers. One of the fritz waved the white flag who was wearing a grey overcoat.

One of the fritz soldiers invited them to the party for which they have already made all arrangements. He said that they have drinks and sausages to celebrate the party and all of the British soldiers present there are invited to attend the party.

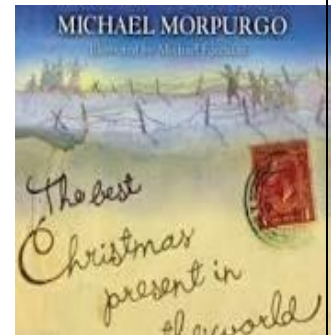


They invited them to celebrate Christmas with them. They offered them a joint Christmas celebration. Mr. Macpherson said that he was the officer and he should stop them while doing a joint celebration with the German scientist. But at that time not a single thought to deny them for the party came to his mind.

Answer the following questions in brief:

Question 1: Why was the letter written? What was the wonderful thing that had happened?

Answer: The letter was written to describe an unusual thing/event happened on the Christmas morning at the battlefield. Both the enemies celebrated the morning in the ferocity of war. They enjoyed together German drinks and sausage. And their carols were praised by each other. It was the wonderful event that had happened on the battlefield.



Question 2: What jobs did Hans Wolf and Jim Macpherson have when they were not soldiers?

Answer: Jim Macpherson was a school-teacher whereas Hans Wolf used to play a cello in the orchestra.

Question 3: Had Hans Wolf ever been to Dorset? Why did he say he knew it?

Answer: No, he had never been to Dorset. He learned about the place from school and reading books in English.



Question 4: Do you think Jim Macpherson came back from the war? How do you know this?

Answer: Jim Macpherson did not return from the war. On the tin box, it was written in a clumsy handwriting: "Jim's last letter, received January 25, 1915. To be buried with me when the time comes." This line supports our answer.

Question 5: Why do you think the desk had been sold, and when?

Answer: The desk, I think, must have been sold when the house got fire. As it was badly burnt, it must have been sold to a junk dealer by Mrs. Macpherson. She left the place then to live in a Nursing Home.

Question 6: Why do Jim and Hans think that games or sports are good ways of resolving conflicts? Do you agree?

Answer: As no one dies in a game or sport, it can be a right way to resolve conflicts between the two nations or societies. Sports don't make children orphans and nor make wives widows. I agree to this concept of resolving conflicts. It would be better for the entire humanity.

Question 7: Do you think the soldiers of the two armies are like each other, or different from each other? Find evidence from the story to support your answer.

Answer: Soldiers are like each other and they are not at all different. Both wanted peace and harmony. They enjoyed wine and meat together, celebrated Christmas on the battlefield.

Moreover, they played football. At night they applauded each other by singing carols. Hans Wolf also narrated that each soldier must wish the fight to end soon and they wanted to go home. Even they wanted to resolve the conflicts by playing sports.

Question 8: What is Connie's Christmas present? Why is it 'the best Christmas present in the world'?

Connie thought that Jim had come back home from war. She mistook the author for Jim. She had been waiting for her husband Jim. So, the coming home of Jim was the best Christmas present in the world for her.

When the narrator came to see Connie and gave her the box, she mistook him for her husband Jim. She thought that Jim has come home for Christmas. This was Connie's Christmas present. It was the best Christmas present in the world for her because Jim had written in the letter that he would come home on Christmas. She had read that letter several times every day to feel that he was near her. Now that he was finally there with her, she was extremely happy.

Reference to Context

Passage 1

I removed the roll-top completely and pulled out the drawers. The veneer had lifted almost everywhere it looked like water damage to me. Both fire and water had clearly taken their toll on this desk. The last drawer was stuck fast. I tried all I could to ease it out gently. In the end I used brute force. I struck it sharply with the side of my fist and the drawer flew open to reveal a shallow space underneath, a secret drawer.

Q 1: Who is 'I' in the above passage?

Ans: 'I' is the narrator in the above passage

Q 2: What does 'it' denote in the above lines?

Ans: 'It' denotes a roll-top desk.

Q 3: What was the condition of the desk?

Ans: The desk was damaged with water and fire.

Q 4: Where did he find a secret drawer?

Ans: He found the secret drawer underneath the last drawer which was stuck up badly.

Q 5: Find out the word/phrase that means the same for the given words:

a. freedom from pain - **ease out**

b. of little depth - **shallow**

Passage 2

I should like to be able to tell you that we began it. But the truth, I'm ashamed to say, is that Fritz began it. First someone saw a white flag waving from the trenches opposite. Then they were calling out to us from across no man's land, "Happy Christmas, Tommy! Happy Christmas!" When we had got over the surprise, some of us shouted back, "Same to you, Fritz! Same to you!" I thought that would be that. We all did. But then suddenly one of them was up there in his grey coat and waving a white flag. "Don't shoot, lads!" Someone shouted. And no one did. Then there was another Fritz up on the parapet, and another. "Keep your heads down," I told the men, "It's a trick." But it wasn't.

Q 1. What did the writer mean by 'we began it'?

Ans: German soldiers were the first to invite the British soldiers for the Christmas celebrations.

In the above passage 'we began it' refers to the Tommy's or the British army.

Q2. What was the symbolic meaning of a 'white flag'?

Ans: The white flag was a symbol of peace

Q3. Where were the soldiers sitting?

Ans: The soldiers were sitting in the trenches

Q4. What did the German soldiers wish them?

Ans: The German soldiers wished them 'Happy Christmas'

Q5. Why did they call each other 'Fritz' and 'Tommy'?

Ans: 'Fritz' means a German soldier and 'Tommy' was a common name for a British soldier.

Passage 3

The old lady was sitting in a wheelchair, her hands folded in her lap. She had silver white hair pinned into a wispy bun. She was gazing out at the garden. "Hello", I said. She turned and looked at me vacantly. "Happy Christmas, Connie", I went on. "I found this. I think it's yours." As I was speaking her eyes never left my face. I opened the tin box and gave it to her. That was the moment her eyes lit up with recognition and her face became suffused with a sudden glow of happiness. I explained about the desk, about how I had found it, but I don't think she was listening. For a while she said nothing, but stroked the letter tenderly with her fingertips.

Q1. Who was the old lady sitting in a wheel chair?

Ans: The old lady, sitting in a wheelchair was Mrs. Macpherson.

Q2. What made her eyes light up?

Ans: Connie's eyes lit up with recognition as she mistook the narrator to be her husband who had promised her that one day he would return from war. Her face became suffused with a sudden glow of happiness.

Q3. What wasn't she listening to?

Ans: Mrs. Macpherson wasn't listening to what the narrator was telling her.

Q4. Explain 'suffused with'.

Ans: Suffused with is a glow of happiness that spread over the face of Connie who was too old and weak. She mistook the narrator to be her husband and smiled.

Improve your vocabulary by doing some dictionary work:

*By the end of the journey, we had **run out of** drinking water.*

Look at the verb **run out of** in this sentence.

It is a **phrasal verb**: it has two parts, a verb and a preposition or an adverb. Phrasal verbs often have meanings that are different from the meanings of their parts.



- a. Find these phrasal verbs in the story.

burned out *lit up* *looked on* *run out* *keep out*



Now write down the sentences in which they occur.

- b. Also consult a dictionary and write down the meaning that you think matches the meaning of the phrasal verb in the sentence.

1. House number 12 turned out to be nothing but a ***burned-out*** shell
(**meaning-destroyed by fire**).
2. That was the moment her eyes ***lit up*** with recognition, and her face..... (meaning-brightened).
3. Hans Wolf and I ***looked on*** and cheered, clapping our hands..... (meaning-considered somebody to be somebody)
4. The time came, and all too soon when the game was finished, the schnapps and the rum and the sausage had long since ***run out***, and we knew it was all over, (meaning- used up, finished)
5. Hans Wolf and I looked on and cheered, clapping our hands and stamping our feet, to ***keep out*** the cold as much as anything. (meaning-to avoid)