NCERT Solutions For Class 8

English - Honeydew

Chapter 1 - The Best Christmas Present in the World

Comprehension Check

1. What did the author find in a junk shop?
Ans: A roll-top desk that belonged to the 19th century, was found by the author in the junk shop. It was in a bad condition and was made from oak wood. One of its legs was clumsy. The top was broken into several pieces and there were scratch marks on one side.

2. What did he find in a secret drawer? Who do you think had put it in there?
Ans: There was a small tin box, found in the secret door of the roll-top desk. There was a piece of lined note paper with sellotape on the top. It was received on 25 January 1915 and was meant to be buried with his wife, when the time comes. The letter was sent by Jim, the husband, to his wife when he was on duty. Mrs Macpherson, Jim's wife, would have put it there.

3. Who had written the letter, to whom, and when?
Ans: The letter was written to the wife, Connie Macpherson on December 26, 1914, by Jim who had gone to fight the war against the Germans.

4. Why was the letter written? What was the wonderful thing that had happened?
Ans: Jim wanted to narrate a beautiful incident that happened on Christmas. Germans and British were engaged in the war but on Christmas, they met in the no man's land. Right in the middle of the war the soldiers were making peace and celebrating Christmas together. They even played a brief football match together.

5. What jobs did Hans Wolf and Jim Macpherson have when they were not soldiers?
Ans: Hans Wolf played the cello in the orchestra at Dusseldorf while Jim was a school teacher in the West of England. Both were not soldiers and their normal life.

6. Had Hans Wolf even been to Dorset? Why did he say he knew it?
Ans: No, Hans never went to Dorset and had learned all about England from the school and reading books in English. Thomas Hardy was his favourite writer and

from his novels he learned a lot about England.

7. Do you think Jim Macpherson came back from the war? How do you know this?
Ans: The sellotaped note paper was the last that was written by Jim last letter. Hence it was likely that he didn't come back from the war. His wife never received any more letters from him after that. She lived alone, as told by her neighbour and the nurse said that no member of her family has ever visited her till date.

8. Why did the author go to Bridport?
Ans: The author was guilty that he opened the letter inside the drawer and read it. The address where Mrs Macpherson lived was mentioned in the letter.

9. How old was Mrs. Macpherson now? Where was she?
Ans: Mrs Macpherson was in a nursing home in Burlington home, on Dorchester Road on the other side of the town. She was that time 101 years old

10. Who did Connie Macpherson think her visitor was?
Ans: The narrator was carrying in his hand the letter and hence Connie thought that he was her husband.

11. Which sentence in the text shows that the visitor did not try to hide his identity?
Ans: The visitor did not try to hide his identity. It can be seen through, 'I explained about the desk, about how I had found it, but I don't think she was listening.'

Working with Text

1. For how long do you think Connie had kept Jim's letter? Give reasons for your
Ans: Connie reads the letter quite often every day. She must have kept the letter for long as it made her feel that Jim was near her.

2. Why do you think the desk had been sold, and when?
Ans: Connie's home caught fire and all the things must have been sold after that. The desk must have been a part of it. Connie was taken to a nearby nursing home after that.

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

Ans: While playing games, nobody dies at the end of it. No woman becomes a widow and no child loses their father. Jim and Hans did think that games or sports are a good way of resolving conflict. Wars only cause destruction and death, and nothing is gained after that. The way the soldiers celebrated Christmas by playing football in no man's land was such a beautiful incident to show that wars are a useless way to show dominance and its humanity that wins at last.

4. 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

Ans: The soldiers of the armies liked each other. Both British and German armies liked each other, and they celebrated Christmas together by drinking, laughing, smoking, drinking and eating. Jim even shared the cake he was sent over by his wife. They placed a football match with each other to lift away the dullness due to war. At night they even exchanged carols and ended Christmas merrily.

5. Mention the various ways in which the British and the German soldiers become friends and find things in common at Christmas.

Ans: Christmas is a beautiful holiday that brings everyone together. The British and German troops celebrated Christmas on a beautiful, frosty morning. They smoked, laughed, drank and ate together. Connie had sent over a cake and Jim and Hans shared it with everyone. They also talked about the books they liked, and they played a match of football together. At night they even exchanged carols.

6. What is Connie's Christmas present? Why is it "the best Christmas present in the world?

Ans: Connie mistook the narrator as her husband when he came to return the box and her letter. Due to old age, she eventually lost her memory and mistook the narrator to be her husband. She thought that he had returned back. The narrator, even though it was an illusion of her husband, became her best Christmas present ever. In the letter, Jim wrote that he would come back on Christmas and when the narrator came to meet her on Christmas, she felt that her husband kept his promise and came back on Christmas. His visit would have made him extremely happy and content.

7. Do you think the title of this story is suitable for it? Can you think of any other title(s)?

Ans: Yes, I believe the title of the story is suitable. We see Christmas as an occasion of celebration throughout the novel. Jim shared a happy memory of Christmas with his wife. When Britain and Germany were at war, both the troops decided to play football on no man's land and celebrate Christmas. It was a happy memory for him before he died. It was on Christmas the narrative went to meet

Mrs Macpherson and tell her about the letter and ask her for forgiveness for reading it. Since it was her husband's last letter it was a precious memory for her. But instead, she felt that the narrator was her husband, and that illusion made her happy. It would have been the best Christmas present for her. Other titles can be "The Christmas Present", "Christmas Wish".

Working with Language

1.

(i) Read the passage below and underline the verbs in the past tense.

A man got on the train and sat down. The compartment was empty except for one lady. She took her gloves off. A few hours later the police arrested the man. They held him for 24 hours and then freed him.

Ans: A man got on the train and sat down. The compartment was empty except for one lady. She took her gloves off. A few hours later the police arrested the man. They held him for 24 hours and then freed him.

(ii) Fill in the blanks using the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

My little sister is very naughty. When she _____(come) back from school yesterday, she had _____ (tear) her dress. We _____(ask) her how it had _____(happen). She _____(say) she _____ (have, quarrel) with a boy. She _____ (have, beat) him in a race and he _____ (have, try) to push her. She _____ (have, tell) the teacher and so he _____ (have, chase) her, and she _____ (have, fall) down and _____ (have, tear) her dress.

Ans: My little sister is very naughty. When she came (come) back from school yesterday, she had torn(tear) her dress. We asked (ask) her how it had happened (happen). She said (say) she had quarrelled (have, quarrel) with a boy. She had beaten (have, beat) him in a race and he had tried (have, try) to push her. She had told (have, tell) the teacher and so he had chased (have, chase) her, and she had fallen (have, fall) down and had torn (have, tear) her dress.

(iii) Underline the verbs and arrange them in two columns, Past and Earlier past.

(a) My friends set out to see the caves in the next town, but I stayed at home, because I had seen them already.

Ans: My friends set out to see the caves in the next town, but I stayed at home, because I had seen them already.

(b) When they arrived at the station, their train had left. They came back home, but by that time I had gone out to see a movie!

Ans: When they arrived at the station, their train had left. They came back home, but by that time I had gone out to see a movie!

(c) So they sat outside and ate the lunch I had packed for them.
Ans: So they sat outside and ate the lunch I had packed for them.

(d) By the time I returned, they had fallen asleep!
Ans: By the time I returned, they had fallen asleep!

Past	Earlier Past
stayed	had seen
arrived	had left
came	had gone
sat	had packed
ate	had fallen
returned	

2. Find these phrasal verbs in the story.
burn out light up look on run out keep out
Write down the sentences in which they occur, consult a dictionary and write down the meaning that you think matches the meaning of the phrasal verb in the sentence.
Ans:

- burn out- House number 12 turned out to be nothing but a burned-out shell, the roof gaping, the windows boarded-up.
- light up-That was the moment her eyes lit up with recognition and her face became suffused with a sudden glow of happiness.
- look on-Hans Wolf and I looked on and cheered, clapping our hands and stamping our feet, to keep out the cold as much as anything.
- run out-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.
- keep out-Hans Wolf and I looked on and cheered, clapping our hands and stamping our feet, to keep out the cold as much as anything.

3. The table below contains a list of nouns and some adjectives. Use as many adjectives as you can to describe each noun. You might come up with some funny descriptions!

Noun	Adjective
elephant	

face	**circular, striped, enormous, multicolored, round, cheerful, wild, blue, red, chubby, large, medium-sized, cold**
building	
water	

Ans:

Noun	Adjective
elephant	enormous, cheerful, wild, large, medium-sized,
face	round, cheerful, chubby
building	multi-colored, blue, red, large, medium-sized
water	blue, cold

Writing

1. Imagine that you are Jim. You have returned to your town after the war. In your diary record how you feel about the changes you see and the events that occur in your town. You could begin like this
25 December, 1919
It's Christmas today, but the town looks.....
Or
Suppose you are the visitor. You are in a dilemma. You don't know whether to disclose your identity and disappoint the old lady or let her believe that her dear Jim has come back. Write a letter to a friend highlighting your anxiety, fears and feelings.
Ans:
25 December, 1919
It is Christmas today, but the town looks dull. There are few homes that are decorated. The streets are grey. The war has left the country and its people tattered. Everyone is still trying to get out of the grief of the losses the war has caused. I lost many friends during the war. Seeing them die in front of my eyes was traumatizing. I still get scared hearing loud thumps. It is the post-war trauma. I thought the Christmas decorated city would lift my spirits but it looks like everyone is going through something. There are new shops up on the street but many are closed too. They would have either left or suffered monetarily not to sustain the shop further. Amidst all this dullness seeing my wife again after so long made me realize what home actually is. Her warmth welcomed me and the house still looks the same. I am so happy to be back home. I truly wish we do not have to see this phase again.

Jim

Or

13-B, Block 2,
Dorset
25 December, 1919
Dear Jack
How are you? I hope the holiday season went well for you as well as your family. I wrote this letter to you since I wanted your advice about a dilemma I am recently stuck in.Remember I told you about an old desk I bought recently for my new home. When I was skimming through the drawers, I came across a letter. It was written by a person named Jim, to his old British wife. The address mentioned the city of Bridport and since I felt guilty, reading a personal letter, I thought it would be better to return it back. I also felt that the letter must be close to her heart. I went there and found out that she was 101 years old and was waiting for her husband, Jim who died in the war. He promised to visit her back on Christmas. I visited her on Christamas and she hallucined me as her husband. I felt bad for her but I couldn't decide if i should tell her that I am not her husband or let her imagine it. It breaks my heart to do that as it looks like she smiled after years and yearned for his presence.
Please let me know what you think I should do at this point.

Harry

2. **Given below is the outline of a story. Construct the story using the outline.**
A young, newly married doctor _____ freedom fighter _____ exiled to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands by the British _____ infamous Cellular Jail _____ prisoners tortured _____ revolt by inmates _____ doctor hanged _____ wife waits for his return _____ becomes old _____ continues to wait with hope and faith.
Ans: A young doctor, who was not only dedicated to his profession but also to his country. He was a dedicated freedom fighter. He was newly married but due to unfortunate circumstances was arrested and exiled to Andaman and Nicobar by the British forces. He asked his wife to stay strong and wait for him. He assured her that he will be safe and fight for his country's freedom. He was sent to the infamous Cellular Jail and was tortured. He fought against the tortures and revolted with his inmates. Troubled by his revolts and continuous upsurge he was causing the Britishers to hang him. His revolts did aid his country to gain freedom but his wife awaited his return. She waited for him as the seasons changed and became old. She didn't leave hope and continued to wait for him and meet him either on this mortal earth or life beyond the human body.