

## Grade X Lesson 8

### Mijbil The Otter

#### Main Points of the Story

- ❖ When Maxwell's dog died. He became alone without a pet.
- ❖ In 1956, he travelled to Southern Iraq and there he thought of keeping an otter instead of a dog.
- ❖ His friend advised him to get an otter in Tigris marshes. They were found in plenty there.
- ❖ Two Arabs were squatting on the floor and a sack was lying beside them
- ❖ They handed him a note from his friend. It read: "Here is your otter ..."
- ❖ The narrator named the otter 'Mijbil'.
- ❖ In the beginning, Mijbil was indifferent but started taking a keen interest in his surroundings.
- ❖ He came to his bed and remained sleep on Maxwell's knees.
- ❖ Like every otter, Mijbil enjoyed splashing water like a hippo.
- ❖ Mijbil was successful in screwing up the tap to its full flow.
- ❖ The otter spent most of his time in playing.
- ❖ It was really a difficult job to transport Mijbil from Basra to England.
- ❖ Mij was packed up in small box.
- ❖ The air hostess was quite friendly and cooperative and suggested keeping the pet on his knee.
- ❖ As the box was opened, Mij was out of the box in flash.
- ❖ Mijbil disappeared and later on it was found beneath the legs of a turbaned Indian.
- ❖ Maxwell remained in London with Mijbil for nearly a month.
- ❖ Mij invented his own game with the ping-pong ball.
- ❖ Like school children he would touch every block with his feet and touch every second lamp-post.
- ❖ The average Londoner could not recognise an otter and people started giving wild guesses about him.
- ❖ Mijbil was called 'a baby seal', 'a squirrel', 'a walrus', 'a beaver', etc.

## I. Extract Based Questions

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

1. What I casually mentioned this to a friend, he casually replied that I had better get one in the Tigris marshes, for there they were as common as mosquitoes, and were often tamed by the Arabs. We were going to Basra to the Consulate-General we found that my friend's mail had arrived but that mine had not.
- What was 'they'?
  - Where could the author get 'one'?
  - Find the exact word from the extract which means 'domesticated.'
  - What did the author find at the Consulate-General?

Ans. a. 'They' in the extract are Otters.

b. The narrator gets one from the Tigris marshes.

c. 'tamed'.

d. The author found that his mail had not arrived while his friend's mail had arrived.

2. With the ping-pong ball he invented a game of his own which could keep him engrossed for up to half an hour at a time.
- Who is 'he'?
  - Which game did he invent?
  - Find out the word from the paragraph which means 'keenly interested'.

Ans. a. Mijibil, the Otter, is 'he' referred to here.

b. He invented a game of his own which he played with a ping-pong ball. It could keep him engrossed for half an hour.

c. The word is 'engrossed'.

3. Early in the New Year of 1956 I travelled to Southern Iraq. By then it had crossed my mind that I should like to keep an otter instead of a dog, and that Camusfearna, ringed by water a stone's throw from its door, would be an eminently suitable spot for this experiment.
- What 'experiment' did Maxwell think Camusfearna would be suitable for?
  - Why was it a suitable spot for his experiment?
  - Write the meaning of the phrase, 'crossed my mind'.

Ans. a. Maxwell thought that Camusfearna would be suitable for keeping an otter. This was the experiment to keep an otter at a dry place.

- b. It (Camusfearna) was a suitable place for his experiment because it was ringed by otter, a stone's throw from its door.
- c. 'Crossed my mind' means 'came to my mind'.

### Short Answer Type Questions

**1. What had crossed the author's mind and why? (Or)**

**Why did Maxwell think of keeping an otter as a pet?**

**Ans.** Maxwell's favourite dog Jonnie died. It left him alone without a pet. He travelled to Southern Iraq in 1956. By then it has crossed his mind that he should like to keep an otter instead of a dog. The place he lived on was ringed by water. It was quite a suitable place for his new experiment.

**2. What did his friend advise Maxwell?**

**Ans.** Maxwell had already decided to keep an otter as a pet instead of dog. He casually mentioned it to a friend. He advised Maxwell that he should try to get an otter in the Tigris marshes. Otters were as common there as were mosquitoes. They were often tamed by the Arabs.

**3. Why were they going to the consulate-General in Basra? Why did he wait for five days there?**

**Ans.** Maxwell and his companions were going to Basra to the Consulate-General to collect and answer their mail from Europe. He found that his friend's mail had arrived but that his had not. He tried to telephone but didn't get any success. His mail came only after five days.

**4. How did Maxwell get Mijbil, the otter?**

**Ans.** Maxwell had changed his idea of keeping a dog as his pet. He decided to have an otter. He had asked one of his friends to arrange for an otter. He went to his bedroom to read his mail. Two Arabs were squatting on the floor. Beside them lay a sack. They handed him a note which said, "Here is your otter ...". The sack was opened. In this way, Maxwell got his new pet-an otter.

**5. Describe the physical appearance of Mijbil, the otter.**

**Ans.** The creature that emerged from the sack was unique one. He resembled like a very small imaginary dragon of the Middle Ages. Its body was coated with pointed scales. Between them a soft velvet fur was visible. It was like a chocolate brown mole.

**6. Why was Mijbil christened Maxwell's otter?**

**Ans.** The narrator called his pet Mijbil. The otter, in fact, belonged to a race unknown to science so far. It was christened at length by zoologists *Lutrogale Perspicillata maxwelli* or the Maxwell's otter, it was christened after the name of his master.

**7. What is a characteristic of otter and how did Mijbil behave in water?**

**Ans.** The main characteristic of an otter is to extend and spread every drop of water about the place. A bowl full of water must be overturned. He would sit in and splash in until it flows.

**8. How did Mijbil fumble at the tap in the bathroom. Did he succeed?**

**Ans.** Maxwell saw Mijbil standing up on the end of his bathtub. He was fumbling at the taps with his paws. Very soon he turned the tap to produce a trickle of water. And soon after he achieved the full flow.

**9. How would Mijbil play with a rubber-ball, and jiggle with small object and marbles?**

**Ans.** Mijbil spent hours shuffling a rubber ball around the room like a four-footed soccer player. But the real game which mijbil enjoyed most was juggling with small objects with his paws lying on his back. Mijbil's favourite toys for his play were marbles.

**10. How was Mijbil transported from Basra to London?**

**Ans.** It was a difficult job for Mijbil to be transported from Basra to London. The British airline wouldn't fly animals. He books a fight to Paris on small box an hour before so that he would become accustomed to it.

**11. Why did Maxwell call the airhostess " the very queen of her kind?"**

**Ans.** The airhostess was very friendly and cooperative. Maxwell took her into his confidence and gave her a parcel of fish for mijbil. He admired her and called her " the very queen of her kind". The air hostess suggested that he could keep his pet on his knee.

**12. Where did mijbil disappear and how was he found?**

**Ans.** The moment the box was open, mij was out of it flash. He disappeared soon down the aircraft. There were squawks and sheiks. A rat!" Mijbil was found beneath the legs of a

turbaned Indian. Maxwell dived for him but found his face covered in curry. In the end, Mijbil himself came and sat on Maxwell's knee.

**13. What game did Mij invent in London?**

**Ans.** Mij played with a ping-pong ball. Due to this game, the author's suitcase was damaged. There was a slope on one end of the suitcase. Mij placed the ball on the high end, then it ran down to the other end. This continued for a long time.

**14. What game did Mij invent?**

**Ans.** Mij invented a game of his own with the ping-pong ball which could keep him engrossed for half an hour at a time. He also discovered that if he placed the ball on the high end it would run down the length of the suitcase.

**15. What special characteristic of Mijbil did Maxwell learn after he took him to the bathroom?**

**Ans.** When Maxwell took Mijbil to bathroom, he found that it enjoyed there too much because its natural instinct is to play and enjoy in water. It plunged and rolled in bathroom. It itself went to the bathroom and struggled with the taps until the water came out.

**16. What guesses did the Londoners make about what Mijbil was?**

**Ans.** The Londoners could not recognize an otter. They tried to guess what the animal was. They thought it to be a baby seal, a squirrel, a walrus, a hippo or a leopard.

**17. What compulsive habits had Mijbil developed?**

**Ans.** Compulsive habits indicate those habits that cannot be controlled. In Mijbil's case, he would tug the author to the two feet high wall of a school opposite to his flat, when he walked with him (author). He would also jump on to the wall and run the full length of its thirty yards.

**18. What happened when Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom? What does it tell us about Mijbil?**

**Ans.** When Maxwell took Mijbil to bathroom, he found that it enjoyed there too much because its natural instinct is to play and enjoy in water. It plunged and rolled in bathroom. It itself went to the bathroom and struggled with the taps until the water came out.

**19. Give an example from the text to show that Mijbil is an intelligent animal.**

**Ans.** Once Mijbil was hurt in box, and while opening it whimpered and caught the author by the leg. It played with Ping-Pong balls and enjoyed galloping on the thirty-yard wall in London. All these things show that Mijbil is an intelligent animal.



**20. What happened when Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom? What did Mijbil do two days after that?**

**Ans.** When Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom, it enjoyed there too much. It pinged and rolled in the bath tub. After two days, it went to the bathroom itself and struggled with the tap until there was a full of water.

**21. What things does Mij do which tell you that he is an intelligent animal who needs love?**

**Ans.** On the first day, it was aloof and indifferent but on the second day, it entered the author's bed and did not wake up till the servant brought tea. When he was hurt in the box, the author opened it. It whimpered and caught him by the leg. It also played with ping-pong balls, and placed itself on the author's knees. It also enjoyed galloping on the thirty yard wall in London. All these things tell us that Mij is an intelligent animal who needs love.

**22. What guesses did the Londoners make about that Mij was?**

**Ans.** The average Londoners could not recognize an otter. So, they made a lot of guesses as to what kind of animal it might be. They thought it to be a baby seal, a squirrel, a walrus, a hippo, a beaver, a bear cub, a leopard, etc.

**23. What happened when Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom? What happened two days after?**

**Ans.** When Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom it enjoyed there a lot. It plunged and rolled in bathtub.

After two days, it went to bathroom itself and struggled with the taps until there was a full flow of water.

**24. What happened when Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom? What did Mijbil do two days after?**

**Ans.** When Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom, it enjoyed there very much. He went wild with joy in the water, plunging and rolling in it. After two days, it went to the bathroom itself and struggled with taps until there was a full flow of water.

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## Long Answer Type Questions

### 1. Why did Maxwell decide to have an otter as a pet? How did he get it?

**Ans.** Maxwell's pet dog Jonnie died. He felt alone without a pet. This time he decided to change his pet. He decided to own an otter as his pet. His place, Camusfearna was ringed by water. It would be a suitable place for this new experiment. One of his friends suggested that he could get an otter in the Tigris marshes as were mosquitoes. They were often tamed by the Arabs as pets. Maxwell got his mail after five days. He carried it to his bedroom to read. There he found two Arabs Squatting on the floor. A sack lay beside them, there was something moving and twisting in it. The Arabs handed him a note from his friend. It read, " Here is your otter ... " The sack was opened. And there emerged a unique creature from the sack. Later on, this otter was named Mijbil by Maxwell.

### 2. Why was Mijbil, the otter christened Maxwell's otter by zoologists? How did the otter behave in the beginning and afterwards?

**Ans.** The otter, Mijbil was, in fact, of a race previously unknown to science. At last, it was christened *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli* by zoologists. It was also called Maxwell's otter after the name of its master.

In the beginning, Mijbil was neither hostile nor friendly. He was totally aloof and indifferent. He chose to sleep on the as far from Maxwell's bed as possible. But the change started coming from the second night. He started taking a keen interest in his surroundings. Later on, he become playful and started enjoying his stay with his owner.

### 3. What is a characteristic of otters? How did Mijbil enjoy himself by playing different games?

**Ans.** Maxwell learnt that extending and spreading every drop of water about the place is the main characteristic of otters. And Mijbil was no exception. He continued rolling and plunging in the bathtub. He made enough slosh and splash for a hippo. A bowl must be overturned. Water must be kept on the move until it overflows.

Mijbil enjoyed himself doing funny things. He would stand up on the end of the bathtub and turn the tap to its full flow. He spent hours shuffling a rubber ball round the room like a four-footed soccer player. He would lie on his back juggling with small objects between his paws. He enjoyed playing with marbles which were his favourite toys for this pastime.

**4. How was Mijbil transporter from Basra to London? What scenes did the otter create in the aircraft?**

**Ans.** Transporting Mijbil from Basra to London was really a problem. The British airline would not fly animals. Maxwell had to book a flight to Paris on another airline. According to the instruction, Mijbil was put into a box not more than eighteen inches square. Luckily, the seat booked for him was at the extremes front. He covered the floor around his feet with newspapers. The air hostess was very friendly and cooperative. Maxwell gave her a parcel of fish for Mij to be kept in a cool place. She suggested that he should keep his pet on his knee. The moment the box was opened, Mij was out in a flash. He disappeared at high speed down the aircraft. Noisy scene was created. There were squawks and shrieks all around. A woman stood up from her seat crying. "A rat! A rat!" Maxwell saw Mijbil disappearing beneath the legs of a portly turbaned Indian. The airhostess requested Maxwell to resume his seat. She hoped to find the animal and bring it to him. Suddenly, he heard Mijbil's voice from his feet. He heard Mijbil bounded on to his knee and began to nuzzle the face and neck of his owner.

**5. What were strange and funny wild guesses that Londoners made about Mijbil? Who made the best remark about the otter?**

**Ans.** It was rather difficult for an average London to recognise such a strange animal as otter. Most of them had never seen such a unique animal. The thing that surprised Maxwell that Londoners made such funny and wild guesses about Mijbil, the otter. He faced a continuous barrage of question from the anxious but ignorant people. They made random guesses about the animal. Some of them guessed that he was 'a baby seal' or 'a squirrel' or 'a walrus'. Others also made fantastic guessed. One called it 'a beaver'. Another called it was 'a bear cub'. The third guessed that it was 'a leopard'. Mij was anything but an otter. The Question that was awarded the highest score came from a labourer. The surprised labourer spat glared and growled out, " Here, Mister—what is that supposed to be?"

**6. Describe Maxwell's experience with the otter in the air flight to London.**

**Ans.** Generally, the British Airline would not allow animals in the air flight to London. However, inside the aircraft, the air hostess was very kind and friendly. 'The very queen of her kind', she permitted the author to keep the otter on his knees. As soon as the author opened the box, the otter jumped and woman screamed out, 'A rat! A rat!' The author caught sight of



Mij's tail disappearing beneath the legs of a portly white-turbaned Indian. Diving for it, he (the author) missed, but his face covered in curry.

**7. How did the otter behave in the beginning? How did he become familiar with the author?**

**Ans.** On the first day, the otter was neither hostile nor friendly to the author. He was simply aloof and indifferent. He chooses to sleep on the author's bed as possible.

On the second night, there was a complete change. He came to the author's bed in the early hours and remained asleep there under his knees as, he became familiar with him.

**8. What games did Mij play when he was with the author in London? Which game did he invent?**

**Ans.** When Mijbil was with the author in London, he played many games for hours. He developed many games on his own. He played different games with ping-pong balls, rubber fruit, shells, marbles, toys, and so on.

The Otter played with ping-pong balls on the author's suitcase. He ran through the ball on the high end; he would run down the length of the suitcase. He also ran to the other end of the suitcase to catch the ball. He sprang and grabbed it.

In fact the play of the Otter was lying on his back and juggling with small objects between his paws. Marble was his most favourite toys.

Mijbil invented a game of his own he played with a ping-pong ball. This game kept him engrossed for an hour at a time.



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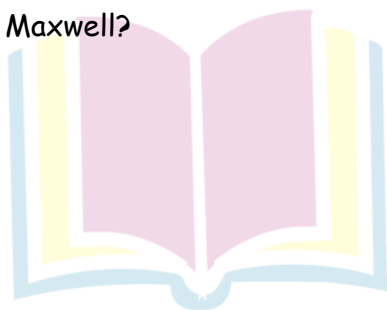
## TEST YOUR SKILLS

### Short Answer Type Questions

1. Why did Maxwell think of having an otter as his pet?
2. How did Maxwell get his pet otter?
3. How did Mijbil behave in the beginning and later on?
4. What is the main characteristic of otters?
5. What were the famous games and antics of Mijbil to spend his time?
6. What difficulty did Maxwell face in transporting Mijbil to London and how was it solved?
7. What funny scenes did Mijbil create in the aircraft?
8. Why the otter was christened 'Maxwell's otter'?
9. What wild guesses did Londoners make regarding the otter?
10. Why did he go to Basra and how long did he have to wait there?

### Long Answer Type Questions

1. Why did Maxwell think of having an otter as his pet and how did he get one?
2. Describe the behaviour of Mijbil with the passage of time. What certain compulsive habits did Mijbil develop during the walks in the streets of London?
3. What is the main characteristic of otters? What games did Mijbil play to enjoy himself as his favourite pastime?
4. Was it easy for Londoners to recognise Mijbil? Make about the otter? Whose remark got the highest score from Maxwell?



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