

Comprehension Check

1. How many daughters did the royal couple have?

A. The Royal couple had nine daughters.

2. Why were they named after the months of the year?

A. The Queen of Siam was worried that it would confuse her to have to remember so many names, so the king decided to call their daughters January, February, March (in Siamese) till he came to the youngest whom he called September.

3. The King had a peculiar habit. What was it? Why is it called peculiar?

A. The King of Siam had a peculiar habit. Instead of receiving gifts on his birthday he gave gifts away. It has been called 'peculiar' because generally, on birthdays, one receives gifts but strangely, the King of Siam gave them away.

4. (i) What was Princess September's reaction to the loss of her parrot?

A. When Princess September got to know about the death of her parrot, she burst into a flood of tears, and nothing that her Maids of Honour could say comforted her. She cried so much that the Maids of Honour, not knowing what to do, told the Queen about it.

(ii) What was her mother's reaction to it?

A. Her mother, the Queen, was quite normal upon hearing it and she said it was only stuff and nonsense. She further suggested that the child better went to bed without any supper.

(iii) What do the reactions indicate about the nature and temperament of each?

A. Princess September's reaction to the loss of her parrot tells us that she was young, sensitive and emotional. Her sudden outburst into tears revealed how much she loved and cared about him. The Queen, on the other hand, was a little insensitive in handling her child's suffering. She did not console her. Her behaviour indicates that she was least bothered with the loss of her daughter's parrot.

5. What pulled the Princess out of her gloom?

A. Seeing a little bird hop onto her window and sing so beautifully, pulled the Princess out of her gloom.

6. How did the Maids of Honour come to know that the Princess and the bird had become intimate friends?

A. When the Maids of Honour brought in the Princess's breakfast, and the bird ate rice out of her hand and he had his bath in her saucer, the Maids of Honour came to know that the bird and the Princess had become intimate friends.

7. The new bird was full of new songs but the old parrots always repeated themselves. What did they say?

A. The new bird was full of new songs but the old parrots always repeated themselves by saying 'God save the King' and 'Pretty Polly'.

8. What is the King's opinion about his Councillors? Why did he form that opinion?

A. The King said that the way his daughter's parrots could say 'Pretty Polly' in seven different languages, reminded him of his Councillors who would say the same thing in seven different ways and it didn't make sense in even one of the ways they said it. He thought his Councillors were just like parrots who kept on repeating the same thing in different ways without knowing what it actually meant

9. (i) The eight Princesses made an offer to Princess September. What was it?

A. After Princess September lost her parrot, the eight Princesses made an offer to her. They told her that they have put their pocket money together to be able to buy a lovely green and yellow parrot for her.

(ii) Why, in your view, did they do it?

A. The eight Princesses were quite vexed at the way everyone liked September's little singing bird while their parrots could only repeat a few words that they taught them. The eight Princesses put their heads together. So, in order to take Princess September's attention away from the singing bird, they decided to offer her a new parrot. This way, everyone would have had the same pet bird.

10. What did the sisters advise the Princess to do about her bird?

A. The eight Princesses advised their sister, Princess September to put her little bird in a cage and lock it as soon as he came back. The sisters told her that she would be lucky enough if the bird finds her way back.

11. In the following sentence elaborate the parts given in bold. Under the circumstances it was a very unfortunate remark for the bird to make.

A. Princess September grew anxious when the little bird was away for a long time. Moreover, her eight sisters had added to her uneasiness by filling her mind with doubt. They told her to lock him in a cage upon his return, and that she would be very lucky if he did. Thus, the words "Under the circumstances", refer to the tense situation the little Princess was in as she thought about the possible mishaps that could happen with the bird that she was so fond of. Upon returning, the little bird told September that he very nearly did not come back that night. Thus, it has been referred to as "a very unfortunate remark" as it made the Princess more anxious. She did not want to take a risk with it, and thus, she ended up locking him in a cage.

12. (i) What did Princess September do to ensure the safety of her pet?

A. To ensure the safety of her pet and to eliminate the risk of losing him, Princess September locked the bird in a golden cage.

(ii) How did the bird react to it?

A. At first, the bird suspected nothing and he was so surprised when she carried him over to the cage, popped him in, and shut the door on him that for a moment he could think of nothing to say. But in a moment or two he hopped up to the ivory perch and asked the Princess about her joke. The little Princess told him that this was no joke and that she wanted him to be safe because her mother's cats were out prowling that night.

13. Why did the bird refuse to be taken out in her cage?

A. When Princess September offered the bird to take her out in a cage almost everyday, the bird refused. According to him, it was not at all the same because the rice-fields, the lake and the willow trees looked quite different when one saw them through the bars of a cage.

14. (i) What persuaded Princess September to give the bird his freedom again?

A. Princess September was already worried about the little bird because he had stopped singing and eating. The next day, when Princess September wished him Good Morning and he did not reply, seeing him lay down lifelessly made Princess September think that she'd almost lost him. Thus, upon realising that the bird won't be able to sing in a cage and if he didn't sing, he would die. Therefore, the Princess decided to give the bird his freedom again.

(ii) How did the bird react to it?

A. The bird was so happy upon realising that he was a free bird again. He was excited about seeing the lake, the willow trees and the green rice-field. He even promised September that he would come back and sing the loveliest songs for her.

15. Princess September kept her window open day and night.

(i) How did it help the bird?

A. It helped the bird come in and out as he pleased.

(ii) How did it help the Princess herself?

A. Keeping the window open day and night helped Princess September to grow up into an extremely beautiful woman.

16. The eight sisters kept their windows shut. How did it affect them?

A. The eight sisters kept their windows shut. Thus, they grew up to be extremely ugly and undesirable.

Extra important questions

1. After what were the king's nine daughters named?

Ans. The King's daughters were named after the names of the months in a year, but in the Siamese language.

2. What was the gift that the King gave to his daughters on his birthday?

Ans. The King gifted a green parrot in a golden cage to his daughters on his birthday.

3. Why did the Maids of Honour put the crying Princess in the bed and went away?

Ans. The Maids of Honour had to go for a party. They, therefore, quickly put the Princess in the bed and went away.

4. What was the little bird's song based upon?

Ans. The little bird sang a song about the lake in the king's garden, the willow trees that reflected its image in the water and the goldfish that glided in and out of the branches in that image.

5. What did the bird tell the Princess to convince her to be friends?

Ans. The little bird asked the Princess to take him in place of her parrot. He told her that he was not as beautiful as the parrot, but had a lovely voice.