

Oral Comprehension Check

Question 1:

What was Valli's favourite pastime?

Answer:

Valli's favourite pastime was to stand in the front doorway of her house and watch what was happening in the street outside.

Question 2:

What was a source of unending joy for Valli? What was her strongest desire?

Answer:

A source of unending joy for Valli was the sight of the bus that travelled between her village and the nearest town, filled with a new set of passengers each time it passed through her street. Her strongest desire was to ride on that bus.

Question 3:

What did Valli find out about the bus journey? How did she find out these details?

Answer:

Valli found out that the town was six miles from her village. The fare was thirty paise one way. The trip to the town took forty-five minutes. On reaching the town, if she stayed in her seat and paid another thirty paise, she could return home on the same bus. She found out these details by listening carefully to the conversations between her neighbours and the people who regularly used the bus. She also gained information by asking them a few questions.

Question 4:

What do you think Valli was planning to do?

Answer:

Valli was planning to travel on that bus.

Question 5:

How do you usually understand the idea of 'selfishness'? Do you agree with Kisa Gotami that she was being 'selfish in her grief'?

Answer:

'Selfishness' means being concerned only about one's own interests and showing complete disregard for others welfare. Yes, it can be said that Kisa Gotami was being 'selfish in her grief'. In the light of her tragedy, she was unable to see that death is something that strikes all things living. In this sense, she was selfish. However, for every person, his/her tragedy is something personal and it prevents him/her from looking at the tragedy from a universal or general point of view. If we take the usual sense of the word 'selfish', then calling Kisa Gotami selfish would be inappropriate, because every person becomes selfish in his/her grief.

Question 1:

Why does the conductor call Valli 'madam'?

Answer:

When the conductor stretched out his hand to help her get on the bus, Valli said commandingly that she could get on by herself, and that she did not require his help. She did not act like a child, but as a grown-up girl and therefore, the conductor called her 'madam'.

Question 2:

Why does Valli stand up on the seat? What does she see now?

Answer:

Valli stood up on her seat because her view was cut off by a canvas blind that covered the lower part of her window. She stood up to look over the blind. She saw that the road was very narrow, on one side of which there was the canal and beyond it were palm trees, grassland, distant mountains, and the blue sky. On the other side, there was a deep ditch and many acres of green fields.

Question 3:

What does Valli tell the elderly man when he calls her a child?

Answer:

When the elderly man called her a child, Valli told him that there was nobody on the bus who was a child. She had paid her fare of thirty paise like everyone else.

Question 4:

Why didn't Valli want to make friends with the elderly woman?

Answer:

Valli did not want to make friends with the elderly woman because she found her absolutely repulsive. She saw that the woman had big holes in her ear lobes and very ugly earrings in them. She could smell the betel nut the woman was chewing,

and could see the betel juice that was almost about to spill over her lips. That is why she did not want to be sociable with her.

Question 1:

How did Valli save up money for her first journey? Was it easy for her?

Answer:

Valli had carefully saved whatever stray coins came her way, resisting every temptation to buy peppermints, toys, balloons, and the like. Finally, she had saved sixty paise.

No, it was not easy for her, especially at the village fair where she was tempted to ride the merry-go-round as she had the money. However, she suppressed her strong desire and saved the money for the bus ride.

Question 2:

What did Valli see on her way that made her laugh?

Answer:

Valli saw a young cow, whose tail was high in the air, running right in front of the bus in the middle of the road. The bus slowed and the driver sounded his horn loudly. However, the more he honked, the more frightened the cow became and it kept running faster and faster, right in front of the bus. Valli found it so amusing that she had tears in her eyes. At last, the cow moved off the road.

Question 3:

Why didn't she get off the bus at the bus station?

Answer:

She did not get off the bus at the bus station because she had to go back on that same bus. She took out another thirty paise from her pocket and handed the coins to the conductor. She just wanted to ride on the bus.

Question 4:

Why didn't Valli want to go to the stall and have a drink? What does this tell you about her?

Answer:

Valli did not want to go to the stall and have a drink because she did not have any money for that. Even when the conductor offered her a cold drink free of charge, she refused firmly and said that she only wanted her ticket. This shows that Valli had a lot of self will and pride. Possibly, she did not want to take anything for free, particularly from a stranger.

Thinking About the Text

Question 1:

What was Valli's deepest desire? Find the words and phrases in the story that tell you this.

Answer:

Valli's strongest desire was to ride on the bus she saw everyday. The sentences in the story which depict this are as follows:

"Day after day she watched the bus, and gradually a tiny wish crept into her head and grew there: she wanted to ride on that bus, even if just once. This wish became stronger and stronger, until it was an overwhelming desire."

Question 2:

How did Valli plan her bus ride? What did she find out about the bus, and how did she save up the fare?

Answer:

Valli planned that she would take the one o'clock afternoon bus, reach the town at one forty-five, and be back home by about two forty-five. She found out that the town was six miles from her village. The fare was thirty paise one way. The trip to the town took forty-five minutes. On reaching the town, if she stayed in her seat and paid another thirty paise, she could return home on the same bus. She had carefully saved whatever stray coins came her way, resisting every temptation to buy peppermints, toys, balloons, and the like, and finally she had saved sixty paise.

Question 3:

What kind of a person is Valli? To answer this question, pick out the following sentences from the text and fill in the blanks. The words you fill in are the clues to your answer.

(i) "Stop the bus! Stop the bus!" And a tiny hand was raised _____.

(ii) "Yes, I _____ go to town," said Valli, still standing outside the bus.

- (iii) "There's nobody here _____," she said haughtily. "I've paid my thirty paise like everyone else."
- (iv) "Never mind," she said, "I can _____. You don't have to help me. "I'm not a child, I tell you," she said, _____.
- (v) "You needn't bother about me. I _____," Valli said, turning her face toward the window and staring out.
- (vi) Then she turned to the conductor and said, "Well, sir, I hope _____."

Answer:

- (i) "Stop the bus! Stop the bus!" And a tiny hand was raised commandingly.
- (ii) "Yes, I simply have to go to town," said Valli, still standing outside the bus.
- (iii) "There's nobody here who's a child," she said haughtily. "I've paid my thirty paise like everyone else."
- (iv) "Never mind," she said, "I can get on by myself. You don't have to help me. "I'm not a child, I tell you," she said, irritably.
- (v) "You needn't bother about me. I can take care of myself," Valli said, turning her face toward the window and staring out.
- (vi) Then she turned to the conductor and said, "Well, sir, I hope to see you again."

For Valli, the bus journey probably symbolised the adult world. Like anyone else, she spent her money to buy the ticket. She would have attained a great sense of pride and satisfaction in doing so. Therefore, though a child, Valli wanted to be treated as a grown-up on the bus. She had a great sense of self respect which prevented her from taking anyone's help. She felt she was able to take care of herself very well, and was easily irritated when anyone treated her as a child.

Question 4:

Why does the conductor refer to Valli as 'madam'?

Answer:

When the conductor stretched out his hand to help her get on the bus, Valli said commandingly that she could get on by herself, and that she did not require his help. She did not act like a child, but as a grown-up girl and therefore, the conductor

called her 'madam'. When the elderly man called her a child and asked her to sit down on her seat, she replied that nobody was a child on the bus. She kept stressing on the fact that she had paid her fare like everybody else and therefore, she should not be treated differently.

Question 5:

Find the lines in the text which tell you that Valli was enjoying her ride on the bus.

Answer:

The following lines in the text show that Valli was enjoying her ride on the bus:

(i) "Valli devoured everything with her eyes."

(ii) "On the one side there was the canal and, beyond it, palm trees, grassland, distant mountains, and the blue, blue sky. On the other side was a deep ditch and then acres and acres of green fields – green, green, green, as far as the eye could see. Oh, it was all so wonderful!"

(iii) "Everyone laughed, and gradually Valli too joined in the laughter. Suddenly, Valli clapped her hands with glee."

(iv) "Somehow this was very funny to Valli. She laughed and laughed until there were tears in her eyes."

(v) "Valli wasn't bored to the slightest and greeted everything with the same excitement she'd felt the first time."

Question 6:

Why does Valli refuse to look out of the window on her way back?

Answer:

Valli refused to look out of the window on her way back because she saw a young cow lying dead by the roadside, just where it had been struck by some fast-moving vehicle. It was the same cow that was running in front of their bus, during their trip to the town. She was overcome with sadness. The memory of the dead cow haunted her and therefore, she refused to look out of the window.

Question 7:

What does Valli mean when she says, "I was just agreeing with what you said about things happening without our knowledge."

Answer:

Valli's mother said that many things happen around us, but we are usually unaware of them. Valli had gone on a bus ride to town, all alone, and had come back without any harm. She did all this without the knowledge of her mother. Hence, she agreed with what her mother said.

Question 8:

The author describes the things that Valli sees from an eight-year-old's point of view. Can you find evidence from the text for this statement?

Answer:

The author has described the things that Valli saw from an eight-year-old's point of view. She was fascinated by a bus. Watching the bus filled with a new set of people each time was a source of unending joy for her. Her strongest desire was to ride the bus. She saved money by cutting on peppermints, toys, and balloons, and even resisting the temptation to ride the merry-go-round at the fair. When the author describes the bus, the points he stresses on are the colour and look of the bus. It was a 'new bus', painted a 'gleaming white'. The overhead bars 'shone like silver'. The seats were 'soft and luxurious'. The descriptions that the author gives when Valli looked outside are also typical for an eight-year-old. The 'blue, blue sky' and the 'acres and acres of green fields – green, green, green' show the enthusiasm of a kid on looking at different colours. Valli clapped her hands in glee on watching a cow run right in front of the bus. She found it so funny that tears came into her eyes. On the other hand, she was overcome with sadness on her way back when she saw the same cow lying dead. It had been a 'lovable, beautiful creature' and later it 'looked so horrible'. The memory of the dead cow haunted her so much that she refused to look outside the window. These are the typical reactions of a young child.