

Grade VIII - English

Lesson 8. Jalebis

Supplementary Reader

Soul of the Chapter

The Introduction

The story is of a young boy when he was in fifth standard at a government school in Kambelpur, now called Atak. On one day, he was carrying four rupees in his pocket to pay his school fees. When he got to school, he found out that the teacher who was to collect fees, Master Ghulam Mohammed, was on leave. He carried the four rupees for fees the entire day. But once he was out of school, the coins began to speak.

The Coins Began to Talk and then Started to Clamour

That day, as the boy stepped out of school, the coins began to talk. One coin told him that he should go and buy hot jalebis with it. The coin urged the boy to spend it as money was meant to be spent. The boy answered the coins that he was a good boy and the coins should not be misguiding him. He told the coins that he was well fed at home and buying anything from the shops would be a sin. He also told the coins that the money was meant for his fees.

The coins didn't appreciate the argument given by the young boy. They, therefore, all began to talk at the same time and made a great clamouring sound. They made such noise that passers by began to stare at the boy. The boy closed them tight in his fist. They were silent for some time. A little later, the boy loosened his fist and the coins again began to lure him. The coins tempt him by saying that he could pay his fees with scholarship money.

The Boy Begins to Think About the Jalebis and Finally Gave In

The boy knew that what the coins were telling him was not right, but he thinks that they were not wrong either. The boy begins to think about the hot, fresh jalebis full of sweet sugar. He was tempted, but he was also weighing the entire situation. He came from a well-to-do family and had enjoyed a considerable prestige. He had also enjoyed a certain status in his class. Masterji had often asked him to beat the other boys in the class. Eating jalebis in the middle of the bazaar was not easy for him. So, he clenched his fist again and came back home.



The boy could not bear the noise created by the coins. He finally gave in to their wish. Barefoot he rushed to the bazaar and asked the halwai to weigh him jalebis worth a rupee. The halwai opened a whole newspaper and heaped a pile of a jalebis on it. He had hardly gathered the heap of jalebis when he saw his chachajaan passing by in his tongo. He immediately clutched the jalebis and ran in an inside street.

Devouring the Jalebis and the Stomachache

Reaching a safe corner, he began eating jalebis and he ate so many that he felt that jalebis would pop out from his ears and nostrils. Soon, he saw boys from the neighbourhood had assembled in the gali. He was so full that he started handing out jalebis to the children around. Soon, more and more children came. He kept distributing the jalebis and one by one, spent all the four coins to buy jalebis.

After having washed his hands and mouth, he got back home pretending innocence. He feared that he might burp and jalebis would pop out. At night he had to eat his dinner, though his stomach was full with the jalebis he had devoured. Not eating the dinner would demand an explanation. So, he simply had his dinner, but spent rest of the night suffering a stomach ache. The next morning he was absolutely fine, calling children's stomach as digestion machines.

Getting ready for school, he headed towards it feeling secure that he would receive four rupees as scholarship money, with which he would pay his fees. But on reaching the school he found out that the scholarship money would be paid next month. Master Ghulam Mohammed announced that the money for the fees would be collected during the recess. He was in a fix.

Not knowing what to do, he ran away from the school after the recess. He kept walking and walking till he reached the point where the Kambelpur railway station began. Under a shade-giving tree besides the railway track, he began to cry. He realised that the things that seemed too simple had unnecessarily become complex. He began to pray to Allah Miyan that somehow he should bestow only four rupees on him.

Promising and Playing Games

He kept praying the rest of the day, making promises to offer namaaz, recite the ten surats and Ayat-al-Kursi and so on. But nothing happened. The next day, too, he walked directly to this spot and offered endless prayers. Then, he decided to play a game with Allah Miyan to place



four rupees under the rock. All he could find under the rock, however, was a hairy worm. He kept playing this game in the hope that Allah Miyan would give in to his wishes.

He Got Caught

Defeated on the second day, too, he decided to think of strategies to strike a deal with Allah Miyan the next day. However, that very day his report of being absent from the school had reached his home. He thought it is needless to share what the consequences were, but till his eighth standard he kept wondering what harm would have occurred had Allah Miyan granted him four rupees. Only later he realised that if Allah Miyan was to grant everything merely by listening to man's prayers and demands, man would not have learnt to do anything.

NCERT Folder

Comprehension Check- 1

1. What didn't he pay the school fees on the day he brought money to school?

He couldn't pay the school fees on the day he brought the money because the teacher who was supposed to collect the fees money was on leave.

2. (i) What were the coins 'saying' to him?

The coins were asking him to spend them by buying fresh and sweet syrupy jalebis.

(ii) Do you think they were misguiding him?

Yes. They were misguiding him by tempting the boy.

3. Why didn't he take the coins' advice? Give two or three reasons.

He refused to take the advice of the coins because he thought that he came from a good house and was well fed at home. Spending money to buy things from the bazaar would be a sin. He was also conscious of the fact that the money he had was meant for his fees, which he had to pay the next day.

4. (i) What did the oldest coin tell him?

The oldest coin told him that they were trying to tell him something for his own good. The coin told him that if he spends the fees money on jalebis, he can still pay the fees with the scholarship money he was going to get the next day.

After all, the oldest coin questioned him, didn't he wish to have hot jalebis.



(ii) Did he follow his advice? If not, why not.

He didn't follow his advice. He knew that what he was saying was not wrong, but he wasn't entirely right too. He was afraid that by doing something of that sort, his prestige must be put on stake.

5. He reached home with the coins in his pocket. What happened then?

As he reached his home, the coins began to talk again. When he went to take his lunch, the coins were shrieking.

He got frustrated with the sound that the coins made and finally gave in. He rushed to the bazaar to buy jalebis from the halwai.

Comprehension Check- 2

1. (i) Why didn't he eat all the jalebis he had bought?

He couldn't eat all the jalebis he bought because there were too many jalebis and his stomach was already full.

(ii) What did he do with the remaining jalebis?

He distributed the remaining jalebis to the boys who had assembled in the gali.

2. "The fear was killing me. " What was the fear?

He had eaten too many jalebis. He feared that with every burp, a jalebis or two might not pop out. Furthermore, at night he was also to have his dinner.

3. "Children's stomachs are like digestion machines." What do you understand by that? Do you agree?

The phrase means that children can digest greater amount of food without much problem. Whatever the boy ate, he was able to digest by next morning.

I do not agree with this because overeating may cause digestive problems and upset the metabolism of the child leading to various other problems.

4. How did he plan to pay the fees the next day?

The next day he thought he would pay the fees with the four rupees he was supposed to get as scholarship money.



5. When it is time to pay the fees, what does he do? How is he disobeying the elders by doing so?

He didn't get the scholarship money that day. When the time came to pay the fees, he simply left the school and went away. He disobeyed his elders by spending the fees money on sweet jalebis and by crossing the railway track, something he was forewarned against.

Comprehension Check- 3

1. What was the consequence of buying jalebis with the fees money?

The consequences of buying jalebis with fees money was that he was not left with any money to pay his fees. In order to escape the punishment of not being able to pay the fees, he was absenting himself from the school.

2. His prayer to God is like a lawyer's defence of bad case. Does he argue his case well?

What are the points he makes?

He argues his case well by giving good logic for having spent the fees money. He tells God that the problem would not have occurred had he got the scholarship money on time and had he known this before and he would have postponed buying of jalebis till the next month.

He also tries to strike a deal with God by promising to recite the ten Surats, Ayat-al-Kursi and Namaa.

3. He offers to play a game with Allah Miyan. What is the game?

He decides to play a game with Allah Miyan. He decides to run up till the signal and before he returned from the signal, Allah Miyan should place four rupees under the rock.

4. Did he get four rupees by playing the game? What did he get to see under the rock?

No. It was a stupid, childlike game. He doesn't get the four rupees. All that he gets to see under the rock was a hairy worm.

5. If God has granted his wish that day, what harm would it have caused him in later life.

If God would have granted his wish that day he wouldn't have learnt a very important lesson.

He would have understood that merely by offering prayers, God fulfilled all the wishes of man. He wouldn't have understood that hard work was equally important.



Exercise

1. Select and read sentences that show that the boy is tempted to eat jalebis.

Jalebis are meant to be eaten and only those with money in their pocket can eat them. But then, these jalebis are no common sort of jalebis either. They're crisp, fresh and full of syrup.

My mouth watered.

that he is feeling guilty.

Ans. My head started to spin. I felt as if I was standing on my head and could not get on to my feet again if I tried. When the recess bell rang, I trucked my bag under my arm and left the school. Now for the crime of eating the jalebis, for the first time in my life I was absent from the school. Sitting under a tree, at first I felt like crying.

that he is justifying a wrong deed.

Ans. I didn't eat them all by myself and I fed them to a whole lot of children.

Allah Miyan, I am a very good boy. I have memorised the whole Namaaz.

Discuss the following points.

Is the boy intelligent? If so, what is the evidence of it.

Ans. The boy is an intelligent boy. He has won the scholarship and is one of the promising students.

Does his outlook on the jalebis episode change after class VIII? Does he see that episode in a new light?

Ans. Yes. His outlook on the jalebis episode changes after class VIII. He is able to look at the episode with a new light.

He is able to understand that he tried to tempt and lure God without understanding the ways of God and man. If God was to grant man everything that man asked for man wouldn't have understood the need to work.

Why are 'coins' made to talk in the story? What purpose does it serve?

Ans. The coins are made to talk in the story because the voice of the coins is the boy's own confused mind, trying to resolve the conflict between eating or not eating the jalebis.



Chapter Practice

Very Short Answer Type Questions

1. The boy was in which standard when the jalebis episode happened?

The boy was in the fifth standard at the government school in Kambelpur when the jalebis episode happened.

2. The boy fears that if he spent the money, he would not be able to show his face. Who were these people whom he would not be able to show his face to?

The boy fears that if he would spend the money he would not be able to show his face to Master Ghulam Mohammed at school and to Allah Miyan at Qayamat.

3. Who could have caught the boy as he purchased the jalebis?

The moment the boy purchased the jalebis, he saw his chachajaan (his father's younger brother) returning from the court on his tongo.

If chachajaan would have seen the boy then, he would have got caught.

4. Whom does the boy compare himself to while distributing the jalebis to the children?

While distributing the jalebis, the boy compares himself to the Governor Saheb who used to distribute rice to the poor on Independence Day.

5. While distributing jalebis, the boy assumes a certain importance. Which lines from the text indicate that?

"If children could be elected to the Assembly, my success would have been assured that day.

Because on little signal from my jalebis wielding hand and the mob would have been willing to kill and get killed for me".

6. What were the contents of the boy's bag, when he was expecting God to have put for rupees in it?

The boy realised that God hadn't put money in his bag. All that he had in his bag were a few textbooks and notebooks, one pencil, one sharpener and an Id card his mamu had sent him last year.



Short Answer Type Questions

1. What all prayers did the boy promise to offer God?

The boy promised to offer Namaaz, recite ten surats, Ayat-al- Kursi, Kalma-e-Tayyab and in fact everything he remembered in order to attain four rupees from God. When his various attempts failed, he even decided to do wazu, wear clean clothes and read namaaz from morning to noon.

2. How does the boy escape from the punishment for not having paid the fees?

On not being able to pay the fees, the boy feared the cane of Master Ghulam Mohammed. He left the school after recess, the time decided for collection of fees.

The next day, he left home for school but never went there, fearing punishment. On third day, too, he decided to do the same.

3. What did the oldest coin mean by, “kissa khatam, paisa hazam”?

The oldest coin was trying to persuade the boy to spend the coins on buying jalebis. It was trying to argue that he could buy jalebis with the fees money and pay fees with the scholarship money and that would be the end of the story, “kissa khatam, paisa hazam”.

4. “The coins were so eager to be spent that day”. Do you agree?

No. The truth is that the coins don't speak. It is the boy's greed and temptation to devour the hot, fresh and sugar syrupy jalebis that was becoming uncontrollable. All the arguments presented by the coins, in fact was the debate going on in the mind of the boy.

Long Answer Type Questions

1. Describe the tone of the second encounter between the boy and the halwai.

Not having been able to pay the fees, the boy left the school after the recess and came back when the school was going to get over to walk down home with the other children. On being asked by the halwai if he wanted to buy jalebis even today, the boy felt like telling him that he wanted to roast his liver and eat, instead. The boy was full of regret and anger which got reflected in their second meeting.

2. Describe the various metaphors employed in the story.

The story employs quite a few metaphors. The jalebis, hot and syrupy, stand as a metaphor for various temptations that young children could have. The boy is lured by the prospect of buying jalebis with his fees money. The four coins, similarly are metaphors in the story.



The noises produced by the coins, their jingle and clamour, is representative of the mental conflict going on in the boy's mind. He was unable to control his temptation. Therefore, the 'talking coins', on whom he transfers the onus of his temptation.

Value Based Question

1. What important lesson did not the boy learn, with respect to money?

The boy had been warned by his elders never to misuse the fees money. Despite that he spends the fees money on jalebis. The lesson he learns is that he should never misuse the funds and money for which his parents have worked hard to earn. Also, he learns that one can never be too sure of his circumstances.

The fate has its own role to play. Therefore, the scholarship money that he used to get every month was so late in coming on that particular day when he had already spent his fees money.



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