

## Swami is Expelled from School



The headmaster entered the class with a slightly flushed face and a hard ominous look in his eyes. Swaminathan wished that he had been anywhere but there at that moment. The headmaster surveyed the class for a few minutes and asked, “Are you not ashamed of coming and sitting there after what you did yesterday?” Just a special honour to them, he read out the names of dozen students or so, that had attended the class. After that he read out the names of those that had kept away, and asked them to stand on their benches. He felt that punishment was not enough and asked them to stand on their desks. Swaminathan was among them and felt humiliated at that eminence. Then they were lectured. When it was over, they were asked to offer explanations one by one. One said that he had an attack of a headache and therefore could not come to school. He was asked to bring a medical certificate.

The second said that while he had been coming to school on the previous day, someone had told him that there would be no school, and he had gone back home. The head master replied that if he was going to listen to every loafer who said there would be no school, he deserved to be flogged. Anyway, why did he not come to school and verify? No answer. The punishment was pronounced; ten days’ attendance cancelled, two rupees fine, and the whole day to be spent on the desk. The third said that he had an attack of a headache. The fourth said that he had stomachache. The fifth said that his grandmother died suddenly just as he was starting for school. The headmaster asked him if he could bring a letter from his father. No. He had no father. Then, who was his guardian? His grandmother. But the grandmother was dead, was she not?



No. It was another grandmother. The headmaster asked how many grandmothers a person could have. No answer. Could he bring a letter from his neighbours? No, he could not. None of his neighbours could read or write, because he lived in a very illiterate part of Ellaman Street. Then the headmaster offered to send a teacher to this illiterate locality to ascertain from the boy's neighbours if the death of the grandmother was a fact. A pause, some perspiration, and then the answer that the neighbours could not possibly know anything about it, since the grandmother died in the village. The headmaster hit him on the knuckles with his cane, called him a street dog, and pronounced the punishment fifteen days' suspension.

When Swaminathan's turn came, he looked around helplessly. Rajam sat on the third bench in front, and resolutely looked away. He was gazing at the blackboard intently.

But yet the back of his head and the pink ears were visible to Swaminathan. It was an intolerable sight. Swaminathan was in acute suspense lest that head should turn and fix its eyes on his; he felt that he would drop from the desk to the floor, if that happened. The pink ears three benches off made him incapable of speech. If only somebody would put a blackboard between his eyes and those pink ears!

He was deaf to the question that the headmaster was putting to him. A rap on his body from the headmaster's cane brought him to himself.

"Why did you keep away yesterday?" asked the headmaster, looking up. Swaminathan's first impulse was to protest that he had never been absent. But the attendance register was there. "No..no.." I was stoned. I tried to come, but they took away my cap and burnt it. Many strong men held me down when I tried to come... When a great man is sent to gaol... I am surprised to see you a slave of the Englishmen... Didn't they cut off—Dacca Muslin—slaves of slaves! These were some of the disjointed explanations which streamed into his head and which even at that moment he was discreet enough not to express. He had wanted to mention a headache, but he found to his distress that others beside him had one. The headmaster shouted, "Won't you open your mouth?" He brought the cane sharply down on Swaminathan's right shoulder. Swaminathan kept staring at the headmaster with tearful eyes, massaging with his left hand the spot where the cane laid. "I will kill you if you keep on staring without answering my question", cried the headmaster.

"I..I.. couldn't come," stammered Swaminathan.

"Is that so? asked the headmaster, and turning to a boy said. "Bring the peon".

Swaminathan thought, "What! Is he going to ask the peon to thrash me? If he does any such thing, I will bite everybody dead." The peon came. The headmaster said to him, "Now say what you know about this rascal on the desk."

The peon eyed Swaminathan with a sinister look, grunted, and demanded. “Didn’t I see you break the panes?”

“Of the ventilators in my room?” added the headmaster with zest.

Here there was no chance of escape. Swaminathan kept staring foolishly till he received another whack on the back. The headmaster demanded what the young brigand had to say about it. The brigand had nothing to say. It was a fact that he had broken the panes. They had seen it. There was nothing more to it. He had unconsciously become defiant and did not care to deny the charge. When another whack came on his back, he ejaculated, “Don’t beat me, sir. It pains.” This was an invitation to the headmaster to bring down the cane four times again. He said, “Keep standing here, on this desk, staring like an idiot, till I announce your dismissal.”

Every pore in Swaminathan’s body burnt with the touch of the cane. He had a sudden flood of courage, the courage that comes of desperation. He restrained the tears that were threatening to rush out, jumped down, and grasping his books, rushed out muttering, “I don’t care for your dirty school.”

*R. K. Narayan*

### About the author



**R.K.Narayan** (1906-2001) was an Indian author, whose works of fiction include a series of books about people and their interactions in an imagined town in India called Malgudi. His popular works are *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The English Teacher* and *The Financial Expert*. The present extract is from *Swami and Friends*.

### Meanings in context

flushed face	:	angry look
ominous look	:	suggests that something bad is going to happen
eminence	:	superiority
knuckle	:	part of fingers at joints where the bone is near the skin



pronounced	:	declared
gaol	:	jail
discreet	:	careful
distress	:	a feeling of unease
stammered	:	repeated sounds/words
sinister	:	evil
whack	:	a sharp blow
brigand	:	a member of a gang
defiant	:	disobedient
desperation	:	hopelessness
restrained	:	acting in a calm and controlled way

## Comprehension

### I (A) . Tick the correct alternative.

- The day before the punishment was given by the Headmaster, Swaminathan\_\_\_\_\_
  - was not present in the school.
  - broke the panes of the ventilation.
  - left the school after lunch hour.
  - had a fight with friends.
- "Swaminathan was deaf to a question that the Headmaster was putting to him." This means that
  - Swaminathan was not paying attention.
  - Swaminathan did not have an answer.
  - Swaminathan could not hear properly.
  - the headmaster's question was not clear to Swaminathan.
- "I don't care for your dirty school," Swaminathan muttered these words because\_\_\_\_
  - the school was untidy.
  - he loved to stay at home.

(iii) he was humiliated by the headmaster.

(iv) he had found a better school for himself

**I. Answer the following questions.**

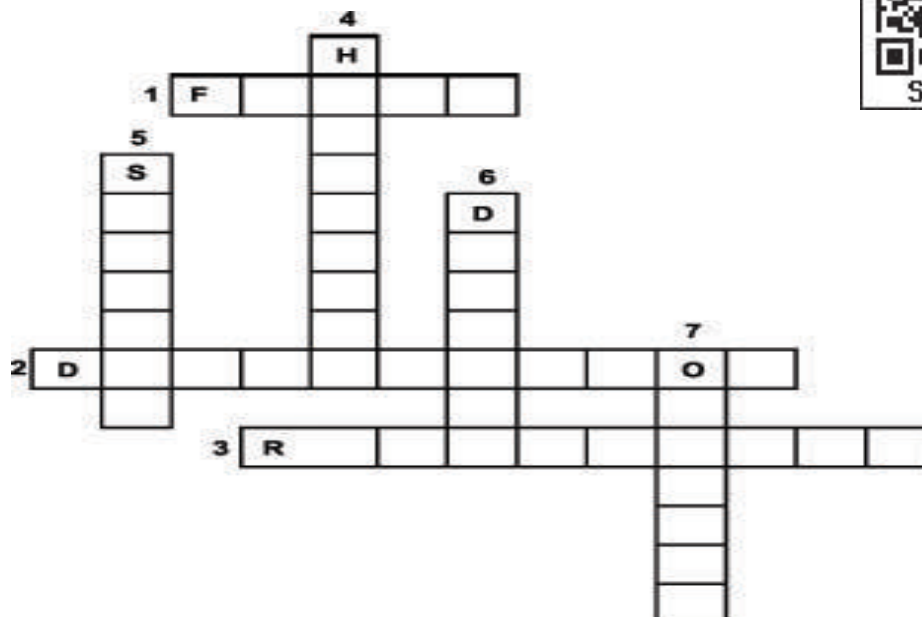
1. What was the mood of the Headmaster when he entered the class?
2. How did Swaminathan react to the questions put by the Headmaster?
3. Why was the peon called? What did he tell about Swaminathan?

**II. Complete the Table as shown below.**

Characters in the story	Excuses given by the students	Headmaster's reaction	Do you agree/disagree with the headmaster's reaction
1. Swaminathan			
2. First boy			
3. Second boy			
4. Third boy			
5. Fourth boy			
6. Fifth boy			

**Vocabulary**

Complete the crossword using the clues given below. The first letter of each word has been given.



## Clues

### Across

1. when your face becomes hot and red
2. feeling that you have no hope and are ready to do anything to change the situation you are in
3. calm and not showing emotions

### Down

4. to make someone feel stupid or ashamed
5. to pause a lot and repeat sounds because of a speech problem or because you are nervous
6. refusing to obey someone or something
7. making you think that something bad is going to happen

### II. Use the words in the crossword and fill in the blanks with their correct forms.

1. The teacher's face \_\_\_\_\_ at the sight of a dirty classroom.
2. The frail boxer, gave a massive blow to the opponent in \_\_\_\_\_.
3. How could you \_\_\_\_\_ me in front of all my friends.
4. He \_\_\_\_\_ an answer that he could not even reconstruct later, when he had calmed down.
5. If children are \_\_\_\_\_ in classroom, they should get punishment.
6. My mother's \_\_\_\_\_ look let me know I was in trouble.

### II. Complete the following poem with appropriate words using the clues given after the poem.

## Our Headmaster

A personality with \_\_\_\_\_

1

always with \_\_\_\_\_ looks,

2

The moment he comes,  
we look into our books.  
By hearing his harsh voice,  
our confidence is lost,  
In spite of knowing the answer,  
we \_\_\_\_\_ at any cost.

3

The way he put the questions  
our senses frost,  
We try to recall, and storm our minds,  
But alas! the fear  
all the lessons are lost,  
We feel ourselves in \_\_\_\_\_,

4

but nothing can be done  
And then he \_\_\_\_\_ the punishment,

5

homeworks from his shot gun.

## Clues

1. superiority
2. making you feel that something bad is going to happen
3. to pause a lot and repeat sounds because you are nervous
4. the feeling of being extremely upset or worried
5. to state something in an official manner

## Grammar

### Verb forms

Look at the following sentences.

The Headmaster surveyed the class for a few minutes.



He had an attack of a headache.

Rajam sat on the third bench.

Why did you keep away yesterday?

In all these sentences the verbs 'surveyed', 'sat', and 'did' are forms of verbs.

The above sentences describe actions in the past. They are in the simple past tense.

**Go through the text and pick out five sentences which are in the simple past tense.**

**Now look at the following sentences.**

Swaminathan had broken the panes. He had unconsciously become defiant and did not care to deny the charge.

He had wanted to mention headache but he found that the others beside him had one.

In the above sentences '**had broken**' and '**had become**' are in the past perfect tense and denote the actions which took place before another action in the past. 'did not care' is in the past tense and denotes the later action or response.

In the same way 'had wanted to mention' took place before 'he found that the others beside him had one'.

As you can see, when two actions occur in the past, the form 'had + (past participle verb)' is used for the action which took place earlier and 'past participle verb' for actions that take place later.

Here are a few more examples.

The train **had** left **before** I reached the station.

The match **had** begun **before** I switched on TV.





When two actions have happened in the past at almost the same time, both the actions will be expressed in the simple past tense.

**I. Match sentences in A with appropriate sentences in B to make meaningful sentences. There may be more than one appropriate combination.**

**A**

I had never been abroad

I had reached home

The train had left

I had completed my work

They had already boarded the  
flight

**B**

when the announcement was made.

before I reached the station.

before I visited Singapore.

when the rain started.

and then I went to sleep.

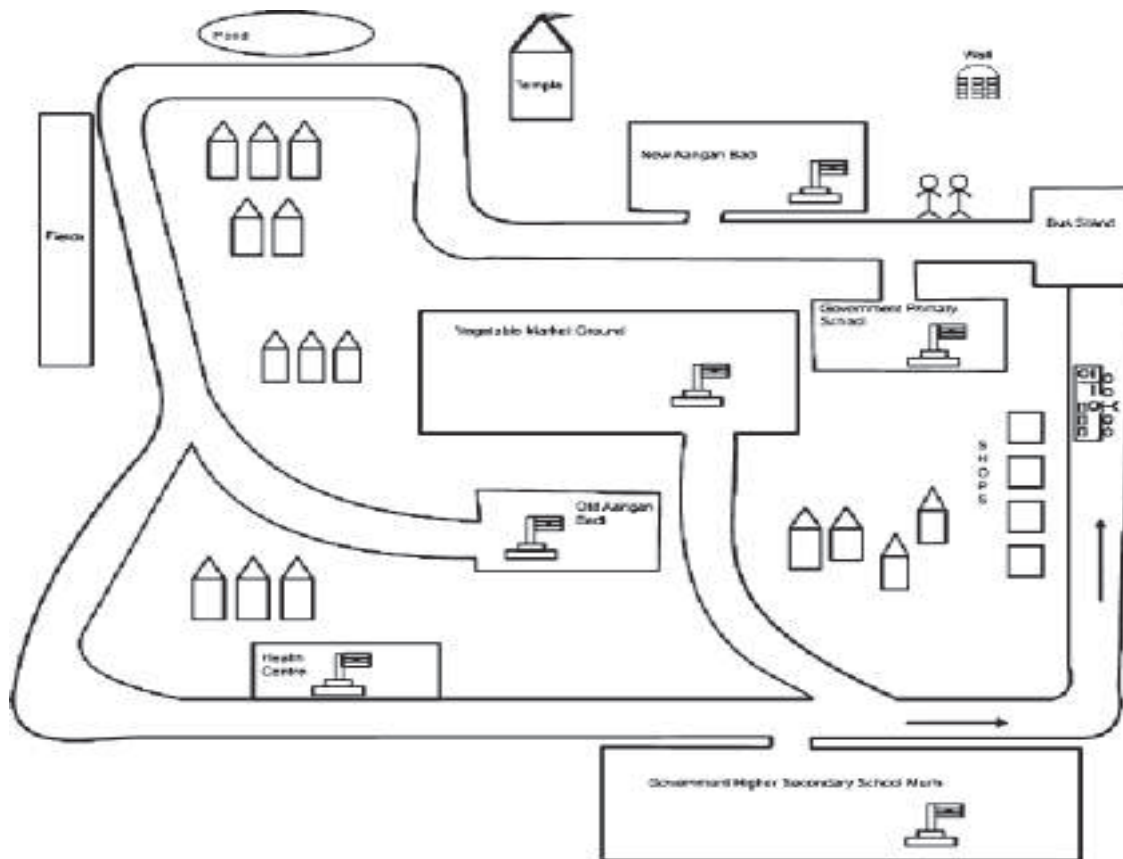
**II. Complete the sentences below with ideas of your own.**

- When I reached the theatre------(I missed the first song)
- All of us ran out of the class -----
- I had gone to the market -----
- After I had completed my work -----
- As I reached home -----

## Writing

Here is the map of village Murhi. Every Year on 26th January, the Republic Day, a procession of school students & teachers of the Higher Secondary School go through the village to hoist the National Flag at different Government Buildings.

The procession starts from the gate of the Government Higher Secondary School, Murhi. It halts at the Primary School, Old Aanganbadi, New Aanganbadi, Health Centre & finally returns to the Higher Secondary School to hoist the National Flag.



Here is a description of the route followed by the students of the Government Higher Secondary School, Murhi. **Trace the route to the different places where flag hoisting would take place.** However, the sentences in the description are not in correct order.

On the Independence Day, the Principal of Government Higher Secondary School, Murhi, will hoist the National Flag, at the Primary School and the Higher Secondary School., The Serpanch of the village will hoist the National Flag at New Aangan Badi, Old Aangan Badi and the Health Centre.

**Now, rearrange these sentences to write a well-organized paragraph.**

- When you reach the Bus stand move a few steps still further & then turn left towards the Primary School.
- First start from the Government Higher Secondary School, Murhi and then, move a few yards to the right and turn left.

- From the gate of New Aangan Badi move towards your right and after a few yards take a right-turn. When you reach near the temple, turn left towards the pond. Take a left turn towards the road along the fields.
- After taking the left turn from split road, walk a few yards & then take another left turn to reach the Health Centre on left side of the road.
- Finally, turn back and go straight across the road and you will reach the Government Higher Secondary School, Murhi.
- Now, return to the main road and go straight till you reach the gate of New Aangan Badi.
- After a few yards you will reach a split road. Take left from that point to reach Old Aangan Badi. Start moving back towards the split road point & take a left turn.
- Now go straight and turn left and you will reach the vegetable market ground.

## Listening

**Listen to your teacher carefully. Some words in the passage have been misspelt. Correct the spellings.**

It is difficult to understand bullying. Bullying means repeated act of putting someone into trouble. Why do people have to make the life of another person so *ilasberme*? Why do they think they have the right to *nhpcu* and kick someone they think is weaker than them. I was *uldeibl* when I was a child. It was a living hell. I was really afraid to go to school, for many, many years. I knew I was not safe *ugrdin* break times. It was always a group of bullies that got me in the *orrrcsiod*, or on the playing fields. They made me hate school. I know they also *gchndae* me for life. I have no *ieenocfdcn* now. I'm 32 years old but I'm afraid to *spake* up for myself. The school bullies took away my belief in *lefsym*. They didn't know that they would scar me for life. The *plisaych* scars have gone but not the emotional ones.

## Study Skills

**Look at the school time table given below and answer the following questions.**

1. What is the duration of long recess? Is it the same as the duration of short recess?
2. For which subjects and classes do we have combined periods?
3. How many classes of Maths are there per week?
4. When do the students of class 12th participate in *laika madai*?
5. How many teachers teach all the four classes? Name them.

