
SUMMARY OF THE LESSON

Children are made to work and earn in different ways. Some of them help their family make a livelihood. Many run away from unhappy homes and they need to support themselves. They don't go to any school.

Velu was an eleven year old boy. He ran away from home because his father was addicted to drinking. He used to beat him and his sister and snatched whatever they earned.

The Kanyakumari Express pulled in at Chennai Station. Velu got down and sat on a bench. He had never before seen so many people with their luggage. The noise was terrible. He was feeling tired, miserable and hungry. In his bundle he carried a shirt, a towel and a comb. He had neither money nor ticket. He tried to sleep on the floor near the door. He heard the rough voice of a girl around his own age. The girl was carrying a big bag. She was picking up plastic cups and putting them into the sack. Her name was Jaya. She sat down next to him. She said she could find some food for him to eat. She stood up to go. Velu had nowhere else to go. So he ran after her.

The two got to the road. Smoke and dust made Velu's head spin. The girl dragged him to the other side of the street. She took him on to a bridge. Velu peeped over the railing. The road under him ran to the city. Velu saw big buildings in the distance. Jaya warned him not to get caught otherwise he would be in jail. His bare feet burned on the hot tar road as he walked.

They finally stopped in front of a big building. A marriage was going to be performed inside. Behind the hall was a garbage heap. The girl picked up a crushed banana and a vada which Velu ate unwillingly. He felt better. Then the girl went to home to drop her full bag and get another one. Velu also joined her.

Jaya and Velu walked along the roads and came to a bridge across a dirty drain. They came to a row of huts built out of wood, plastic and sheets. It was Jaya's village. She dumped her sack there and gave him a pair of old shoes, a sack and stick. He wondered what work she wanted him to do. She told him that they were rag pickers. They collected things from rubbish bins—paper, plastic and glass. It was sold to Jaggu, a junk dealer. Velu had no option. He decided to work as a rag picker until he found a better job.

TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED

COMPREHENSION CHECK (Page 9)

1. Velu stood on the platform but he felt "as if he was still on a moving train." Why?

Ans. Velu had run away from home. Being a small boy he was naturally tired, hungry and afraid of the ticket examiner. He lay down near the compartment door. He could not get over the feeling that his train journey was over.

2. What made him feel miserable?

Ans. Velu was alone, tired and hungry. He didn't have a ticket also. So he felt miserable.

3. (i) Velu travelled without a ticket. Why?

(ii) How did he escape the ticket collector's attention?

Ans. (i) Velu travelled without a ticket because he had no money.

(ii) He escaped the ticket collector's notice because the ticket collector did not come to that unreserved compartment.

4. Why had Velu run away from home?

Ans. Velu had run away from home because of the misdeeds of his father, who used to snatch all the money from him and his sister. He also beat the children.

5. Why did he decide to follow the 'strange' girl?

Ans. Velu agreed to go after the 'strange' girl because he was hungry and the girl promised to get food for him.

COMPREHENSION CHECK (Page 13)

1. Can Velu read Tamil and English? How do you know?

Ans. Velu could not read sign boards in English. But he read the Tamil sign on the Central jail.

2. "If you are not careful, you will soon be counting bars there," the girl said.

(i) What is she referring to?

(ii) What does she mean when she says "If you are not careful."?

(She says something a little later which means the same. Find that sentence.)

Ans. (i) She is referring to Central jail

(ii) She pointed out to Velu that doing wrong was not so important as escaping the police or getting caught.

The sentence is: 'You don't have to do anything. Just don't get caught, that's all'.

3. (i) Where did the girl lead Velu to?

(ii) What did they get to eat?

Ans. (i) The girl led Velu to a marriage hall.

(ii) They got some food from the garbage bin. It was leftover food.

4. What work did she do? (Think of a one-word answer).

Ans. Ragpicking.

COMPREHENSION CHECK (Page 15)

1. (i) What material are the 'strange' huts made out of?

(ii) Why does Velu find them strange?

Ans. (i) The 'strange' huts are made out of tin sheets, bricks, wood and plastic.

(ii) Velu finds those huts strange because in his own village the huts were made of mud and palm leaves.

2. What sort of things did Jaya and children like her collect and what did they do with those things?

Ans. Jaya and other children like her collected paper, plastic, and glass etc. They sold all that to a kabadi or junk-dealer.

3. Is Velu happy or unhappy to find work? Give a reason for your answer.

Ans. Velu is not at all happy. He had never done such a dirty job in his village.

EXERCISE (Page 16)

Discuss the following questions in small groups. Write their answers afterwards.

1. Is Velu a smart boy? Which instances in the text show that he is or isn't?

Ans. No, Velu is not a smart boy. He runs away from his home to escape his father's beatings. He felt miserable at the railway station. He found himself alone and hungry. He accepted rag picking because he wasn't fit for any other job.

2. Do you think Jaya is a brave and sensitive child with a sense of humour? Find instances of her courage, kind nature and humour in the text.

Ans. Yes, Jaya is a brave and sensitive girl. She takes pity on Velu and gets food for him. She herself earns her livelihood bravely by collecting discarded material and selling them. She has a sense of humour also. She calls the 'dirty trickle of water Buckingham Canal'.

3. What one throws away as waste may be valuable to others. Do you find this sentence meaningful in the context of this story? How?

Ans. Yes, the plastic, the paper and rusty metal sheets thrown away by the people, become valuable to ragpickers. They eat leftover food for survival. They sell junk food to some dealer to earn their livelihood.