



QUESTION BANK – WE'RE NOT AFRAID TO DIE ... IF WE CAN ALL BE TOGETHER

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Class: XI

Sub: ENGLISH

SUMMARY

This lesson is an exciting account of a family's experience at sea. It not only underlines the difficulties that mariners often face at sea but also brings out, poignantly, the spirit of togetherness in a family, who are prepared to brave death together.

"We are not afraid to die if we can all be together" tells about the extreme bravery and skill exhibited by Gordon Cook. Gordon Cook's family and crewmen in a war with water and the waves for existence. The narrator and his wife plan a voyage around the world just like famous Captain James Cook. They have been preparing and perfecting their seafaring skills for the past 16 years. They get a ship which is 23 meters long and weighs 30 tons wooden-hulled, named Wave Walker. They test it in the rough weather for months. In the month of July in the year 1976, the writer, his wife Mary, his son Jonathan and his daughter Suzanne set sail from Plymouth, in England to duplicate the round-the-world journey made 200 years ago by Captain James Cook. They took the trip in their professionally designed ship, named the Wavewalker, accompanied by 2 sailors. Larry Vigil, who was an American and Herb Sailor, a Swiss, to tackle one of the world's coarsest oceans – the Southern Indian Ocean.

The first portion of the journey that is about 1,05,000 kilometres up to Cape Town passed off very enjoyably. They encounter strong and alarming waves during the second day. By December 25, they all manage to reach 35,000 kilometers east of Cape Town. The family, somehow, manages to surpass the bad weather and celebrates Christmas together. On the 2nd day out of Cape Town, they started to encounter strong windstorms. Windstorms did not worry about the narrator. But the height of the waves was alarming up to fifteen meters above that was as high as the mainmast. On the 25th of December, the writer's ship reaches in the southern Indian Ocean that was about 3,500 kilometers to the east of Cape Town. The family welcomed the New Year on the ship.

At the dawn of 2nd January, the waves were huge in size. Unfriendly weather and massive

waves forced the sailors to slow the speed of the ship, drop the storm jib and take various other precautions. The risk was so obvious that the sailors accomplished a life-raft drill, attached the lifeline boats and the life jackets. Unexpectedly at 6 pm, a terrific explosion shook the Wavewalker and the writer was thrown overboard. The Wave walker was about to overturn when another massive wave hit it throwing it upright one more time. The writer was thrown back again on the deck, his head and ribs were smashing touching the walls of the Wave walker. He grabs the guard rail and sails into the ship's main boom. In spite of a lot of injuries, the writer took charge of the situation and decided to handle it on his own. He instructs his wife Mary to guard the wheel as he realizes that the ship has water in the lower parts. His crewman starts pumping out the water. The narrator goes to his children's cabin and checks on them. His daughter, Sue, informs him about a bump on her head which he ignores because his major concern is to save the ship.

The author somehow managed to cover the canvas across the gaps to stop the water from entering into the ship. Moreover, their hand pumps stopped functioning and the electric pumps short-circuited at the same time. Luckily, the writer found a spare electrical pump that was in a working condition. The entire night everyone was pumping, steering, repairing and sending radio signals for help. The author checked the charts and found that He Amsterdam, a French scientific base was their last hope.

Sue, on the other hand, has now a swollen black eye and a deep cut in her arm. On being asked by her father about her injuries, she tells him she didn't want him to worry as he was trying to save them. After 15 hours the situation gets under control. The narrator decides to work in rotation and rests. The water levels are controlled but the leaks were still there, below the waterline.

After pumping the water out continuously for 36 hours, they took a sigh of relief. Only a few centimeters of water was left to be pumped out of the boat. They hoisted the storm jib as the mainmast was destroyed. They ate their first meal in two days, some corned beef and crackers. The weather soon started changing and again the black clouds took over by the morning of January 5.

Sue and Jon got heavily injured. But, they were not afraid to die if they were all together. Sue's head got swelling and she was having a deep injury. Moreover, the writer became extra determined to see the courage of his children. The Wavewalker sailed through the storm and made it. The narrator then calculated their exact position by working on the wind speed. While he was brainstorming, Sue, gave him a card that she had made expressing her love and gratitude towards the family.

He instructed Larry to steer the course to 185 degrees. He said that if they were lucky, they could hope to find an island by 5 pm. He dozed off and suddenly got up around 6 pm. He believed that they didn't make it and was disappointed. His son came and informed him about how they reached the Ile Amsterdam Island and he called him 'best daddy' and 'best captain'.

Finally, they were able to touch the lie Amsterdam. It was a volcanic island where 28 inhabitants were ready to receive them.

Reference to Context

1. There, before heading east, we took on two crewmen-American Larry Vigil and Swiss Herb Seigler- to help us tackle one of the world's roughest seas, the southern Indian Ocean. On our second day out of Cape Town, we began to encounter strong gales. For the next few weeks, they blew continuously. Gales did not worry me; but the size of the waves was alarming –up to 15 metres, as high as our main mast.

(a) Which port did the ship leave just before the incident narrated?

(I) **Cape Town** (II) Indian Ocean (iii) Plymouth (iv) None of the above

(b) Why two extra crewmen were hired?

(I) to tackle the ship (II) as author wanted extra helpers
(III) for maintenance of the ship (IV) to tackle the southern Indian Ocean

(c) What was the height of the mast of the ship?

(I) 5 meters (II) 10 meters (III) **15 meters** (IV) 20 meters

(d) The author was worried about _____

(i) strong winds (ii) **size of the waves** (iii) his family (iv) going in a right direction

2. At dawn on January 2, the waves were gigantic. We were sailing with only a small storm jib and were still making eight knots. As the ship rose to the top of each wave we could see endless enormous seas rolling towards us, and the screaming of the wind and spray was painful to the ears.

(a) Which figure of speech has been used in this line 'the waves were gigantic'?

(I) simile (II) oxymoron (iii) irony (iv) **Hyperbole**

(b) Which kind of fears was evident in the mind of author during the incident given in the extract?

(I) fear of death (II) fear of losing his family soon
(III) **fear of shipwreck** (IV) fear of losing his job

(c) 'screaming of winds' here means-----

(I) **sound of wind** (II) speed of wind (III) direction of wind (IV) intensity of wind

(d) According to the extract, the speed of eight knots was considered _____

(i) slow (ii) medium (iii) average (iv) **high**

(e) Complete the analogy with a word from the extract:

huge: massive: colossal: **gigantic**

3. The first indication of impending disaster came at about 6 p.m., with an ominous silence. The wind dropped, and the sky immediately grew dark. Then came a growing roar, and an enormous cloud towered aft of the ship. With horror, I realized that it was not a cloud, but a wave like no other I had ever seen. It appeared perfectly vertical and almost twice the height of the other waves, with a frightful breaking crest.

(a) What do you mean by ‘the wind dropped’?

(I) wind fell down (II) wind slipped out of the hands of author

(iii) speed of wind greatly reduced (iv) wind started coming from below the ship.

(b) Which of the following was not a sign of impending disaster?

(I) ominous silence (II) wind dropped (III) a growing roar **(IV) clock struck at 6 p.m.**

(c) which word in the extract means ‘forthcoming’?

(I) growing (II) roaring **(III) impending** (IV) ominous

(d) why was the author horrified?

(i) he had never seen such big wave (ii) the wave was perfectly vertical

(iii) the wave was almost twice the size of normal waves **(iv) all of the above**

4. Sue’s head had swollen alarmingly; she had two enormous black eyes, and now she showed us a deep cut on her arm. When I asked why she hadn’t made more of her injuries before this, she replied, “I didn’t want to worry you when you were trying to save us all. By morning on January 3, the pumps had the water level sufficiently under control for us to take two hours’ rest in rotation.

(a) Which of the following part of Sue’s body she did not have any injury?

(I) above eyes (II) arm (iii) leg (iv) head

(b) Why did they want to take rest in rotation?

(I) the ship was safe (II) the pirates were still very close

(III) shortage of space (IV) pumps were required to be run

(c) whom does the word ‘you’ refer in the above extract?

(I) Larry (II) Seigler **(III) author** (IV) author’s wife

(d) What trait of Sue’s character is reflected through the above statement?

(i) she was a brave girl (ii) she was a concerned person (iii) she was naughty (iv) she could understand priorities

(v) she was impatient (vi) she was vociferous

(a) 1,2,3 (b) 2,3,6 (c) 1,2,4 (d) 4,5,6

5. Our only hope was to reach these pinpricks in the vast ocean. But unless the wind and seas abated so we could hoist sail, our chances would be slim indeed. The great wave had

put our auxiliary engine out of action. On January 4, after 36 hours of continuous pumping, we reached the last few centimetres of water. Now, we had only to keep pace with the water still coming in.

(a) What does the word ‘seas’ mean in the above extract?

(I) *depth of sea* (II) *width of sea* (iii) **waves** (iv) *colour of sea*

(b) Which word in the extract is synonym of ‘recede’?

(I) *continuous* (II) *auxiliary* (III) **abate** (IV) *slim*

(c) The ‘last few centimetres’ represents?

(I) **depth of water** (II) *width of water* (III) *amount of water* (IV) *volume of water*

(d) For how many hours of continuous pumping, water in the ship was brought under control?

(i) 24 hours (ii) **36 hours** (iii) 16 hours (iv) 20 hours

Short Answer Type Questions:

1. What preparations did the narrator and his wife make for their round-the-world sea voyage?

The narrator and his wife wanted to ‘duplicate’ the round-the-world voyage made 200 years ago by Captain James Cook. They had been making formidable preparations for the last 16 years. First, they got ‘*Wavewalker*’ a boat especially designed and professionally built for this purpose. They tested it for months in the roughest weather. They spent all their leisure time in strengthening their seafaring skills in British waters. They were both mentally and physically prepared to undertake their exceptionally long and challenging sea voyage.

2. Describe the boat *Wavewalker*.

The narrator wanted to duplicate the round-the-world voyage made by Captain James Cook 200 years ago. In order to undertake this journey, they got a boat built professionally. The boat, named *Wavewalker*, was 23 meters long, 30 ton wooden-hulled sailboat. They had spent months fitting it out and testing it in the roughest weather conditions.

3. Why did they take on two crewmen with them at Cape Town?

Before heading East from Cape Town, they took on two crewmen who were experienced seamen. They were Larry Vigil, an American and Herb Seigler, a Swiss. The narrator knew that they would require expert help to tackle one of the world’s roughest seas – the southern Indian Ocean.

4. How did the voyagers celebrate their Christmas and where?

On Christmas Day, the voyagers were 3500 kms East of Cape Town in the southern Indian Ocean. Though the sea was rough, they enjoyed the wonderful holiday. They celebrated Christmas singing carols complete with a Christmas tree. They expected the weather to improve but it didn’t.

5. How was the weather on the morning of 2nd January?

On New Year’s Day, the weather saw no improvement and was bad. On 2nd January, it got even worse. The waves were gigantic. They were sailing with only a small storm jib but still were going pretty fast. As the ship rose to the top of each wave they could see the endless, enormous sea rolling towards them. The wind seemed to be howling.

6. What attempts did the narrator make to protect himself and his family from the huge waves?

The waves were gigantic on 2nd January. In order to protect themselves, they decided to slow down the boat. They dropped the storm jib and lashed a heavy mooring rope in a loop across the stem. Then they double-lashed everything, went through their life-raft drill, attached lifelines, donned oilskins and life jackets and prepared themselves for the worst-case scenario.

7. “I had no time to worry about bumped heads”, says the narrator. What problem do you think deserved his immediate attention?

The problem that deserved immediate attention was the repair of the starboard side, which had been smashed; with every wave, it was letting water enter the boat. If he did not make some repairs, the boat would have surely sunk and they would have drowned.

8. What did Sue say when she was asked by her father about why she had not complained about her grave injuries?

Sue had been injured badly when the wave had hit the ship. Her head had swollen alarmingly. She had two black eyes and she had a deep cut on her arm. When asked why she had not complained about her injuries earlier, she replied that she had not wanted to worry her parents when they were trying to save them all from sinking.

9. What happened on the morning of 3rd January?

By the morning of 3rd January, they had managed to pump out the water out of the boat to a reasonable level and the situation was under control but, they suspected a huge leak below and found that nearly all the boat’s main rib frames were damaged down to the keel. The narrator knew that Wavewalker will not be able to hold together long enough to reach Australia. So the narrator made some calculations and found two small islands a few hundred kilometers to the East. They hoped to reach one of them.

10. Why did the narrator call Ile Amsterdam the most beautiful island in the world?

Ile Amsterdam was the only hope of survival for the voyagers and so, when they reached there, it looked the most beautiful island to the narrator. He was successful in saving his family and crewmen by reaching there. He had won the fight for survival. If they had not reached the island, they would surely have sunk.

11. Describe how the narrator tried his best to find the small island for the last time.

It was very hard for the narrator to get to the island of Ile Amsterdam because of the bad weather. The narrator also saw the compass was not working correctly, but he gave it one last try. He used the main compass to calculate the influence of the westerly wind at 2 p.m. He asked the crewmen to steer the boat at 185 degrees. He hoped that if the calculations went right, they would be able to see the island after 5 p.m. After this, he went to his cabin and took a nap. He woke up at 6 p.m., and his children gave him the good news that they had found the island.

Long Answer Type Questions:

1. Highlight the tremendous courage and forbearance shown by the two children during

the struggle to keep the boat from sinking. What values do you learn from them?

The two children, Suzanne and Jonathan, showed tremendous courage and forbearance during the epic struggle put up by their parents and the crewmen to keep the boat from sinking. Sue had been injured badly when the big wave hit the boat. Her head had swollen alarmingly and both her eyes were hurt. She also had a deep cut on her arm. But she did not complain about her injuries as she did not want to worry her parents when they were trying to save them from sinking. When the author went to comfort the children, his son Jonathan, asked him if they were going to die. When he was assured that they would all survive, he told his father that they were not afraid of dying if they could all be together. Moreover, Sue had patience and power enough to even draw the caricatures of her parents with a message of hope and gratitude to her parents. The children, thus, exhibit extraordinary patience, courage and tolerance.

2. The hurdles of life can be challenged if we have confidence to make optimum use of our potential. Elaborate.

The statement holds true in the light of the story ‘We’re Not Afraid to Die.....’. The narrator along with his wife, children, and two crewmen overcame the worst situations and defeated death by fighting the adverse situations which cropped up during their voyage. When the big wave hit the boat, it was severely damaged and the narrator was badly injured. However, he did not pay attention to it and Mary also helped by following instruction without worrying about the destruction around. Both Larry and Herb kept pumping out water and did not stop. Moreover, when the hand-pumps stopped working and the electric pump short-circuited, he did not lose confidence and used electric pump to drive out water from the boat. Even the children had confidence in their father and they hoped to survive. They also showed great courage. Jon said that they were not afraid to die if they are all together. Sue made a card to thank her parents. It was a great example of unity and trust that they had on each other. Thus, it can be concluded that by staying optimistic like the children and making the best use of your potential like the narrator, one can fight adversities and be a winner.

3. “We are Not afraid to die” is a saga of patience and bravery. Comment.

The story “we are not afraid to die” is a story of the rare courage and perseverance of the narrator’s family. The narrator’s undertaking to replicate Captain James Cook’s voyage was a challenging task, as they had to sail in some of the roughest seas. However, the voyagers kept their sprits high and made every effort to save the boat and their lives. Even in the worst of circumstances, the captain did not give up hope and tried his best to protest the ship from flooding. All the dangers and disasters were confronted with patience, courage and determination. Even the children showed exemplary courage. They were not afraid to die if they were all together. The two crewmen continuously pumped out water and never complained. They trusted their captain and worked as a team. Luckily the voyagers were able to come out of a near death experience due to their never-say-die attitude. Thus, the story proves to be a saga of patience and bravery.

4. The reaction of the crew and children gives us an insight into the human mind and how it can help us survive any disaster. Discuss.

The reaction of the crew and children gives us an insight into the human mind. The crew reacted to the danger with a fighting spirit and optimism. Their undaunted efforts helped them to survive the disaster. On the other hand, the children showed amazing maturity and resilience in the face of

disaster. They remained strong and composed. Despite serious injuries, both the children displayed courage and patience. Adopting a courageous attitude in times of difficulties motivates one to face the upheavals of life courageously. It is rightly said “cowards die many times before their death: the valiant face death only once” and when the valiant to die, they die a heroes’ death. The story inspires us to maintain our calm in a crisis. Stress and panic only worsen the situation. If we accept difficulties as a way of life and face them with a brave front, they soon fade away. By being positive and not losing faith in ourselves can help us to survive any disaster.

5. How did the narrator and his companions save the boat from sinking?

The narrator’s ship was greatly damaged by the waves. He somehow made it to the cabin to see his children and see if they were all right. Then he did some repairs to the boat to save them from drowning. It became almost impossible to work in the big waves, but he did some repairs that obstructed further water from entering the boat. The crewmen were pumping out the water like madmen. The electric pumps got short-circuited due to the water. Luckily, the narrator found a hand pump, and it kept working. For the next 36 hours, they kept pumping, steering, and getting radio signals. The next day, they almost got the water in the boat under control, and the weather got a little better too. Thus, they saved the boat from sinking.

6. What difference did you notice between the reactions of the adults and the children when faced with danger?

Adults are more thoughtful than children. They have more responsibilities than children, too. On the other hand, the children are pure human beings with no experience of grief or fear. This is why adults are more horrified by any difficult situation, whereas children do not understand the complexities of the situation and accept it easily. The reflection can be seen in the story as well. The narrator and his wife thought their end was near, and we can see the narrator went through huge mental pressure and tension in the situation. He had the responsibility of saving his family. He was scared at one point. On the other hand, the children showed great bravery. The little boy, Jonathon, told his father he wasn’t afraid of death. On the other hand, Suzanne, who was only nine years old, tolerated the pain of the head bump. She even made a card for her parents so that they might feel better. Thus, the children were more spontaneous than the adults in difficult situations.