

1. Answer the following questions briefly.

a. Why had Rigzin woken up early? What had he planned to do for the rest of the day?

Ans: Rigzin had woken up early because it was Buddhapurnima which was a day of great religious significance for Ladakhi Buddhist. His plans for the day were to help in the preparations for the special prayers which were to be held later that night in the village monastery.

b. How did Rigzin learn about the snow leopard in the village? Why were the people rushing towards Tashi's house?

Ans: Rigzin learnt about the snow leopard in the village when he was at the stream washing up, and his friend Jigmet called out to him and pointed in the direction of Tashi's house. A group of people were rushing in the direction of Tashi's house because a snow leopard had entered the livestock enclosure there and killed many of the livestock.

c. How had the calf managed to survive?

Ans: The calf had managed to survive almost by accident initially, either because the snow leopard had happened to focus its attention on the other animals in the enclosure first, or because it had lain very still, or both. Later, of course, brave actions distracted the snow leopard from the calf and saved it.

d. Why was Rigzin concerned about the snow leopard?

Ans: Rigzin was concerned about the snow leopard because it was a heavily endangered animal and the villagers were so distressed and angry that they were talking about killing it.

e. How did Rigzin save the calf?

Ans: Rigzin saved the calf by suggesting that the villagers distract the snow leopard while he crept in and quickly removed the calf from the enclosure. Thus, while the villagers made a new hole in the roof of the enclosure and started yelling and screaming to catch the snow leopard's attention, Rigzin slipped in, crept up to the calf, picked it up and ran out of the door before the leopard could reach him.

f. Did Rigzin manage to save the life of the snow leopard? How?

Ans: Yes, Rigzin managed to save the life of the snow leopard. He did so by his quick thinking and courageous actions. He told the crowd that if the snow leopard felt threatened by them it might attack the calf, and proposed the alternative plan to rescue the calf first. He reminded them that snow leopards have never been known to attack humans. He then threatened them with the law, reminding them that snow leopards are endangered animals and covered under the Wildlife Protection Act, and if they harmed him, he would report each and every one of them to the wildlife department. He also persuaded the crowd by reminding them of what would be lost to the world, to the future generations, if snow leopards were to become extinct.

Critical Thinking

1. The magnificent natural beauty of Ladakh has been beautifully captured in the story. Explain.

Ans: The magnificence of Ladakh has been beautifully captured in the story through the vivid descriptions of its natural beauty and birds and animals. The author uses Rigzin's point of view to describe Ladakh in spring, with the trees in bloom, bursting with pinkish-white apricot blossoms, flaming red rose finches flitting in and out of trees, and of course, the magnificent snow leopard. The author has also painted an enticing picture of the mountainous terrain, and the stream flowing by.

2. Why are animals poached? What are its consequences?

Ans: Animals are poached for their skins, fur and bones. Some people buy furs and pelts (skin) to use them for clothing and accessories, while the bones of some animals, like tigers and snow leopards, are used in traditional Chinese medicine. A consequence of this is that these poached animals become endangered and move closer towards complete extinction.

3. Real-Life Connect: Wildlife is an integral part of nature. As a young student, how would you create awareness to protect wildlife?

Ans: As a young student I can create awareness by:

a. Doing my research and educating the people in my life about the dangers being posed to wildlife and what we can do to help.

b. Volunteering with organizations that are working to protect wildlife.

c. My actions – I can make small changes in my life that would help protect wildlife, such as giving up the use of single-use plastics. This might influence others to make similar changes.

d. Creating flyers and distributing them in my school and neighbourhood.

e. Writing to wildlife conservationists and inviting them to come and speak at my school and neighbourhood.