2.5 Book Review - Swami and Friends by R. K. Narayan

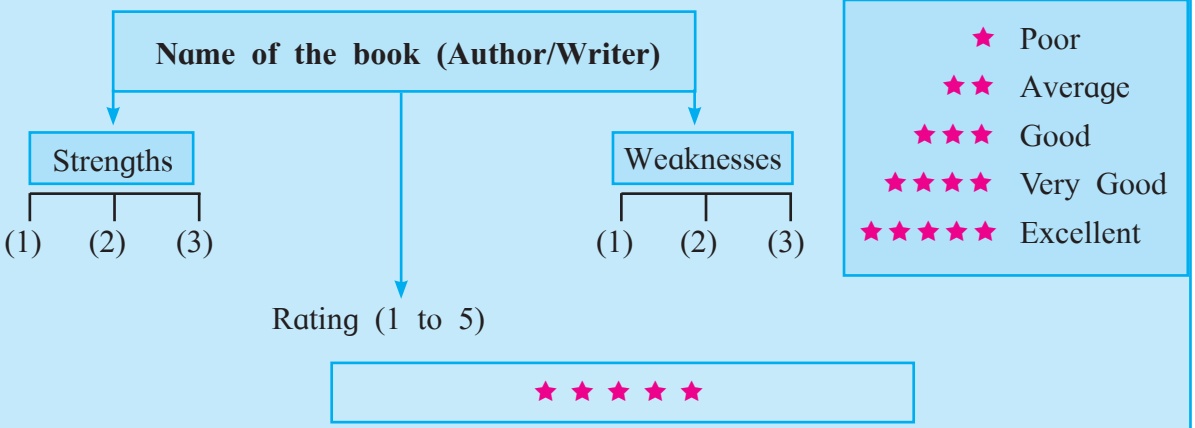
Warming up!

Chit-Chat

1. Form groups of 3 to 4 and share the following with your groups.

- Your favourite book
- Type of book (short stories/biography/thriller/adventure/ science fiction/historical) etc.
- Author/Writer
- Main character
- Background (Time and place)
- Problem/dilemma
- Any special message

2. You have recently read a short story/novel/drama/science fiction/ghost-story. Write in short 3 of its strong points that made you like the book and 2 or 3 drawbacks it has. Fill them up in the tree-diagram given.



3. Determiners are words that modify a noun or noun phrase and occur before them in a sentence. Determiners provide a context to the noun they precede. They may be :-

- Articles - a, an, the
- Demonstratives - this, that, these, those, which etc.
- Possessives - my, your, our, their, his, her etc. my friend's, her mother's etc.
- Quantifiers - few, many, much, more, every, each, some etc.
- Numerals - one, four, hundred, first, fourth, hundredth

4. Underline only Determiners in the following.

1. My brother bought a few magazines.
2. What is your friend's name?
3. Which writer was also the President of our country?
4. These are some toys.
5. These toys are new.
6. That doctor is an expert dentist and he has many patients.

Book Review - Swami and Friends by R. K. Narayan

A little bit about the book...

Anything I mention about the book can be mistakenly understood as 'spoilers', so I would rather give a glance into the book without mentioning any events or plots of the story.

Swami is a mischievous little kid of about 10 years old and living in the era where India was under the British rule... Like most kids of that age, Swami is a kid who cannot stay at one place and absolutely hates school, even worse Mathematics. School is his absolute **nightmare**. Anyway the story unfolds around the happenings of this kid and how he constantly gets into trouble and gets a good beating from his father.

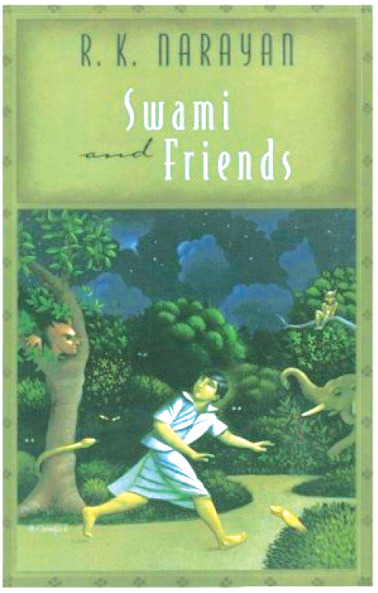
Swami is a talkative little kid and thinks that's his way of facing life, talking himself out of everything. But he does learn the truth the harsh way. As many teens back then, all he wants to do is play under the sun, kick something, climb a tree, break something and **harass somebody** (unlike kids today!!!). This, in fact, was (and in most parts of India, still is) the life of a typical boy growing up. Technology isn't big in a kid's life. All they want is **to play havoc**!!!

In what ways is Swami a typical boy in his growing years?

In this regard, Narayan gets deeply into the workings of Swami's ten year old mind, explaining **exquisitely** how he thinks and what his **perspective** of the world is. The reader does feel like Swami and gets very attached with the character as the story progresses. That's the magic of Narayan.

Significance of the book...

'Swami and Friends' by R. K. Narayan is not merely an interesting read that could be enjoyed from top to bottom, but the work attributes a lot of literary values even if it is a teen book.



- Find out what are 'spoilers' in a dictionary.

- **nightmare :** a very frightening experience
- What is the most striking quality of 10 year old Swami?
- **harass somebody :** trouble
- **to play hovoc :** to prevent normal function and cause damage
- **exquisite :** in a pleasing manner
- **perspective :** point of view

- What does the review say about R. K. Narayan's style and language?

- **technical jargon :** words used by particular professionals, that others fail to understand

- **encompasses :** circles around

- **sensitive :** quick to understand feelings of others

'Swami and Friends' is a good read for the kids and teens alike. Also the book is widely used in the Asian continent as a study text for the students who study literature as a subject at schools. This does not mean that the book is filled with heavy grammar and **technical jargon**. Actually the truth is in contrary to this.

Swami and Friends is written in such simple English it is hard to imagine that it is a work of such a literary genius like R. K. Narayan. The English used in the book is both plain and simple, without any troubling words for the kids. Also the use of simple and short sentences adds to the simplicity of the book.

It is mentioned in the description that the book is about a mischievous ten year old Indian boy, and some parents may be concerned about the influence this will have on their already mischievous children. But the book is as such, that it **encompasses** the mischief of the kids in a view of the kid which is harmless and pure in his perspective. Also amidst all the mischief and naughtiness, we actually find that Swami is a loving and a tender kid who's actually very sensitive. It is also a known fact that mischievous kids are the most **sensitive** and loving people of all. And R. K. Narayan does a great job conveying that to all of us.

So in conclusion it can be said that this book is a good read for children of all ages, who may just enjoy a good read or who may want to improve their English skills.

About the author...

The author of 'Swami and Friends' is India's one of the greatest authors of all time, R. K. Narayan.

R. K. Narayan is responsible for many of the outstanding literary works India has ever produced. And this book in particular captures the **essence** of India under British ruling and the mind and life of a typical teenage kid.

Other great works by Narayan include –

'Malgudi Days', 'The Guide', 'The Painter of Signs' and many more literary works such as 'The Ramayana' : A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic and 'The Mahabharata' : A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic.

Go take a look at them if you are interested.

✦ What are the two advantages of reading this book?

• **essence :** spirit

ENGLISH WORKSHOP

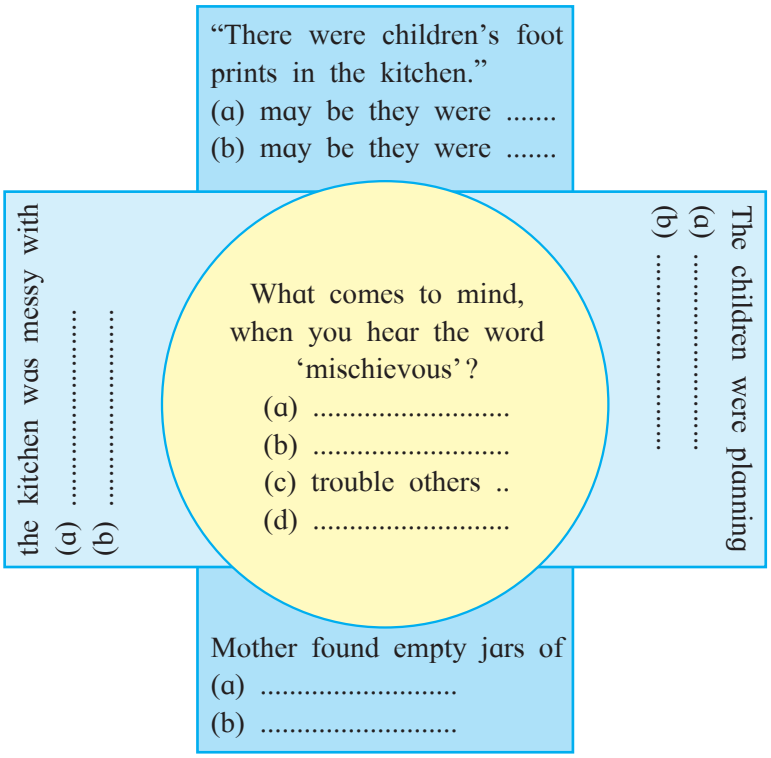
1. Refer to the story 'The Boy who Broke the Bank' (Lesson 2.2) by Ruskin Bond. Read it carefully and write a Review of the same, keeping the following points in mind.

(a) Name of Story and Writer/Author
(b) Type of story
(c) Background and setting (Time and Place)
(d) Main characters
(e) Problem faced
(f) Language used
(g) What you liked about the story
(h) What you did not like about it
(i) Your general opinion of the story

2. Look inside your thinking hat.

Read the evidence/sentences given below and offer a possible explanation of what happened in this house? Make up some questions to gather more information.

Now collect all your evidences and write a story in your notebook. Give a suitable title.



3. Identify the new words and phrases which seem to be important, in the review. Try to guess their meaning from the context. You can use a dictionary to confirm it. Fill up the table.

Word	Meaning conveyed	One Synonym/ Antonym	Word Class	Other forms	Translation in Mother tongue
1. mischievous	naughty but innocent	Synonym- naughty, troublesome Antonym- good and well-behaved	Adjective	mischief mischievously	शरारती (Hindi) खोडकर (Marathi)
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

4. (A) Find from the lesson the Noun forms of :

(a) happen ..... (b) true .....

(c) simple ..... (d) conclude .....

(B) Find Verb forms of :-

(a) hatred ..... (b) thought .....

(c) meaning ..... (d) improvement .....

(e) description ..... (f) attribution .....

(C) Find Adjective forms of :-

(a) talk ..... (b) interest .....

(c) purity ..... (d) technique .....

(e) literature .....

Tips For Reading, For A Review (Guidelines)

Skimming - (While you read for a review you should know –

(a) What is the title/text/content?

(b) What exactly is to be read? (Selectivity)

(c) What support/related resources/references/help is to be generated or found?

(d) What will you search to get complete details/associated ideas?

(e) Use technology if required (web, e-books, gazettes) to correlate the content that is read.

Scanning - We might use scanning to –

(a) Look up for meanings of related words/phrases/novel ideas.

(b) Find exact associations or inter-relationship of words.

(c) Check perfection in the start and finish time, while reading.

(d) Identify the exact sequence of ideas and occurence of events.

(e) Use technology if required (web, e-books, gazettes) to correlate the content that is read.

Project - (A Book Review)

Write a complete review on any book that you have read recently. Use the following points for your Book Review.

(a) Introduction (b) Selectivity of contents

(c) Subject/Title Apporpriacy

(d) Sequence of Contents (e) Language Appropriacy/Type

(f) Good Points/Novelty in the book.

(g) Advantages/Scope of the book. (if any)

(h) Demerits/Shortcomings (if any)

(i) Message/Opinion/Views (Personal)

(j) Conclusion (in short)