



THE VILLAGE
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
"We Nurture Dreams"

Mijbil the Otter

Summary

The story, *Mijbil the Otter*, begins with the writer, Gavin Maxwell, who was travelling to Basra with his friend to the Consulate-General to collect and answer their mail from Europe. During their journey, Maxwell expressed his desire to keep an otter as a pet instead of a dog, as he felt very lonely after losing his pet dog earlier. His friend suggested he get an otter from the Tigris marshes in Iraq. When they reached the destination, his friend received the mail immediately, while Maxwell had to wait for a few more days to receive his mail. Once he received the mail, he took the sack that was brought by two Arabs carrying a message from his friend and discovered an otter inside it. He christened the otter 'Mijbil' and would often refer to it as Mij.

It took a little while for the little creature to adapt to its surroundings. In due course, Maxwell observed that Mij enjoyed playing with water and how it learned to open the bathroom faucet on its own. The writer was thoroughly amazed at the games played by Mij with its own touch of creativity. Soon it was time for Maxwell to return to England with his pet otter. However, British Airlines had a few restrictions that barred animals from travelling with human beings, so he booked another flight that allowed Mij to travel with him. The new airlines insisted that Mij should be packed in a box so that it didn't disturb other co-passengers onboard. Henceforth, Maxwell arranged for a box one hour before the flight, put Mijbil inside and left to grab a quick meal.

When he returned, he found there were holes in the box and the edges were stained with blood. He understood that Mij must have injured himself inside the box. He cleaned the box properly and reached the airport a few minutes before the flight took off. When he boarded the flight, he explained the entire

incident to an air hostess who advised him to keep his pet on his lap rather than locking his pet inside the container. Maxwell was filled with gratitude for her kind words. But the moment he opened the box, Mij leapt out and vanished in thin air, which caused a lot of chaos on the flight. Many co-passengers were astonished to see the little creature moving around. But the kind-hearted air hostess took Mij and handed it to Maxwell in no time. Soon, they reached London, and Maxwell thanked the crew for their support onboard.

In London, Mij got used to its surroundings gradually. It started playing with marbles and ping-pong balls. The writer was also amazed by the game that Mij had developed with his broken suitcase. Maxwell often took Mij for a walk, and the people of London would make wild guesses about his pet. Some called Mij to be a baby seal, beaver, or squirrel, and there were still a few more who would refer to the otter as a hippo. The most shocking response that Maxwell received from a labourer who was digging a hole when he asked him, “Here, Mister — what is that supposed to be?”

Mijbil the Otter Important Questions

Short Answer Type Questions

Question 1. How was Mij to be transported to England?

Answer: The British Airline to England would not fly animals. So, Maxwell booked a flight to Paris on another airline and from there to London. The airline insisted that Mij should be packed into a box not more than eighteen inches square. Thus, Mij was transported to England in that box, which was kept on the floor at his feet.

Question 2. What happened when the box was opened?

Answer: When the box was opened, Mij went out of the box. He disappeared at a high speed down the aircraft. There were cries all around. A woman stood up on her seat crying, “A rat! A rat!”.

Question 3. Why did Maxwell get his mail after five days and what did he do to get it? [CBSE 2011]

Answer: Maxwell got his mail after 5 days due to some delay. He cabled and tried to telephone in order to get his mail.

Question 4. What did the otter look like?

Answer: The otter looked like a small dragon belonging to the middle ages. It was covered with symmetrical pointed scales of mud. One could see between the scales a soft velvet fur like that of a chocolate-brown mole.

Question 5. What did Mijbil do during the second night?

Answer: Mijbil came on to Maxwell's bed soon after midnight. It remained asleep in the crook of his knees until the morning.

Question 6. What, according to the writer, is the real play' of the otter? [CBSE 2015]

Answer: The real play of an otter is lying on his back and juggling with small objects between his paws. Mijbil would roll two or more marbles up and down on his wide, fat belly. He never dropped one to the floor.

Question 7. Why was the narrator not able to communicate when there was a delay in the arrival of the mail?

Answer: The narrator was not able to contact because the telephone lines had to be booked twenty-four hours in advance. On the first day, the line was out of order; on the second day, the exchange was closed for a religious reason; and on the third day, there was a breakdown.

Question 8. What was the first characteristic of the otter discovered by the narrator? [CBSE 2014]

Answer: The first thing that the narrator observed about the otter was that he liked to play with water. When he was taken to the bathroom, for half an hour he went wild in the water with joy. He was plunging, jumping and rolling in the water.

Question 9. How did Mij spend his time?

Answer: Mij spent most of his time in play. He spent hours shuffling the rubber ball round the room like a four-footed soccer player. His real play was when he used to juggle small objects between his paws. Marbles were his favourite toy for his pastime.

Question 10. While staying in London, what was the pastime of Mij?

Answer: While staying in London, Mijbil would play for hours with his own selection of toys. His favourite toys were ping-pong balls, marbles, rubber fruit and a terrapin shell that the narrator had bought from his native marshes.

Question 11. How did Mij behave outside the house in London?

Answer: Mij used to follow the narrator while walking on the streets. He developed certain habits during those walks. He went with him like children playing, running and touching things in the street. He would take the author near the wall of a primary school and then gallop on it.

Question 12. What special characteristic of Mijbil did Maxwell learn after he took it to the bathroom?

Answer: When Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom, he learnt that he went wild with joy in water, plunging and rolling in it and splashed water.

Question 13. Why did the writer stay in Basra?

Answer: The writer and his friend were going to Basra to the Consulate—General to collect and answer their mails. They found that the mail of his friend was available but the author had to stay in Basra for five days.

Question 14. What did the otter look like?

Answer: The otter looked like a very small dragon. Its appearance was very pretty. It was coated with pointed scales of mud on its back. It spread mud all round.

Question 15. How did Maxwell get the otter?

Answer: Maxwell wanted to keep an otter as a pet instead of dog. He expressed his wish before his friend who managed to get an otter and sent it to Maxwell through two Arabs. Thus, Maxwell got his tamed otter.

Question 16. What happened when Maxwell decided to transport Mijbil to England by air?

Answer: When Maxwell decided to transport Mijbil to England, Mijbil was kept into a box. He tore off the box and wounded himself. Then Mijbil disappeared down the aircraft, terrorizing the other passengers. After that, he settled on Maxwell's knee and gave no further inconvenience to others.

Question 17. What game did Mijbil invent?

Answer: Mijbil discovered that if he placed the ball on the high end of the damaged suitcase, it would run down the length of the suitcase. He would dash around to the other end to ambush its arrival, hide from it, crouching, to spring up and take it by surprise, grab it and trot off with it to the high end once more.

Question 18. What guesses did the Londoners make about what Mijbil was?

Answer: The writer was not surprised to know that the Londoners could not recognize an otter. They thought he was a baby seal, a squirrel, a walrus, a hippo, a beaver, a bear cub, a leopard.

Question 19. What 'experiment' did Maxwell think Camusfearna would be suitable for?

Answer: Maxwell was staying in a cottage in Camusfearna. There was a lot of water around the cottage. He thought to have an otter as a pet instead of a dog. An otter likes flowing water. So the author thought that Camusfearna would be suitable spot for that experiment.

Question 20. How does he get the otter? Does he like it? Pick out the words that tell you this?

Answer: Maxwell expressed his desire to have an otter as a pet to his friend. His friend kept it in mind and sent an otter through two

Question 21. Why was the otter named 'Maxwell's otter'?

Answer: This race of animals was unknown to the scientists in the beginning. After its discovery it was christened by zoologists Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli or Maxwell's otter.

Question 22. What happened when the box was opened?

Answer: The airhostess suggested the author that he could keep the pet on his knee. The author opened the box. Mij was out of the box in a flash. He disappeared at high speed down the aircraft. There was chaos all around in the plane.

Question 23. What game had Mij invented?

Answer: Mij had invented a game of his own with a ping-pong ball. During the journey, the suitcase of the author was damaged. It got a slope on one end. Mij discovered that if he placed the ball on the high end it would run down the length of the suitcase.

Long Answer Type Questions

Question 1. In the name of rules and regulations, basic values are ignored but people like the airhostess in 'Mijbil the Otter' are a ray of hope. What virtues do we find in the airhostess?

Answer: The airhostess was somewhat friendly, and she allowed the narrator to place the otter on his lap. She could relate and empathise with the situation faced by the narrator. This shows that apart from being professional, she was a caring lady. She not only wanted to do her job but was also responsible as she helped the narrator in finding the otter back. She did all that she could do for Maxwell and the otter. She was hard working and was ready to help as she did not say 'no' to help the narrator.

Question 2. The narrator called the airhostess the queen of her kind. This shows how caring and supportive she was. Do you find such people these days? Are people having a change in their values?

Answer: In today's world, it is getting difficult to find people who show their care and support. Rather than helping others, they start giving excuses and quote rules and regulations. Earlier, people used to think about the situation faced by others and helped them in all possible ways.

This is changing because of the change in the values of the people. People give first priority to their own safety and security. They care for themselves first and then think about others.

Question 3. Why do you think the otter was not friendly at first with the narrator? Can you relate this to the human nature as well? [CBSE 2016]

Answer: At first, the otter was not very friendly with the narrator as he had seen him for the first time. He was brought to a new place and new surroundings. He neither knew the narrator nor the place which made him stay away from the narrator. But, as soon as he started becoming comfortable with the surroundings, he became friendly and came close to the narrator.

This is very similar to the human nature. Even, the human beings first take time to understand others and then only become friendly with them. Unless they are comfortable in being with somebody, they try to stay away from that person.

Question 4. Why does he go to Basra? How long does he wait there, and why?

Answer: He goes to Basra to the Consulate General to collect and answer his mail from Europe. His mail did not arrive in time. He cabled to England, and when, three days later, nothing had happened, he tried to telephone. The call had to be booked twenty-four hours in advance. On the first day the line was out of order; on the second day, exchange was closed for a religious holiday. On the third day there was another breakdown. His mail arrived five days later. He had to wait for five days.

Question 5. What happened when Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom? What did it do two days after that?

Answer: When Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom he went wild with joy in the water, plunging and rolling in it, shooting up and down the length of the bathtub underwater, and making enough slosh and splash for a hippo. Two days after, Mijbil escaped from the bedroom and entered the bathroom. He struggled with the chromium tap till it had a full flow.

Question 6. How was Mij to be transported to England?

Answer: The British airline to London did not permit to fly animals. The author had to book a flight to Paris on another airline. The airline insisted

that Mij should be packed into a box not more than eighteen inches square. The author acted accordingly and transported Mij to England.

Question 7. What did Mij do to the box?

Answer: The author put Mij into the box an hour before he started for the airport so that Mij would become accustomed to it and left for a meal. When he came back he found complete silence in the box. He saw blood stains around the airholes. Mij had torn the lining of the box to shreds. He got himself hurt.

Question 8. Why did Maxwell put the otter back in the box? How do you think he felt when he did this?

Answer: Maxwell put the otter back in the box because he was already late for the airport. It was just ten minutes time for the flight, and the airport was five miles distant. He felt bad in doing so. He did not want to keep the miserable otter in the box but there was no other option due to time constraint.

Question 9. Why does Maxwell say the airhostess was "the very queen of her kind"?

Answer: The author told the airhostess about the incident that took place half an hour before at home and took her into his confidence. The airhostess was a considerate lady. She cooperated with the author and suggested him to keep his pet on his knee. This made the author call her "the very queen of her kind".