

AN UNCOMFORTABLE BED

Learning outcomes

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- identify the irony of the situation in the story.
- express how the narrator causes his own misfortune.
- relate how the details at the onset develop the reader's interest.
- explain how the suspense is built up in the story.
- describe the feelings of the narrator.
- summarise the events as seen by the narrator.
- explain how the speaker's suspicions add to the humour.
- infer how the first-person narration enhances the humour.
- identify quantifiers and use them in sentences.
- use prefixed words in sentences.
- role-play situations.
- write paragraphs using linkers.

Pre-reading

- Have you played practical jokes on others? If so, on whom?
- What kind of practical jokes do you play?
- How do you feel when someone has made a fool of you? How do you handle the situation?

Understanding the Text

One autumn... "Goodnight"

Ask students:

How can we make out that the speaker likes how his friends are (*He says his friends are practical jokers. He also says he does not like people who are not practical jokers.*)

How did he respond to their overtures? (*He felt he had to take precautions against being made a fool of.*)

What did the narrator think of his friends' behaviour? (*He thought his friends were laughing more than was necessary and believed they were thinking of the practical joke they had planned for him and how he would make a fool of himself.*)

What was the comparison made and how? (*Just as a hunting dog's sense of smell is sharp enough to detect the scent of its prey amidst other smells, he felt he too could sense the specific reason for merriment among his friends apart from the usual cheerfulness of getting together.*)

Do you think this would be a serious or humorous narrative? Why do you think so? (Free response)

I entered my room... nothing to fear from outside.

Ask students:

What confirmed his suspicions? (*He could hear people talking and whispering in the corridor and walking about outside his door. So, he concluded that his friends were looking through the keyhole to watch him secretly as he fell for their gag.*)

How did he try to protect himself from possible dangers? (1. He lit all the candles in the room in case his candle went out, leaving him in a dark room. 2. He closed the window shutters, drew the curtains and put a chair in front of the window to keep himself safe inside.)

Then I sat down cautiously... I fell asleep.

Ask students:

How did the narrator plan to spend the night? Why? (He planned to sit in the armchair and sleep fearing that his friends may have done something with the bed to fool him.)

Where did he finally decide to sleep and why? (Finally, he decided to sleep on the bed because he felt his friends would be laughing at him for being afraid of their tricks to fool him. He did not want to show them that he was scared.)

Discuss:

Was he being silly or was he right in behaving this way?

How do we know that he was not going to sleep on the bed? (He says he certainly does not want to be the butt of his friends' practical joke by sleeping on the bed as expected.)

What precautions did he take to be able to sleep soundly? (He dragged the mattress, sheet and bedclothes to the middle of the bedroom floor away from the bed-frame, put out the candles and lay down.)

I must have been... in my nightshirt.

Ask students:

How was he awakened from deep sleep? How did he respond to this rude awakening? (He put out his hand to find out what was smothering his face and struck the face of the person who had fallen on him.)

What did he do in response to the slaps he received? (He got out of bed and ran into the corridor in his nightshirt.)

Oh, heavens!... that day!

Ask students:

Why was he embarrassed when he ran out of his room into the corridor? (It was bright in the morning

and his friends saw him in his nightshirt, without his robe on.)

Discuss:

What is the irony of the situation here? (The speaker who suspects his friends of mischief and takes precautions, falls prey to own actions.)

Who was responsible for the accident and how? (He was himself responsible for the accident. The butler had tripped on the bed he had moved to the floor, and fallen on him with his breakfast tray.)

Why did his friends laugh at him? (He had been so careful about not becoming the victim of their practical jokes that he had made a fool of himself.)

How does imagery lend to the humour? (Each action of the speaker is portrayed in a detailed and comical manner. The scene that is vividly described, helps the reader imagine the situation in a humorous way.)

Appreciating the Text

This is a humorous story in the first-person, with the speaker presenting himself as the victim.

The first-person narrator is the protagonist. The rest are supporting characters. All of them are clubbed together as practical jokers, including the speaker.

The speaker's friends welcome him warmly. He is suspicious that his friends may have planned to play a joke on him. His suspicion and the resulting alertness keeps the reader guessing. The protagonist shows himself as the master of the situation. 'Look out, old ferret!'

The jollity continues during dinner until the friends bid goodnight. The narrator suspects that he is going to be the victim of a practical joke played by his friends. He thinks he is in command of the situation, comparing himself to a hunting dog smelling a practical joke as keenly as it would smell a prey. The more jolly and warm the friends are, the more the narrator is cautious. What will happen to him?

The comic element in the situation is the way the main character sees every action of his friends as exaggerated because of a hidden motive. The plot develops with the activities of the main character through the night as he takes whatever precautions he can to protect himself from

becoming a victim of all the practical jokes he can think of. Humour is presented as a series of exaggerated actions to serve one purpose and to focus attention on the ridiculous lengths the main character goes to protect himself from imagined hoaxes.

He ends up becoming a victim of his own fertile imagination as a practical joker.

The speaker lays bare the irony by portraying himself as the hero who made himself a fool.

Post-reading

Discussion:

It is not easy to laugh at yourself. Provide instances, real or imagined to prove your point.

Grammar and Usage

nouns and quantifiers

Rule 1:

Write the word 'tea' on the board:

Ask students:

Is the noun 'tea' countable or uncountable?

Can you make plural forms of this word? (yes)

Give them the following situations.

Situation 1

You and your friend go to a restaurant and want to order tea. How will you place the order without using the word 'cup'?

Prompt: Please bring us _____ (two teas)

Situation 2

You want to tell your teacher where tea is grown. How will you say it?

Prompt: _____ is grown in _____.

Ask students:

In situation 1, have you used the word 'tea' as a countable or an uncountable noun? (countable)

In situation 2, have you used the word 'tea' as a countable or an uncountable noun? (uncountable)

Tell students:

Some nouns can be used both as countable and uncountable nouns based on the situation.

Put students in groups. Give them the words *paper, coffee, hair* and *time*.

Give different words to different pairs. Ask them to role-play situations using the given words as countable and uncountable nouns.

Rule 2:

Give students the same noun used in rule 1 and ask them to use suitable quantifiers to qualify the noun when used as uncountable nouns.

Example: a cup of tea.

Rule 3:

Book tickets early to avoid disappointment.

The film turned out to be a disappointment.

Tell students:

In the first sentence, the speaker is talking about a general feeling of disappointment.

In the second sentence, the speaker is specifying what was disappointing.

In the second case, the abstract noun disappointment is used as a countable noun although abstract nouns are generally uncountable. Countable nouns are mostly preceded by indefinite articles.

Words in Use**prefixes**

Explain that a prefix is a set of letters placed before a word, and that the word takes a different meaning when written or said with the prefix.

Brainstorm for a few words with the given prefixes.

Tell the class that they are going to play *noughts and crosses*.

Note:

- The first team chooses its square and decides its symbol. Either a nought – **O** or a cross- **X**
- Team A then places its symbol anywhere in the grid.
- Teams take turns until one team places their symbol in a row. It can be vertically, horizontally or diagonally as shown below.

X		
	O	
		O

X	X	X
	O	
	O	O

X	X	O
	O	
O		

X		X
O	O	O
O		X

- Divide the class into teams; two teams play at a time and the winning team proceeds to the next round and plays against another winning team. Demonstrate with two teams.

Direct students to play the game using prefixes.

Draw a grid and write the words that have prefixes [one word in each square]:

Example:

prove	take	president
state	approve	pack
fire	estimate	appear

[Answers: *improve / disprove, overtake / undertake, ex-president, interstate, disapprove, unpack, misfire, underestimate / overestimate, disappear*]

- Divide the class into two groups — A and B.
- Group A chooses the word that goes with the square.
- The group now gives the prefix for the chosen word. If it is correct they get to put their symbol in the square, if not the question passes to the other team.
- The game continues till there is a winning team.

Phrases in context: Follow the input given in the Reader.

Speaking

role play

As a warm up to the speaking task, provide a few situations and let students role-play the tasks. Give them about five minutes to prepare for the task. Tell them that while one relates, the other should ask questions and react appropriately.

Monitor the activity.

A few examples:

- talking about some suspicious activity that you came across while you were walking to school.
- encountering a friendly monkey.
- saving a kitten on the road and taking it home

Writing

paragraph with linkers

Explain to the class that we use linkers to:

- show the order of events of an incident.
- tell readers about the relationship between ideas/things.
- combine short simple sentences to form longer complex ones.

Brainstorm for a few linkers.

Example: *and, but, although, yet, even though, then, after that*, and so on.

Encourage students to come up with some interesting acronyms for linkers. For instance, the *fanboys*: For, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

Let students do the exercise with the help of the given guidelines in the Reader.

WORKSHEET

AN UNCOMFORTABLE BED

GRAMMAR

Name of Student: _____

Class: _____

Underline the countable/uncountable nouns and their quantifiers in the sentences.

1. I was surprised to see a pile of rubbish at the roadside.
2. She had seen a lot of misery in her life.
3. There is a rumour that this place is haunted.
4. I do not have any sugar.
5. This play has many scenes.
6. Would you like some coffee?

AN UNCOMFORTABLE BED

VOCABULARY

Name of Student: _____

Class: _____

Complete these sentences by adding the correct prefixes to the words in the brackets.

over pre auto im inter anti

1. They discovered that the plane was flying on _____ for the entire journey. (pilot)
2. She was very _____ during the meeting. (polite)
3. It is important to _____ with people who bring out the best in us. (act)
4. He seemed arrogant and _____ about his computer skills. (confident)
5. Bullying can be called _____ behaviour. (social)
6. These days people prefer to _____ while purchasing a product online. (pay)

WORKSHEET

AN UNCOMFORTABLE BED

WRITING

Name of Student: _____

Class: _____

Write a short story using linkers, with you as a first-person narrator.

ANSWER KEY TO THE WORKSHEETS

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Answer Key to the grammar worksheet

1. a pile of—rubbish
2. a lot of—misery
3. a—rumour
4. any—sugar
5. many—scenes
6. some—coffee

Answer Key to the vocabulary worksheet

1. autopilot
2. impolite
3. interact
4. overconfident
5. antisocial
6. prepay

QUESTION BANK WITH ANSWER KEY

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1. Read the given line and answer the questions.

I had no doubt they were looking through the keyhole.

- a. Who does 'they' refer to?
- b. Why did the narrator feel he was being noticed?
- c. What made him suspicious?
- d. What did he do to protect himself?

Answers:

- a. 'They' in the above line refers to the narrator's friends.
- b. As the narrator suspected that his friends were planning to have fun at his cost, he thought they were constantly observing him, waiting for the right opportunity.
- c. His friends' behaviour made him believe that he was right. Besides, he knew that they were fond of practical jokes.
- d. He did not want to be caught in the dark, so he lighted all the candles in the room and was vigilant.

2. Answer in brief.

- a. What made the narrator suspect that his friends had something in store for him?

When the narrator arrived in Picardy to spend a few days with his friends, he was given an exceptionally grand reception. They cheered loudly and everything was exaggerated and there was excessive mirth without any reason. So, he concluded that they were planning to make him the victim of a big prank.

b. Why did the narrator drag the mattress to the middle of the room?

As a precaution to ensure his safety, the narrator dragged the mattress along with the bed clothes to the middle of the room because he expected danger from the corner of the room. He probably thought he would be able to see the full room from the middle and protect himself easily.

3. Answer in detail.

What efforts did the narrator take to protect himself from the joke he suspected his friends would play on him?

Suspecting his friends would play a prank on him, the narrator took care not to expose himself. That night, expecting trouble in the darkness, he lighted all the candles in the room and taking small steps inspected every article in the room. He shut the large wooden shutters, drew the curtains and placed a chair in front of them to avoid any intrusion from outside. Finally, he thought the bed was suspicious looking. So, he dragged the mattress out along with the bed sheets to the very middle of the room facing the door. By doing all this he thought he would be safe and not get fooled.

4. Answer in detail (Think and answer).

In the process of saving himself from being fooled, the narrator unknowingly played a prank on himself. Explain.

It was indeed a hilarious situation in the end, when after taking all efforts to avoid the possible pranks, he made a fool of himself by his own doing. Little did he realise that he had laid the trap for himself when he dragged the mattress to the middle of the room to feel safe from the possible prank. As he was sleeping peacefully in the middle of the room on the improvised bed, the valet who brought his morning cup of tea just tripped over the unexpected bed and crushed and smothered the narrator. Thus, he became a victim by trying to avoid being tricked.

STUDENTS' BOOK ANSWER KEY

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1. The writer builds up our interest in paras 1-6 by describing everything that makes him feel suspicious, such as his friends welcoming him too warmly or being too cheerful at dinner.
2. To build up the suspense further, the writer describes different possible pranks that may have been set up for him, so that the reader keeps guessing which, if any, of these pranks may be played on him.
3. In paras 16-18, the writer takes the excitement to a peak by telling us about an unknown weight falling upon him, accompanied by some unidentified burning liquid and some strange sounds. It seems as if the prank that the reader had been waiting for has finally happened. The writer then explains what had really happened—it was the valet who had fallen down with the breakfast tray. The explanation adds to the humour by showing how the writer brought about this accident by trying to be too careful.

Understanding the Text

1.
 - a. The second sentence tells us that the speaker valued a sense of humour in his friends.
 - b. The only evidence that we can find in the text for the first sentence is the way the speaker's friends laughed when they found out what had happened. We do not see them actually playing any practical joke on the speaker.
2.
 - a. watchful, restless, distrustfully, carefully, cautiously
 - b. *Sample answers:* nervous / apprehensive
3.
 - a. The speaker calls himself a ferret because he was trying to find out what kind of prank his friends could play on him. He was trying to ferret out the truth, and he was also acting a bit like a ferret— hunting for clues and trying to 'catch' his friends.
 - b. The speaker thought that his friends had set some kind of trap for him or set him up for a practical joke.
4. Once inside his room, the speaker shut the door, and remained standing, without moving a single step. He looked around at the walls, the furniture, the ceiling, the hangings and the floor. He thought that his candle may go out, so he lighted all the candles in the room. He moved with short steps, carefully examining the room, and inspected every article, one after the other. He was convinced that his friends had laid a trap for him inside the room, so he was being careful and trying to check everything.
5. The speaker closed the shutters and drew the curtains so that no trick could be played on him through the window. As a result of this, no light could come into the room from outside. In para 14, he made his bed in the middle of the room, on the floor, and extinguished all the candles. Since the room was now completely dark, when the valet came in, he could not see the bed on the floor and tripped over it.
6. c
7. At first, the speaker did not dare to get into the bed because he was sure that his friends had made some arrangement in the bed for a prank. Yet, he also thought that his friends, who must be waiting for the success of their trick, would be laughing at him because he was too afraid to go to bed. He could not let them have so much fun at his expense and went to bed to challenge them.
8. As the speaker was awakened by a body falling over him, he felt a burning hot liquid on his face, neck and chest. It made him howl with pain. At the same time, he heard a great noise, as if many plates and dishes had fallen down. After a brief struggle with the body which had fallen over him, the speaker managed to get up and rush out of the room. It was then that he realised it was morning, and in the light from the corridor, he saw that the valet, while bringing his tea, had tripped over his bed and fallen down, along with the plates he had been carrying. The hot liquid had been the tea.

Appreciating the Text

Right from his arrival at his friends' house until bedtime, the speaker kept expecting some trick to be played on him. He was suspicious and watchful, in order to avoid falling into any trap. He was so careful, in fact, that in taking measures to guard himself against a prank, he set himself up for an awkward situation, making his friends laugh. That is the irony of this story.

The first-person narrative helps to build this irony because this style of narration lets the reader know exactly what is going on in the speaker's mind. Had it been told by someone else, we, as readers, may not have known how nervous or suspicious the speaker was feeling, or why he took certain odd decisions, like

placing a chair in front of the window or making his bed on the floor. The first-person narrative traces his feelings—from his first suspicion to growing nervousness to his final embarrassment—clearly.

Grammar and Usage

- A.** 2. Uncountable noun: experience; rule 1
3. Uncountable noun: business; rule 1
4. Uncountable noun: fire; rule 1
5. Uncountable noun: excitement; rule 2
6. Uncountable noun: seaweed; rule 1
7. Uncountable noun: friendship; rule 3
8. Uncountable noun: praise; rule 2
- B.** 2. anyone 3. another 4. few 5. several 6. No one 7. each 8. most

Words in Use

- A.** uncomfortable, unexpected, dishonest, distrustful, impolite, impractical
2. dishonest 3. impractical 4. distrustful 5. impolite 6. unexpected
- B.** 2. Alia did not seem to mind that her cousins had a laugh at her expense.
3. He cast a glance at his notes before entering the examination hall.
4. Rohan's classmates made much of him when he won the quiz competition.
5. After a lot of thought, I made up my mind to go to Himachal, and not Kerala.
6. I think my family has a surprise in store for my birthday.

Writing

Sample answer:

In the morning, I went to Mr M's room with his tea. At first, I could not see anything—it was so dark inside. However, I walked into the room carefully, trying to see my way in the dark. The next thing I knew, I had stumbled over something piled on the floor! Down went the tray with all the plates and the dishes. Additionally, I myself fell down. As I struggled to get up, the pile under me started moving and struck me a great blow! But I was not going to take that so easily. I too, struck out. At that, the man jumped up and rushed out of the room. After he had left, I tried to look around and understand what was going on. Right then, I heard people laughing outside. Mr M and his friends were looking into the room. I finally realised who had been lying on the floor. It was Mr M himself!