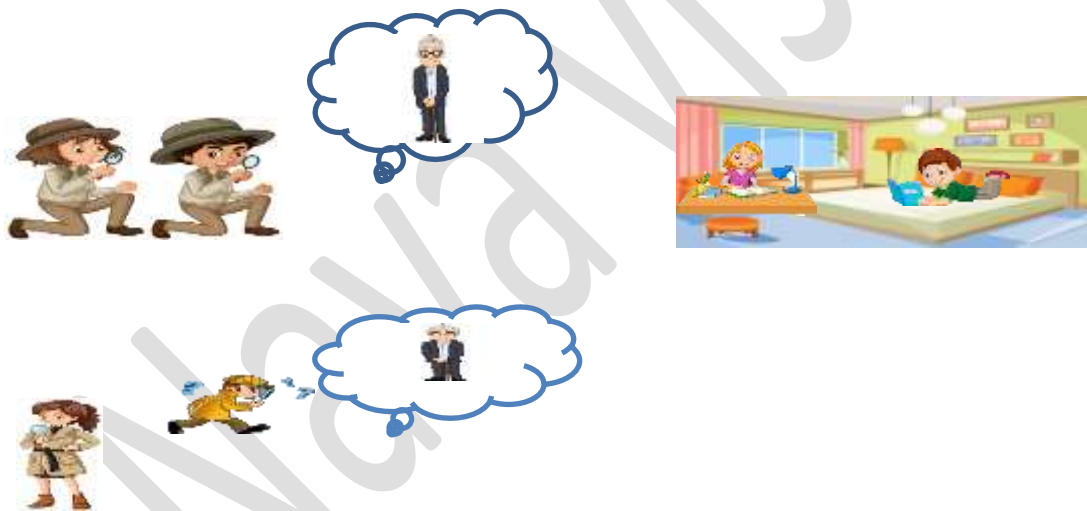


## Expert Detectives

### Before you read

Nishad, a boy of seven (also called Seven because his name means the seventh note on the musical scale) and his ten-year-old sister Maya are very curious about one Mr Nath. Then one day the children's marble rolls into Mr Nath's room, and Nishad gets a chance to see him. Is he a crook on the run? Why is his face badly scarred? Why has he no friends?

Nishad's mother, a doctor, knows Mr Nath as a patient, who is very polite.



### I

As we walked back towards the clinic Seven said, "He doesn't look anything like a monster, Maya. But did you see how thin he is? Maybe he's very poor and can't afford to eat."

"He can't be poor if he's a crook on the run," I told him. "He's probably got millions of rupees stashed away somewhere in that room."

"Do you really think he's a criminal, Maya? He doesn't look like one," Nishad looked doubtful.

"Of course, he's one, Seven," I said, "and he certainly isn't starving. Mr Mehta told us that Ramesh brings his meals up from the restaurant downstairs."

"But Maya, Mr Mehta told us he doesn't work anywhere, so how can he possibly have money to pay for food?" Nishad said.

"Exactly!" I exclaimed. "He must have lots of money hidden somewhere, maybe in that trunk in his room. It's probably full of silver and gold and jewels and..."

"What rubbish," Nishad interrupted.

"I know I'm right, stupid," I told him. "By the way, Seven, did you see his scars? I couldn't, it was too dark, but I bet he got them during a shootout with the police or something."

"Mummy told us quite clearly they were burn scars," Nishad said firmly.

"Perhaps the police had to set his house on fire to force him out," I suggested. Seven looked unsure.

On the Monday following Mamma's birthday, seven went alone with her to the clinic at Girgaum as I was spending the evening with a schoolfriend. When they returned, Nishad told me he'd been to see Mr Nath and I felt most annoyed that I hadn't been there.

Seven had been quite upset about Mr Nath's gaunt appearance and was sure that he was starving. He told me that he had knocked loudly on Mr Nath's door that evening and said, "Open the door quickly, Mr Nath."

The man had opened it and asked him, "Lost another marble?" He had obviously recognised my brother. "No," said Nishad. He had taken the man's hand in his own, and thrust a bar of chocolate into it.

"Did you get a chance to peek into the trunk, Seven?" I asked. Nishad looked disappointed. "He didn't even ask me in," he said. Then he smiled. "But I did find out something, Maya. I went down to the restaurant where Ramesh works and talked to him."

"Good for you, Mr Detective," I said, patting him on the back, "I hope you questioned him properly." Seven looked pleased. "Ramesh told me that he takes two meals for Mr Nath every morning and evening, and two cups of tea, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Ramesh says he's not very particular about what he eats, it's always the same food – two chapattis, some dal and a vegetable. Mr Nath pays cash and tips well.

"Ramesh told me something very strange, Maya," Seven added. "Almost every Sunday, he carries two lunches to Mr Nath's room and the same man is with him each time. He's tall, fair, stout and wears spectacles. Ramesh says his visitor talks a lot, unlike Mr Nath who hardly speaks."

"Well done, Nishad," I told him. "Now that we've made some progress with our inquiries, we'll have to sort out all the facts like expert detectives so that we can trap the crook."

“How you do go on, Maya,” Seven sighed. “How can you possibly imagine he’s a crook? He looks so ordinary!” “Criminals can look quite ordinary, smarty,” I retorted. “Did you see the picture of the Hyderabadi housebreaker in the papers yesterday? He looked like any man on the street.” Nishad looked doubtful.

The monsoons broke the next day. Dark clouds accompanied by blinding flashes of lightning and roaring rolls of thunder burst with all their fury, flooding the streets with a heavy downpour. School was to have reopened after the summer holidays, but no traffic could move through the flooded roads and there was an unexpected holiday. I thought I’d spend the time usefully. I sat at my desk in our bedroom with a sheet of paper before me.

### **Moral of the prose:-**

The lesson is a story of two young detectives who were inquisitive about a man who was polite, a recluse with health problems. A sense of curiosity is nature's original school of education.

### **Worksheets**

1. What does Nishad find out about Mr Nath from Ramesh?

Arrange the information as suggested below.

- What he eats
- When he eats
- What he drinks, and when
- How he pays

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## Working with Language

1. The word 'tip' has only three letters but many meanings. Match the word with its meanings below.

- (i) finger tips - be about to say something  
(ii) the tip of your nose - make the boat overturn  
(iii) tip the water out of - the ends of one's fingers  
the bucket  
(iv) have something on - give a rupee to him, to thank him  
the tip of your tongue  
(v) tip the boat over - empty a bucket by tilting it  
(vi) tip him a rupee - the pointed end of your nose  
(vii) the tip of the bat - if you take this advice  
(viii) the police were - the bat lightly touched the ball  
tipped off  
(ix) if you take my tip - the end of the bat  
(x) the bat tipped the ball - the police were told, or Warned

2. The words helper, companion, partner and accomplice have very similar meanings, but each word is typically used in certain phrases. Can you fill in the blanks below with the most commonly used words? A dictionary may help you.

- (i) business \_\_\_\_\_  
(ii) my \_\_\_\_\_ on the journey  
(iii) I'm mother's little \_\_\_\_\_.  
(iv) a faithful \_\_\_\_\_ such as a dog

- (v) the thief's \_\_\_\_\_  
(vi) find a good \_\_\_\_\_  
(vii) tennis/ golf / bridge \_\_\_\_\_  
(viii) his \_\_\_\_\_ in his criminal activities

3. Now let us look at the uses of the word break. Match the word with its meanings below. Try to find at least three other ways in which to use the word.

- (i) The storm broke - could not speak; was too sad to speak  
(ii) daybreak - this kind of weather ended  
(iii) His voice is beginning - it began or burst into activity  
to break  
(iv) Her voice broke and - the beginning of daylight  
she cried  
(v) The heat wave broke - changing as he grows up  
(vi) broke the bad news - end it by making the workers submit  
(vii) break a strike - gently told someone the bad news  
(viii) (Find your own expression. Give its meaning here.)

### **Speaking:-**

1. Play detectives with each other. Find a person in your class (or some other acquaintance) to speak to. Find out the answers to the questions given below. Be careful to ask your questions in a polite and inoffensive way. Do not force the person to answer you. Then allow the person to ask you the same questions.

- (i) Name?  
(ii) What newspapers or magazines does the person read?  
(iii) How long has the person lived at the current address?  
(iv) What does she/he do during the day, i.e. the daily routine?  
(v) What do neighbours and friends say about the person?  
(vi) Who are his/her visitors and what are his/her eating habits? (You can ask a few others about this.)  
(vii) What do you think about the person?

### **Writing:-**

1. Who do you think Mr Nath is? Write a paragraph or two about him.

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2. What else do you think Nishad and Maya will find out about him? How? Will they ever be friends? Think about these questions and write a paragraph or two to continue the story.

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Navavision