Bepin Choudhury’s Lapse of Memory

A Satyajit Ray story with a surprise ending that brings in its wake the much needed psychological relief to the sophisticated executive beleagured by a conspiracy, which is a humorous take after all.

Before asking children to read the text, tell the story part by part, each part ending where the listener wonders what comes next.

Activity 3 under working with language is about two tense forms — simple past and present perfect. Notice how both have been used in conjunction with each other. The following explanatory notes may be useful.

- The present perfect tense is used to refer to an action initiated and completed in the past and is associated with the present. It has its effect on the present situation.
  
  I have seen the Taj. (I know what it looks like.)
  
  He has arrived. (He is here.)
  
  I have finished my work. (I am free now.)

Present perfect tense is usual with already, so far, not yet, ever, never etc.

It is not used with ago, yesterday, last week/month/year, etc.

The Last Bargain

Here is a method of teaching that may be tried.

(a) Let children read the first stanza silently.

Ask the following questions.

(i) How many persons/characters are there?

(ii) Who are they?

(iii) Who is big and who is small?

(iv) What does the person in the first line say?

(v) What does the other one in the fourth line say?

(vi) Do they stay together or part company? Why?
(b) Now reconstruct the episode. Begin like this.
   I was walking on the road looking for work. I saw the king in
   his chariot. He had a sword in his hand. He was very kind to
   me. He shook my hand and offered to hire me. I did not
   accept his offer. To me, power is not a valuable thing. It is not
   permanent. It won’t make me happy. I was looking for
   something else as a reward for my work.
   What is he looking for?
   Let us read the next stanza.

(c) Do the other stanzas in the same way.
   The clue to what the person is looking for lies in the last line.
   The operative phrases are ‘the child’s play’ and ‘a free man’.
   The child and her/his play is a metaphor for innocence and inward
   happiness, which gives this person a sense of fulfilment and
   freedom from stress and strife. He feels genuinely free and happy
   in the company of the child.
   Recite each stanza with feeling, pausing at the right places.
   The method suggested may work better for a poem with a story.

The Summit Within

Adventure and the world of nature – the arduous task of
reaching the highest summit in the world makes the climber
reflect on the ‘internal summits’ which are, perhaps, higher
than the Everest. The text underscores the physical, emotional
and spiritual aspects of the adventure in a single perspective.
Divide the text into three parts. A convenient division is
suggested here.

‘...............that mountains are a means of communion with
God’. (end of Part-I)

‘It is emotional. It is spiritual’. (end of Part-II)

The remaining is Part-III.

Design while-reading comprehension questions for each part. The
multiple choice items are given at the end of the lesson. You
may try the following as additional questions.

What is the author’s personal answer to the question as to
why people climb mountains?

How is the same question answered in Part-II in a different way?
Famous climbers have recorded how they needed just that help? Explain the italicised phrase.

Looking round from the summit, you tell yourself that ____________________________.

(a) Complete this sentence using the same words as in the text without referring to the book.

(b) Now complete it using a clause/phrase of your own without changing meaning.

Activities 2 and 3 under working with language provide ample opportunities for vocabulary development. Extend Activity 2 by choosing new words from the text to cover their adjective and/or adverb forms.

remark – remarkable – remarkably

type – typical – typically

Use each item in a meaningful context, involving more than one sentence.

‘What you say is not appropriate, though it’s a good remark.’

‘Isn’t that remarkable?’

‘It may be so, but it doesn’t mean you are remarkably objective.’

You may not find the dialogue above remarkable enough, but it meets the immediate requirement appropriately.

Re-read and discuss passages where the author’s admiration for the mountains and passion for adventure comes through.

The School Boy

A school is a place where children and teachers assemble every morning to learn from one another. Find out if any child would like to describe school in a different way.

An interesting discussion on different types of schools, supported by pictures from magazines/newspapers, may ensue — a village school where children are sitting on the floor; another school where they are sitting at long desks; an outdoor lesson under a tree, etc.

Ask children how they reach school. Do they walk or take a bus, etc.? What problems others in remote areas may face in reaching school on time?

Any suggestions as to how to make school an interesting and enjoyable place!
**This is Jody’s Fawn**

A story about a child’s emotional preoccupation with the fawn whose mother had to be killed to save his father’s life. The story highlights values such as compassion and justice, care and concern for human and animal life.

Spend some time on a discussion about ‘home remedies’ for commonplace health problems/ailments. Should we see a doctor about every little thing, or should we talk to the grandmother first?

The growing concern about preservation of environment and protection of animal life has gone a long way in persuading schools to refrain from dissecting animals for experiment. Elicit children’s comments on the issue and on the law that punishes humans for hurting animals.

Activity 1 under *working with language* is about reporting questions – yes/no and wh-questions. The use of ‘if/whether’ in the case of yes/no type questions should be explicitly explained. Devise separate exercises for teaching the use of ‘if/whether’, the appropriate reporting verb, the changes in pronominals in the reported speech and the sequence of tenses.

Here is a simple exercise to exemplify some of these points.

Choose the correct word to complete statements in indirect speech given below. Write words in the blanks given.

(a) “Where do you come from?”
   I ___________(said/asked) him where ____________ (he/you) come from.

(b) “What is your name?”
   He asked me what ____________ (my/his) name. (is/was)

(c) “Are you happy?”
   I asked him ____________ (if/whether) he ____________ (is/was) happy.

(d) “Do you live here?”
   He asked me __________ __________ (whether/if) I __________ (live/lived) _________ (here/there).

(e) “Why are you crying?”
   The teacher asked the child ____________(if/why) she _____ (is/was/were) crying.
Here is another exercise.
Read the following dialogue between Jody and his father. Rewrite their conversation in indirect speech.

Penny lay quiet, staring at the ceiling.
“Boy, you’ve got me hemmed in.”
“It won’t take much to raise the fawn. It will soon start eating leaves.”
“You are smarter than boys of your age.”
“We took its mother, and it wasn’t to blame.”
“It seems ungrateful to leave it to starve.”

Begin like this:
Penny lay quiet staring at the ceiling. He said to Jody that __________________________________. Jody replied that it wouldn’t __________________________.

Activity 2 under **working with language** deals with transitive and intransitive verbs.
Ask children to underline the direct object in the following sentences.

- He brought me a colourful umbrella.
- I will write a letter to him.
- You should give yourself a chance.

Activity 3 under **writing** may be linked with the first task covering home remedies under ‘Before you read.’ It will be useful to take it up separately also.

**The Duck and the Kangaroo**

Try the method suggested for *The Last Bargain*.

Before taking up the text and the activities given, let children talk about ‘unusual’ activities they want to do such as walking on the moon, floating in outer space or shaking hands with an octopus. Take every idea seriously, no matter how improbable it may seem. We may come upon enough raw material of which *The Duck and the Kangaroo* is made.

It may be suggested that a story/poem like the present one need not be factually correct or ‘real’. We enjoy reading them because they appeal to our imagination, curiosity and sense of the music of words.
Children should be encouraged to attempt short poems such as the following.

1. *Once I knew*
   
   *A Kangaroo*
   
   *Named Sue*
   
   *How about you?*

2. *’There is a man called Peter Pan’,*
   
   *’I know another who’s neither Pan nor Peter. You haven’t met him, have you? It’s my friend Kanga Roo’.*

Sample two is impromptu as you rightly guessed, did you?

**A Visit to Cambridge**

Excerpt from a travelogue highlighting exchange of views between two extraordinary persons on what it means to be ‘differently abled’. A tour through Cambridge had a surprise, both pleasant and poignant, for the author. He met the brilliant and completely paralysed author of *A Brief History of Time*, and talked to him for a full half-hour.

Activity 2 under *working with language* is about the *present participle* (dancing/walking) used as adjective.

- **Running** on the road, he saw __________. (participle)
- The train is **running, ________** (verb)
- The **running** train ________ (adjective)
- The use of *past participle* as adjective may also be illustrated here.
- He has **broken** the window. (verb)
- The window was **broken** when the almirah was taken out (verb — in passive)
- See the **broken** window. (adjective)

Activity 3 under *speaking and writing* may be done as a project.

Lot of oral work to precede the writing task. The final draft should be edited and improved before it is put up on the board.
Activities 1 and 2 under *speaking and writing* are about word stress. Stressed syllables to be pronounced clearly and loudly. Some words of more than one syllable from the text may also be listed according to whether the stress falls on the first or the second syllable.

**When I Set Out for Lyonnesse**

The poem has a clear beginning-middle-end structure. The beginning is ‘setting out’, the middle is ‘sojourn’ and the end is ‘return’.

Draw children’s attention to appropriate words/phrases/lines that suggest and reinforce each phase of the journey.

‘Lyonnesse’ to be pronounced as *lie-an-ness*. The last syllable receives the primary stress.

If feasible and useful, explain the rhyme scheme and its musical effect on the listener.

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<th>Stanza</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Lyonesse</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stanza 1</td>
<td>A B B A A B</td>
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<td>Stanza 3</td>
<td>A D D A A D</td>
<td>A</td>
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