

2. Skimbleshanks : The Railway Cat

(a) Text-based Multiple Choice Questions

- | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (b) | 3. (c) | 4. (a) | 5. (c) |
| 6. (c) | 7. (c) | 8. (b) | 9. (b) | 10. (a) |

(b) Comprehension Passages

PASSAGE 1

- (i) One of the passengers on the train is the speaker. He observes that the train is about to start but Skimble, the cat, its incharge, is missing. It is not normal.
- (ii) The Night Mail is ready to depart on its usual time. However, its incharge Skimble who is to give the signal is missing. All are in suspense about the whereabouts of Skimble.
- (iii) Skimble is never late. He comes to give signal to the train in time.
- (iv) Skimble who is to give signal to the train to leave is nowhere to be seen. The time of its departure is fast approaching. This causes commotion among all the passengers.
- (v) Skimble being the incharge of the train ensures that everything goes well on the train. He looks after the comforts of all passengers. He ensures that there is no lawlessness anywhere.

PASSAGE 2

- (i) The Night Mail was ready to depart but Skimble, its incharge was missing. Without his signal, the train would not leave. So there was restlessness among the passengers.
- (ii) The cat is no ordinary animal. He is called Skimble and is the official incharge of the Night Mail. It is he who supervises everything on the train.
- (iii) The train is heading for the northern part of the Northern Hemisphere. No particular city of its destination is mentioned because the cat's whole railway network seems to be crazy.
- (iv) The cat's watching the passengers 'without winking', drinking a cup of tea with a drop of scotch, and his parting remark 'I'll see you again' by waving his long tail are some of his amusing actions.
- (v) At times we feel that the cat does represent some dictator who keeps a constant eye on everybody and every action of theirs. This is confirmed when we come to know how the cat watches the face of each passenger and tries to know what they are thinking.

PASSAGE 3

- (i) Skimble, the cat, is most important on the Northern Mail. He is the incharge of the train. The train cannot depart without his signal. Thus it is he who supervises everything on the train.

- (ii) Skimble, the cat, watches all the passengers carefully. He has full control over everything going on in the train. His discreet presence everywhere reminds us of a dictator.
- (iii) Skimble, the incharge of the train supervises everything minutely. He does not allow chaos anywhere. Thus he ensures that nothing goes wrong on the train.
- (iv) The cat helps the passengers to get down. He waves his long brown tail which seems to say, "I'll see you again". Thus he sees off his passengers.
- (v) The cat, Skimble, is a serious, disciplined being. He wants a peaceful atmosphere and no disturbance for anyone. So he dislikes any hilarity and noisy merriment.

PASSAGE 4

- (i) 'The little den' indicates the small cabin in the train compartment. It is made cosy with a clean floor, clean bed and an adjustable light.
- (ii) In the small cabin of each compartment, called 'the little den', there is a comfortable bed to sleep in. There is an arrangement for adjustable light. A small basin is also provided for face washing. Moreover, there is a device to shut the window to prevent cold wind from outside.
- (iii) Skimble, ensures that all the passengers get a clean and peaceful surrounding, timely tea to their taste and have a sound, undisturbed sleep.
- (iv) Skimble is a very devoted and conscientious being. He is strict and watchful. He does not do anything wrong on the train in his charge.
- (v) The poet personifies the cat as a hilarious and agile creature. Some of his actions like watching the passengers without a wink, drinking tea with a drop of scotch to keep himself alert and waving his tail as a goodbye gesture are quite hilarious.

PASSAGE 5

- (i) The Night Mail was ready to depart but its incharge, Skimble, the cat, was missing. The train could not leave without his giving the signal. This made the passengers and the crew restless.
- (ii) The cat performs all his duties as a supervisor very efficiently. He ensures all comforts to the passengers. He made certain that nothing goes wrong during the journey.
- (iii) Skimble keeps a strict watch on everybody and everything. He does not allow any chaos. He looks after the needs of each and every passenger.
- (iv) The cat ensures a peaceful atmosphere. He makes sure that the passengers get timely tea according to their taste and have a good, undisturbed sleep.
- (v) The cat's watching of what each passenger thinks and does and his discreet presence everywhere makes us feel that he is not conceived as a mere feline creature. He reminds us of Big Brother in a dictatorship.

PASSAGE 6

- (i) The cat plays the role of the train supervisor. He ensures the timely departure of the train. He provides every comfort to the passengers. He has full control on everything and everybody on the train. He does not do anything wrong.
- (ii) The speaker views the role of the cat as an efficient supervisor, and perhaps as the Big Brother who watches and controls everything and everybody in his regime.
- (iii) The cat ensures a peaceful atmosphere and timely tea to them. He also makes sure that they have a nice, undisturbed sleep.
- (iv) The cat does not allow anyone to break any rule, make a noise or merriment and do anything that disturbs others.
- (v) The cat sees off the passengers by waving his long brown tail as if saying, "I'll see you again". The gesture seems to be amiable, not sinister.