My Childhood

by A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

Summary, Questions & Answers, Grammar and Writing

Class 12 English

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Working with Words

A. Match the words in column 'A' with their meanings in column 'B'.

Expectantly: In a way that shows you are hoping for something, especially something good or exciting.

Beckon: To give a signal to somebody to move nearer or to follow you.

Grapple: To try hard to find a solution to a problem.

Texture: The way food or drink tastes or feels in your mouth.

Cobbled: Having a surface that is made of small, round stones.

Flimsy: Thin and easily torn.

Attire: Clothes, especially fine or formal ones.

Marvelous: Extremely good; wonderful.

Dynamics: The science of the forces involved in movement.

B. An autobiography is a story of a person's life, written by himself/herself. Use a dictionary and find the meanings of the following words related to people's life stories.

Hagiography: The writing of the lives of saints.

Psychobiography: A biographical study focusing on psychological factors, such as childhood experiences, traumas and unconscious motives.

Pathography: The study of the life of an individual or the history of a community with regard to the influence of a particular disease or psychological disorder.

Chronicle: A factual written account of important or historical events in the order of their occurrence.

Obituary: A notice of a death, especially in a newspaper, typically including a brief biography of the deceased person.

Character Sketch: A brief written description of a person's qualities and personality.

Profile: A short article giving a description of a person or organization.

Memoir: A historical account or biography written from personal knowledge and experience.

Comprehension

A. Put the following events in the life of Abdul Kalam in a chronological order.

Correct chronological order:

c. Abdul Kalam attended an elementary school at Rameswaram.

f. One day Abdul Kalam's teacher visited them to share his pride and pleasure about his performance.

a. They celebrated happiness with poli.

g. A new teacher in the school forbade Abdul Kalam to sit together with his Brahmin friend.

e. Many students did not understand well of Sivasubramania Iyer's lecture.

d. He then took the students to the seashore for a practical class.

b. Abdul Kalam was determined that he would make a future study about flight and flight systems.

B. Answer the following questions.

a. What were the causes of Abdul Kalam's happiness?

The main causes of Abdul Kalam's happiness were his supportive father, loving mother and inspirational teachers. His teachers encouraged him to learn and develop his abilities. He also had a strong interest in

mathematics and science. His hard work, dedication and success in his studies made him happy. The support of his family and teachers gave him confidence and motivated him to achieve more in life.

b. Which two places did Abdul Kalam visit before going to school?

Before going to school, Abdul Kalam visited his Arabic tutoring class and his mathematics teacher's home. These visits were part of his daily routine and helped him continue his studies beyond regular school hours.

c. What did he like about mathematics?

Abdul Kalam liked learning the rules and principles of mathematics. He enjoyed solving complex mathematical problems and could spend hours working on them. Mathematics was one of his favourite subjects because he found pleasure in understanding its concepts and solving difficult questions.

d. Why was the new teacher unhappy?

The new teacher was unhappy because he saw Abdul Kalam, a Muslim boy, sitting on the same bench with Ramanadhan Sastry, a Brahmin boy. The teacher could not accept the friendship between two children from different religious communities. His reaction showed religious prejudice and discrimination.

e. Why did Abdul Kalam have to split with his intimate friend?

Abdul Kalam had to separate from his intimate friend Ramanadhan Sastry because of the discriminatory behaviour of their new teacher. The

teacher ordered Abdul Kalam to leave the seat beside his Brahmin friend and sit elsewhere. This incident hurt both boys because they had a close friendship and did not understand why their religions should separate them.

f. What was the topic of Sivasubramania Iyer's class?

The topic of Sivasubramania Iyer's class was how birds could fly in the sky. He explained the mechanism of bird flight and discussed how birds used their wings and tails to move through the air.

g. How was the teacher's reaction when the students told him that they did not understand his lecture?

The teacher did not become upset when the students said they could not understand his lecture. Instead, he understood their difficulty and decided to explain the topic in a more practical way. He took the students to the seashore so they could observe birds and understand how they flew. His reaction showed that he was patient, helpful and dedicated to teaching.

h. Why did Sivasubramania Iyer take his students to the seashore?

Sivasubramania Iyer took his students to the seashore because he wanted to demonstrate the mechanism of bird flight in a practical way. He believed that students could understand the topic more easily by observing birds rather than only listening to a classroom explanation. At the seashore, he showed them how birds used their wings and tails to maintain balance and fly.

Critical Thinking

a. APJ Abdul Kalam became a renowned aerospace scientist in his later life. Do you find any association of his childhood days in shaping his career? Explain with specific instances from the text.

Yes, Abdul Kalam's childhood played an important role in shaping his future career as an aerospace scientist. His early interests, hardworking nature and the guidance of his teachers helped him develop an interest in science and flight technology.

From an early age, Kalam was a keen student of mathematics. He regularly performed well in his studies and showed a strong interest in solving difficult mathematical problems. He even attended extra mathematics classes at his teacher's home. His dedication to learning helped him develop the knowledge and discipline needed for his future career.

One of the most important experiences of his childhood was the practical lesson given by his teacher, Sivasubramania Iyer. The teacher explained how birds could fly in the sky. When the students could not understand the classroom explanation, he took them to the seashore and demonstrated the flight mechanism of birds.

By observing the birds, Kalam learned how they used their wings and tails to maintain balance and fly. This practical experience deeply influenced him and created a strong interest in flight dynamics and flight systems.

Therefore, his childhood education, interest in mathematics and science,

and the inspiration he received from his teacher helped shape his career. His experience at the seashore became an important step towards his future as an aerospace scientist.

b. Kalam mentions an instance of discrimination against him in his school life. What picture of society does he want to depict by mentioning the incident? Discuss.

In his memoir, Abdul Kalam describes an incident of religious discrimination that happened during his school life. He was a Muslim boy, while his close friend Ramanadhan Sastry belonged to a Brahmin Hindu family. Both boys used to sit together on the same bench in their classroom.

One day, a new teacher noticed them sitting together. He did not like seeing a Muslim boy and a Brahmin boy sharing the same bench. Because of his religious prejudice, he ordered Kalam to leave his seat and sit at the back of the classroom. This incident made both friends very sad.

Through this incident, Kalam wants to show that religious discrimination existed in society, even among educated people. Some people judged others based on their religion instead of treating everyone equally. The teacher's behaviour showed how religious differences could create unnecessary divisions among people.

However, the incident also shows that friendship and humanity are more important than religious differences. Kalam and Ramanadhan Sastry were close friends despite belonging to different religious communities. Their friendship represents the possibility of unity and mutual respect.

Thus, Kalam presents a picture of a society divided by religious prejudice while also showing the importance of equality, friendship and religious harmony.

Writing: Autobiography

What is an Autobiography?

An autobiography is the story of a person's life written by that person. It describes personal experiences, family background, education, achievements, challenges and important events from the writer's own life.

Unlike a biography, which is written by another person, an autobiography is written by the person whose life is being described.

Important Points to Include in an Autobiography

Date and place of birth: Mention when and where you were born.

Family background: Describe your parents, siblings and family environment.

Daily life: Explain your daily routine and activities.

School life: Write about your school, teachers, friends and studies.

Special childhood events: Include memorable experiences, celebrations, trips and activities.

Personal experiences: Describe the lessons and memories that influenced your life.

Sample Autobiography: My Childhood Life

I was born in a small village in the north-eastern part of Nepalgunj District. I belong to a middle-class family. There are five members in my family, including me. My father is a tailor, and my mother is a housewife. I also have an elder brother and a younger sister. Both of them are students.

Since I am a student, my daily routine mainly focuses on studying and attending classes. I usually wake up at 6:00 a.m. and complete my morning activities, such as brushing my teeth, taking a shower and getting ready for class. After that, I check my notes and revise my lessons for the day.

My classes usually start at 8:00 a.m. and end at 1:00 p.m. I attend my classes regularly and spend some time with my friends after school. Then I return home and usually take a short nap until 4:30 p.m. After waking up, I go outside to play with my friends. I usually return home by 6:00 p.m., take a bath and prepare for my evening studies. I normally go to bed at around 9:00 p.m.

During my childhood, I used to play a lot with my siblings. I have many fond memories of the games we played together. In the evenings, we often went to the park with our sports equipment. We played different games on different days, such as football and cricket. Those moments spent playing with my siblings are still very special to me.

One of my most memorable childhood experiences was a family picnic. We visited a zoo and spent a wonderful day together. My mother packed delicious food for us, which we enjoyed during the picnic. My father also took many photographs that day. Whenever I look at those pictures, the memories feel as fresh as if the event happened yesterday.

My childhood memories are very dear to me. They remind me of the happiness, love and experiences I shared with my family. These memories continue to bring joy to my life.

Grammar: Connectives (Concession and Contrast)

What are Connectives?

Connectives are words or phrases used to join ideas, sentences or parts of sentences. They help make writing more connected and meaningful.

In this lesson, we study connectives used to express concession and contrast. These connectives show that something happens or is true even though another fact or situation might suggest the opposite.

1. Although, Though and Even Though

Although, though and even though are used to introduce a contrasting idea. They are followed by a subject and a verb.

Structure:

Although / Though / Even though + Subject + Verb + Main Clause

Examples:

Although she was tired, she continued working.

Though he is poor, he is honest.

Even though it was raining, they played football.

Note: Although, though and even though have similar meanings. Even though often gives stronger emphasis to the contrast.

2. Despite and In Spite Of

Despite and in spite of are used to show contrast. They are generally followed by a noun, pronoun or verb ending in -ing (gerund), not a complete sentence with its own subject and verb.

Structure:

Despite + Noun / Pronoun / Verb-ing

In spite of + Noun / Pronoun / Verb-ing

Examples:

Despite the rain, we went outside.

In spite of his illness, he attended the meeting.

Despite being tired, she completed her homework.

In spite of having little money, they enjoyed their holiday.

3. Difference Between Although and Despite

The main difference is the grammatical structure that follows them.

ConnectiveWhat follows it?ExampleAlthoughSubject + VerbAlthough he was tired, he worked.ThoughSubject + VerbThough she was ill, she attended class.Even thoughSubject + VerbEven though it rained, we went out.DespiteNoun / Pronoun / Verb-ingDespite the rain, we went out.In spite ofNoun / Pronoun / Verb-ingIn spite of the rain, we went out.

Remember: Do not write "despite he was tired." Instead, write "although he was tired" or "despite being tired."

A. Study the following sentences and underline the connectives.

Although she spoke very fast, I understood what she meant to say.

In spite of her hard labour, she failed her exam.

Though he had all the required qualifications, he did not get the job.

Despite having all the qualifications, he did not get the job.

B. Join the following pairs of sentences twice, using although/though/even though and despite/in spite of as in the example.

a. He is a millionaire. He lives in a simple house.

Although he is a millionaire, he lives in a simple house.

Despite being a millionaire, he lives in a simple house.

b. The weather was extremely bad. The pilot landed the plane safely.

In spite of the extremely bad weather, the pilot landed the plane safely.

Although the weather was extremely bad, the pilot landed the plane safely.

c. We study in the same college. We hardly see each other.

Despite studying in the same college, we hardly see each other.

Although we study in the same college, we hardly see each other.

d. It rained heavily. We enjoyed our holiday.

Although it rained heavily, we enjoyed our holiday.

In spite of the heavy rain, we enjoyed our holiday.

e. I had an umbrella. I got wet in the rain.

Despite having an umbrella, I got wet in the rain.

Although I had an umbrella, I got wet in the rain.

f. I was really tired. I could not sleep for a moment.

Although I was really tired, I could not sleep for a moment.

I couldn't sleep despite being very tired.

g. She has a very good accent in English. She failed the interview of a newsreader.

Despite having a very good accent in English, she failed the interview of a newsreader.

Although she has a very good accent in English, she failed the interview of a newsreader.

h. Lhasa has extremely cold weather in winter. Millions of tourists go there in January.

Millions of tourists go to Lhasa in January, even though it has extremely cold weather in winter.

Despite having extremely cold weather in winter, millions of tourists go to Lhasa in January.

i. He was badly injured in the first round of the boxing match. He was victorious in the third round.

In spite of being badly injured in the first round of the boxing match, he was victorious in the third round.

Although he was badly injured in the first round of the boxing match, he was victorious in the third round.

C. Complete each sentence in an appropriate way.

He passed the exam although he hadn't prepared well.

She climbed the mountain in spite of her leg injury.

He did not give any alms to the beggars even though he earned a lot.

In spite of his poor eyesight, he is conducting online courses.

She does not go to parties, though she is very sociable.

He could not pass the test, in spite of his ten attempts.

He refused to eat anything despite having an appetite.

He could not score good grades in the SEE exams in spite of his hard work with private coaching.

She accepted the job although she couldn't meet her salary expectation.

Even though we had planned everything carefully, we could not complete our mission.

Quick Revision

Important Vocabulary

Expectantly: With hope or excitement.

Beckon: To signal someone to come closer.

Grapple: To struggle to solve a problem.

Texture: The way something feels or tastes.

Cobbled: Made with small, rounded stones.

Flimsy: Thin and easily damaged.

Attire: Clothing.

Marvelous: Wonderful or excellent.

Dynamics: The forces involved in movement.

Important Points from the Chapter

Abdul Kalam's childhood education and family support helped shape his personality.

He had a strong interest in mathematics and science.

His teacher Sivasubramania Iyer inspired his interest in bird flight and flight systems.

The practical lesson at the seashore became an important learning experience for him.

The incident involving his new teacher showed the problem of religious

discrimination.

His friendship with Ramanadhan Sastry represents equality and religious harmony.

An autobiography is a person's own account of their life.

Although, though and even though are followed by a subject and a verb.

Despite and in spite of are followed by a noun, pronoun or verb ending in -ing.

Grammar: Remember These Rules

Although + Subject + Verb

Though + Subject + Verb

Even though + Subject + Verb

Despite + Noun / Pronoun / Verb-ing

In spite of + Noun / Pronoun / Verb-ing

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