

## Reading A

# The Eyes Have It

I had the train compartment to myself upto Rohana, then a girl got in. The couple who saw her off were probably her parents. They seemed very anxious about her comfort and the woman gave the girl detailed instructions as to where to keep her things, when not to lean out of windows, and how to avoid speaking to strangers.

They called their goodbyes and the train pulled out of the station. As I was totally blind at the time, my eyes sensitive only to light and darkness, I was unable to tell what the girl looked like. But I knew she wore slippers from the way they slapped against her heels.

It would take me some time to discover something about her looks and perhaps I never would. But I liked the sound of her voice and even the sound of her slippers.

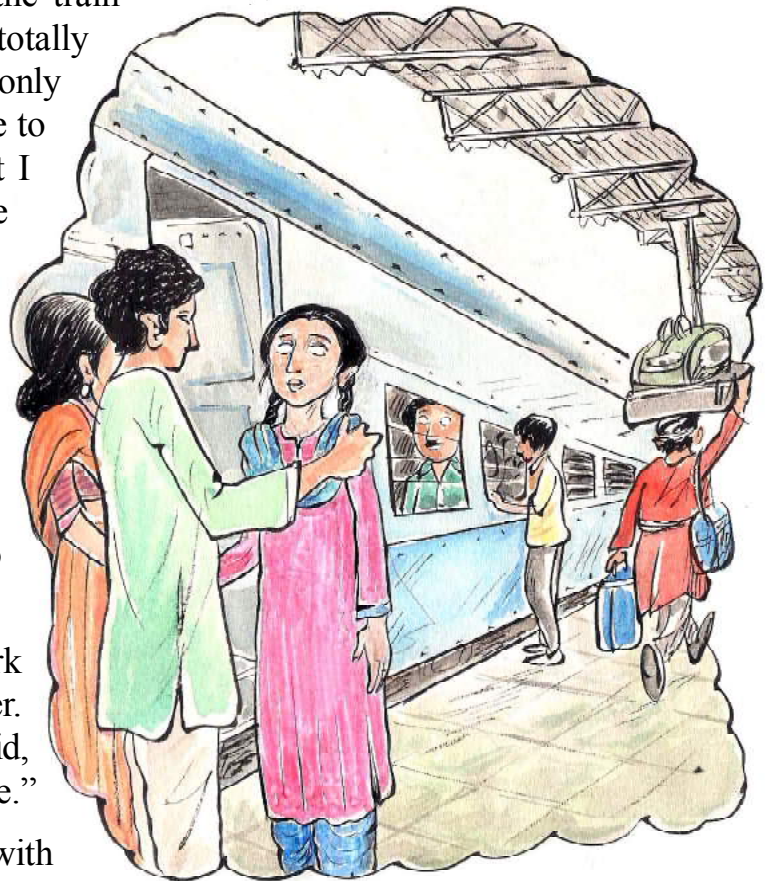
“Are you going all the way to Dehra?” I asked.


I must have been sitting in a dark corner because my voice startled her. She gave a little exclamation and said, “I didn’t know anyone else was here.”

Well, it often happens that people with good eyesight fail to see what is right in front of them. They have too much to take in, I suppose. Whereas people who cannot see (or see very little) have to take in only the essentials, whatever registers tellingly on their remaining senses.

“I didn’t see you either,” I said. “But I heard you come in.”

I wondered if I would be able to prevent her from discovering that I was blind. “Provided I keep to my seat” I thought, “it shouldn’t be too difficult.” The girl said, “I am getting off at Saharanpur. My aunt is meeting me there.”





“Then I had better not get too familiar,” I thought. “Aunts are usually formidable creatures.”

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“To Dehra and then to Mussoorie.”

“Oh, how lucky you are. I wish I were going to Mussoorie. I love the hills; especially in October.”

“Yes, this is the best time,” I said, calling on my memories. “The hills are covered with wild dahlias, the sun is delicious, and at night you can sit in front of a log fire and drink a little brandy. Most of the tourists have gone and the roads are quiet and almost deserted. Yes, October is the best time.”

She was silent. I wondered if my words had touched her or whether she thought me a romantic fool. Then I made a mistake.

“What is it like outside?” I asked.

She seemed to find nothing strange in the question. Had she noticed already that I could not see? But her next question removed my doubts.

“Why don’t you look out of the window?” she asked.

I moved easily along the berth and felt for the window ledge. The window was open and I faced it, making a pretence of studying the landscape. I heard the panting of the engine, the rumble of the wheels, and, in my mind’s eye I could see telegraph posts flashing by.

“Have you noticed,” I ventured, “that the trees seem to be moving while we seem to be standing still?”

“That always happens,” she said. “Do you see any animals?”


“No,” I answered quite confidently. I knew that there were hardly any animals left in the forests near Dehra.

I turned from the window and faced the girl and for a while we sat in silence.

“You have an interesting face,” I remarked. I was becoming quite daring but it was a safe remark. Few girls can resist flattery. She laughed pleasantly—a clear, ringing laugh.

“It’s nice to be told I have an interesting face. I’m tired of people telling me I have a pretty face.”

Oh, so you do have a pretty face, thought I. And aloud I said, “Well, an interesting face can also be pretty.”



“You are a very gallant young man.” she said. “But why are you so serious?”

I thought, then, that I would try to laugh for her, but the thought of laughter only made me feel troubled and lonely.

“We’ll soon be at your station.” I said.

“Thank goodness it’s a short journey. I can’t bear to sit in a train for more than two or three hours.”

Yet I was prepared to sit there for almost any length of time, just to listen to her talking. Her voice had the sparkle of a mountain stream. As soon as she left the train she would forget our brief encounter. But it would stay with me for the rest of the journey and for some time after.

The engine’s whistle shrieked, the carriage wheels changed their sound and rhythm, the girl got up and began to collect her things. I wondered if she wore her hair in a bun or if it was plaited. Perhaps it was hanging loose over her shoulders. Or was it cut very short?

The train drew slowly into the station. Outside, there was the shouting of porters and vendors and a high-pitched female voice near the carriage door. That voice must have belonged to the girl’s aunt.

“Goodbye!” the girl said.

She was standing very close to me. So close that the perfume from her hair was tantalizing. I wanted to raise my hand and touch her hair but she moved away. Only the scent of perfume still lingered where she had stood.

There was some confusion in the doorway. A man, getting into the compartment, stammered an apology. Then the door banged and the world was shut out again. I returned to my berth. The guard blew his whistle and we moved off. Once again I had a game to play and a new fellow traveller.

The train gathered speed, the wheels took up their song, the carriage groaned and shook. I found the window and sat in front of it, staring into the daylight that was darkness for me.

So many things were happening outside the window. It could be a fascinating game guessing what went on out there.

The man who had entered the compartment broke into my reverie.

“You must be disappointed,” he said. “I’m not nearly as attractive a travelling companion as the one who just left.”

“She was an interesting girl.” I said. “Can you tell me—did she keep her hair long or short?”

“I don’t remember,” he said sounding puzzled. “It was her eyes I noticed, not her hair. She had beautiful eyes but they were of no use to her. She was completely blind. Didn’t you notice?”

*Ruskin Bond*

### About the author



**Ruskin Bond** (born 19 May 1934) is a well known Indian writer in English. He is British by birth and lives with his family in Mussoorie. He has written more than hundred short-stories, six novels, three collections of verse and over thirty books for children. Ruskin Bond received Sahitya Academy award for his book ‘*Our Trees Still Grow at Dehra*’ in 1992, and was honored with title Padma Shree in 1999 and Padma Bhushan in 2014, for his

life time contribution to Indian literature in English. He has been writing for the last fifty years in different genres of literature.

### Meanings in context

registers	:	gets understood
tellingly	:	effectively
formidable	:	inspiring fear or respect
making a pretence	:	acting
flattery	:	excessive praise
gallant	:	brave, heroic
encounter	:	meeting
shrieked	:	made a high pitched piercing sound
tantalizing	:	causing desire and excitement
stammered	:	spoke with difficulty
reverie	:	pleasant dream-like thoughts
pretence	:	a behavior that makes someone believe something that is not true
ventured	:	risked saying something

## Comprehension

### I. Answer the following questions.

1. What details could the narrator gather about the girl?
2. The girl was startled to hear the narrator's voice. Why was she startled?
3. What differences does the narrator point out between those who can see and those who cannot? List them.
4. Was the narrator able to hide from the girl and from the new fellow traveller the fact that he was blind? Give evidence from the story in support of your opinion.
5. Whose voices does the narrator hear when the girl i) boards the train and ii) gets off the train?

### II. The narrator made some comments. What could have been his comments if he could see? Complete the bubbles with the imaginary comments of the narrator.

I did not see you either but I heard you come in.

I thought I heard your footsteps.

What is it like outside?

You have an interesting face.

## Vocabulary

Write down the words/phrases used by the author to describe the sounds mentioned in the lesson.

Sounds mentioned in the lesson	Word/phrases used to describe the sounds
sound of slippers	
the girls' laugh	
the whistle of the train	
carriage	
wheels	
engine	
the aunt's voice	

## Grammar

### 1. Phrasal verbs

Read the following sentences from the story.

1. The couple who **saw** her **off** were probably her parents.
2. The train gathered speed, the wheels **took up** their song.

The words in bold are phrasal verbs. A phrasal verb is a verb followed by a preposition or an adverb; the combination creates a meaning different from the original verb alone.

In sentence 1, the object is between the verb and the preposition. It is thus a separable phrasal verb. In sentence 2, the preposition comes next to the verb and is therefore called inseparable phrasal verb. Sometimes, a phrasal verb may be both separable and inseparable, as in the sentence given below.

He **picked** the book **up**.

He **picked up** the book.

Now use the following phrasal verbs from the story in your own sentences.

1. take in
2. call on
3. get off
4. see off
5. turn from
6. break into

## 2. Narration

In the story we have read in this lesson, the main character is narrating his experiences during a train journey.

**Compare column 1 with column 2. Write down the difference related to the use of pronouns, verbs, punctuation and word order in column 3. Some are done for you.**

1	2	3
“You are a very gallant young man,” she said.	She said that he was a very gallant young man.	you → he are → was ‘That’ is added. Inverted commas are removed.
“you have an interesting face,” I remarked. She gave a little exclamation and said “I didn’t see you either,” I was here.”	I remarked that she had an interesting face. She gave a little exclamation and said that she hadn’t known anyone else was there.	
“I didn’t see you either,” I said, “ But I heard you come in.”	I said that I hadn’t seen her either, but that I had heard her come in.	
“We’ll soon be at your station,” I said. (“We will ...) “Where are you going?” she asked.	I said that we’d soon be at her station. (... we would...) She asked where he was going.	you → he are → was Inverted commas are removed.
“Are you going all the way to Dehra?” I asked.	I asked if she was going all the way to Dehra.	

*During the school excursion tour to Shivrinarayan, Vikas was interviewed by a local TV channel reporter.*

Here is the interview.

**Reporter:** What is the purpose of the picnic?

**Vikas :** It’s an educational tour.

**Reporter:** Have the students of all classes in your school come for the tour?

**Vikas:** No. Only the students of classes 9 and 10 have come.

**Reporter:** You said that this is an educational tour. How has your visit to Shivrinarayan been educational?

**Vikas:** Shivrinarayan has great religious importance. During Lord Rama's 'vanavasa' he stayed in this place and met Shabari. Shabari offered delicious fruits to Lord Rama.

**Reporter:** Would you like to comment on the scenic beauty of this place?

**Vikas:** Here three rivers meet: Mahanadi, Jonk and Shivnath. It's a wonderful sight.

**Reporter:** Have you seen Shivrinarayan Temple?

**Vikas:** Yes. My class teacher told us that this beautiful temple was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD during Kalchuri period. The temple has a splendid idol of Chaturbhuj Vishnu and Goddess Shabari.

**Reporter:** Thankyou. Please watch this interview on our news channel.

**Vikas:** I will surely watch the interview.

*Vikas gets back home and describes the tour to his family members.*

**Father:** Welcome , my child.

**Moni:** Tell me bhaiya, was it fun?

**Mother:** Did you bring Prasad for us from the temple?

**Vikas:** Wait wait wait! Listen! Tomorrow you will see me on TV. A reporter interviewed me.

**Moni:** And what did you tell her? What did she ask you?

**Vikas:** She asked me about the tour. I told her that we were on an educational tour. I told her that the class teachers had also come with us. She asked me if we go for such tours every year. I denied and added that I was happy that our school had brought us to Shivrinarayan.

**Mother:** Did she ask you what you like about Shivrinarayan?



**Vikas:** Yes she enquired how the visit to Shivrinarayan was educational. I replied that Shivrinarayan has great religious importance. During Lord Rama’s ‘*vanavasa*’, he stayed in this place and met Shabari. Shabari offered delicious fruits to Lord Rama.

She asked me if I had seen Shivrinarayan temple. I replied that my class teacher had told us that beautiful temple was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD during Kalchuri period and that the temple has a splendid idol of Chaturbhuj Vishnu and Goddess Shabari.

She also asked me to comment on the scenic beauty of the place, the temple and the importance of Shivrinarayan . I told her that Shivrinarayan has great religious importance. I added that during Lord Rama’s ‘*vanavasa*’, he stayed in this place and met Shabari and that Shabari offered delicious fruits to Lord Rama.

**Moni:** What else did she ask? Who else did she talk to?

**Father :** Enough for now. Let Vikas have a wash.

**Complete Column 2 after making suitable changes in the direct speech given in Column 1. (Note that inverted commas have not been used since the text has been written in the dialogue form.)**

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
<b>Vikas’s comments in direct speech</b>	<b>Vikas’s comments indirect speech</b>	<b>Change</b>
It’s an educational tour.	Vikas said that it was an educational tour.	It’s → It was that is added
Only the students of classes 9 and 10 have come. Shabari offered delicious fruits to Lord Rama.		have come → had come that is added Offered → had offered that is added
My class teacher told us that this beautiful temple was built in the 12th century AD during Kalchuri period.		my → his told → had told us → them this → that was built → had been built that is added
I will surely watch the interview.		will → would that is added I → he

Questions that the reporter asked	the reporter's questions in indirect speech	Change
What is the purpose of the picnic?		is → was was is moved to the end of the sentence
Have the students of all classes in your school come for the tour?		'if' is added 'have' is deleted your → his come → had come
Have you seen Shivrinarayan Temple?		'if' is added 'have' is deleted you → he
Has your visit to Shivrinarayan been educational?		.....asked me your → his has been → had been
Would you like to comment on the scenic beauty of this place?		add 'if' you → you would you like → he would like this → that

## Listening

I. Listen to the announcements at a railway station and complete the table given below.

Train No.	Train Name	Scheduled Time	Platform No.	Late by ..... /on time/not mentioned

II. Answer the following questions.

1. On which station are the announcements being made?
2. How many trains are late?

## Speaking

**Suppose a visually challenged person travels with you through your village, how would you describe your village to that person?**

(You may tell him about river/ponds, mountains/hills, temples and other religious places, festivals, things related to agriculture and industry in the village, educational institutions etc.)

**Work in groups. Later, anyone from your group could tell the rest of the class how your group will describe the village.**

## Study Skills

### *Homonyms*

A word that sounds the same as another word and has the same spelling, but has a different meaning is called a homonym.

Here is an example.

This house does not **suit** me.

He is wearing a new **suit**.

**Use each of the words given below with two meanings, as in the example given above. Consult the dictionary to find more meanings of each of these words.**

- a. still \_\_\_\_\_
- b. register \_\_\_\_\_
- c. draw \_\_\_\_\_
- d. move \_\_\_\_\_
- e. face \_\_\_\_\_
- f. train \_\_\_\_\_