

# I Want Something in a Cage

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## SUMMARY OF THE LESSON

Mr Purcell owned a pet shop. He sold cats and dogs and monkeys. He also sold fish food and bird seed. The birds and other small creatures were closed up in cages. They moved about madly in circles. They made a lot of noise. But Purcell was used to that.

Each morning Purcell sat on a high stool behind the counter to read the morning paper. As he read, he smiled or frowned. It was a rough day. A faint wind was blowing. A bell at the door rang whenever a customer entered the shop. That morning it didn't ring. A stranger entered the shop and stood before the owner.

The man wore a cheap, ill-fitting suit. His hair was cut short. He ran his eyes around at the cages. He said he wanted something in a cage, something small, a bird. He pointed to a cage which contained two white doves. Purcell demanded the price five dollars and fifty cents. The man felt sad. He wanted to have those birds but he had only five dollars. Purcell finalised the deal and handed the cage to his customer. The man asked Purcell if he was not disturbed by the noise. Purcell, however, didn't hear any noise.

The stranger then told Purcell that he had earned those five dollars after ten years of hard labour in prison, fifty cents a year. He turned around and walked out of the store. Just outside, he held the cage high and drew out one of the doves and then the second one. He set them free into the air. Then he dropped the cage and walked away.

Purcell stood perplexed. He wondered why the man had let the birds loose. Anyway, he felt sort of insulted. While he was robbing the pets of their freedom, the stranger had spent his total earning on buying and then liberating them.

## TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED

### COMPREHENSION CHECK

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1. Write 'True' or 'False' against each of the following statements.

(i) Mr Purcell sold birds, cats, dogs and monkeys.

(ii) He was very concerned about the well-being of the birds and animals in his shop.

(iii) He was impressed by the customer who bought the two doves.

(iv) He was a successful shop owner, though insensitive and cold as a person.

Ans. (i) True (ii) False (iii) False (iv) True

2. Why is Mr. Purcell compared to an owl?

Ans. Purcell appeared like an owl when he looked through his glasses.

3. From the third paragraph pick out

(i) Words associated with cries of birds.

(ii) Words associated with noise.

(iii) Words suggestive of confusion and fear.

Ans. (i) Whispered, twitter, squeal, cheeps.

(ii) Stir, rustling, scampered.

(iii) Bèwilderèd, blindly seeking.

4. Mr. Purcell heard it no more than he would have heard the monotonous ticking of a familiar clock"

(Read para beginning with "It was a rough day .....")

(i) What does it refer to?

(ii) Why does Mr Purcell not hear it clearly?

Ans. (i) 'It' refers to the chirping, squealing and moving of birds all around him.

(ii) He has become so used to those noises that he does not mind them.

### COMPREHENSION CHECK

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1. Do you think the atmosphere of Mr Purcell's shop was cheerful or depressing? Give reasons for your answer.

Ans. The atmosphere in Mr Purcell's shop was dull and cheerless. The shop was full of movements of noising birds and pet animals. Mr. Purcell had become used to that noise. But the customer wondered how the owner put up with that noise.

2. Describe the stranger who came to the pet shop. What did he want?

Ans. The stranger who came to Mr. Purcell's shop had been released from jail after ten years of imprisonment. His suit though new looking was cheap and ill-fitting. He had close-cropped hair. His eyes moved all around in the shop. He wanted to purchase something in a case.

3. (i) The man insisted on buying the doves because he was fond of birds. Do you agree?

(ii) How had he earned the five dollars he had?

Ans. (i) No, the man was neither fond of birds nor did he insist on buying the fair doves. He only wanted some birds in a cage.

(ii) The man had spent ten years in prison. He had to work hard. He was paid only half a dollar per year. He left the jail with just 5 dollars and a cheap suit.

4. Was the customer interested in the care and feeding of the doves he had bought? If not, why not?

Ans. No, the man had no love or liking for the doves. He did not mean to keep them as pets. So he paid no attention to what Mr. Purcell said about the feed and care of birds. Soon after stepping out of the shop, he freed the birds and dropped the cage.

### EXERCISE

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Discuss the following topics in groups:

1. Why, in your opinion, did the man set the doves free?

**Ans.** The man set the doves free because he had got already the better taste of imprisonment. He knew the need and value of freedom. It was his love for freedom that he spent his hard-earned money on buying the doves and setting them free.

**2. Why did it make Mr. Purcell feel “vaguely insulted”?**

**Ans.** Mr Purcell felt insulted because he had reduced the price of the doves and still made profit. He felt small to see 'the customer's love for freedom and his great sacrifice.

