

2.3 Abdul Becomes a Courtier

(Father who is a schoolmaster is getting ready to go to school.)

Abdul : Father, to knowledge and erudition I aspire.
To study hard and deep, books I require.
Will you lend me a little gold?
Books I'll buy and study to rise high in the world.

Father : Only the first half of the month has passed,
But alas, the money doesn't last!
Great books and manuscripts are so expensive.
They are treasures rare and exclusive
But from my school, I will try to borrow
Books that will take you to a brighter tomorrow.

Abdul : That will be great!
How eagerly I wait!

(In the evening, when father returns –)

Abdul : How many books could you get?
Oh! Now my life will be all set –

Father : I am so sorry son,
Couldn't lay my hands on even one!

Chorus : *Poor Abdul is sad and dejected
Ponders; 'Why my wishes are thus rejected?'
Continues to do his daily chores
Reads borrowed books in tens and scores
An idea then crosses his mind
To serve the rich, and get paid in kind.*

- erudition : learning, scholarly work
- scares : sets of twenty
- in kind : (payment) given in the form of goods or services and not money.

- ⌘ Guess the meaning of 'a brighter tomorrow' in the context of the play.
- ⌘ What does Abdul want to do? How does he plan to do it?

(Abdul approaches a rich merchant.)

Abdul : I'm a poor student, give me a chance
to serve.

Observe my work, pay only what I deserve.

Merchant : You appear to be smart, be my Clerk.

I'll pay you well, if honestly you work.

(Some days pass. The merchant calls Abdul.)

Merchant : I am pleased with your work and loving care!

You are indeed a gem, quite rare.

I'll give you a reward, if your demand is fair.

Abdul : (excited) May I now read the books in your store?

Quench my thirst for knowledge,

I need nothing more.

Chorus : Days passed by, he learned and learned
Gaining the knowledge for which he yearned
Philosophy, Astronomy, Arabic and Persian
Abdul the scholar now is one in a million!

Will he come to the Emperor's notice?

Will he be given an honourable office?

Friend : News for you, Abdul.

The Emperor has answered your prayer.

The Royal *Murgikhana* is now under your care.

Abdul : What, the *Murgikhana* for me, a scholar!

Intellectual, sagacious, astute - made a poultry keeper?

Never mind, the chance I won't refuse.

It is an opportunity. I'll put it to good use.

- clerk : a person who keeps records, accounts, etc.
- quench : satisfy
- office : position, responsibility
- prayer : Here, it means a request
- sagacious : wise
- astute : intelligent. One who knows how to use a situation to his advantage

- ✿ Find pairs of rhyming words used in this passage.
- ✿ Guess the meaning of 'a gem' in the context of this play.
- ✿ Find words/phrases that mean 'rare'.
- ✿ What request must Abdul have sent to the Emperor?

Chorus :

*Abdul worked with conviction, zeal and passion
The hens were given a new kind of ration.
The birds seemed to be in the pink of health
But nothing was spent from the Emperor's wealth!*

Emperor : How is that?

Why are we spending so little on our hens?
Have most of them died in the pens?

Minister : No, your Majesty, they are alive and well.
The secret of their health, only Abdul can tell.

(Abdul enters and bows before the Emperor.)

Emperor : How come you spend so little on our hens?
How do you nourish them, at no expense?

Abdul : Jahapanah, your humble servant feeds them well.
Food from the royal kitchen, if I may tell –
But only scraps and shells and kitchen waste
That's enough for the hens, they relish the taste.
It's good for their health, see how they thrive.
Waste not, want not, that's my drive.

Emperor : Interesting, young man, you seem to have brains.
We put you in charge of the library for all your pains.

Chorus : *Oh, no! Not again. Only a keeper of books!
And he wished to be a courtier! How sad he looks!*

Abdul : Never mind! I love books. I'll get down to work.
I'll handle this well, my duties I won't shirk.

- zeal : enthusiasm
- to be in the pink (of health) : to be fit and fine
- passion : great feeling
- drive : an effort made to achieve a certain purpose
- brains : intelligence
- shirk : avoid
- ⌘ How did Abdul manage to feed the birds well without spending money?
- ⌘ How did the Emperor reward Abdul for his good work? Do you think the Emperor's action was right?

(After one year.
The Emperor is looking
at the books in the library.)

Emperor : What!

All these books have such expensive jackets!
Surely they've cost a fortune -
silks, brocades and velvets!

Abdul : No, Your Majesty. The expenses were none.

Emperor : I can't believe it, then how was it done?

Abdul : Your Majesty, I observed that the formal requests
Were sent to you in bags made of the fabrics best.
When the papers were read, the bags were discarded.
Why waste the silk, velvet, brocade, I demanded?
The Royal Tailors made the jackets,
nothing did they take.
Each book was dressed for Your Majesty's sake.

Emperor : You've great merit, I'd realised much earlier.
I'm happy to announce, now you are my courtier!

Chorus : *Wits, brains, and perseverance
helped Abdul achieve his aim
Patience, determination won him
great name and fame.*

- Adapted from the story 'Enter Mulla Do-Piazza'
by Pratibha Nath

- brocade : rich fabric woven with golden or silver thread
- papers : official documents
- won him name and fame : It means he became a famous person.

✿ How did Abdul manage to get expensive jackets for the books?

✿ Abdul got the Royal Tailors to work for making the jackets. What skills does it reflect?



ENGLISH WORKSHOP

1. From the play, find all the words that are related to the following :
 - knowledge and learning • fabrics • books • workAdd other related words you know to the list.
2. **Discuss** the following.
 - (a) Abdul gets what he wants in the end. What is the major factor that contributes to this success ?
 - His learning of books • His intelligence • His attitude
 - His relations with other people • His luck
 - (b) The Emperor says he had realised earlier that Abdul has great talent. Does this tally with his actions ? Give your opinion.
3. **Write a letter** from Abdul to the Emperor, requesting the Emperor to give Abdul a suitable job.
4. **Rewrite** the play in the form of a short story.
5. Suggest at least one method of creating something useful or beautiful from waste.
6. Write how you take care of your books.
7. Language Study : **Common nouns - 3** : Common nouns can be classified in one more way – **concrete nouns and abstract nouns**. **Concrete nouns** stand for things that you can actually touch or see.

Examples : school, house, bags, butterflies, child.

Abstract nouns stand for ideas, feelings, qualities, actions, states, etc. Examples : life, time, goodness, progress, kindness, childhood, honesty, mathematics Can you spot at least three abstract nouns in the following paragraph?

‘We put the plan of action in motion immediately. We kept it a secret. We wanted to give Mrs Desai a surprise. But her intelligence is really appreciable. She spotted the change within a week.’

Now you know that plural forms of nouns have -s, -es, or -ies at the end. But the plurals of some nouns are formed differently. Look at the following forms.

- child – children • man – men • tooth – teeth • foot – feet
- leaf – leaves • mouse – mice

Some nouns have the singular and the plural alike.

Examples : sheep, deer.

