

**NCERT Book Notes**  
**Class 10<sup>th</sup> English (First Flight)**

**Chapter 8 – Mijbil the Otter**

**Oral Comprehension Check**

**1. What ‘experiment’ did Maxwell think Camusfearna would be suitable for?**

**Ans:** Maxwell thinks that he will keep an otter instead of a dog. He thinks that Camusfearna would be a suitable spot for the experiment because it was ringed by water at a short distance from its door.

**2. Why does he go to Basra? How long does he wait there, and why?**

**Ans:** He goes to the Consulate-General in Basra. He travels there to pick up and respond to his European mail. He waits there for five days. He starts with his mails which didn't reach on time. Then he makes a telephone call. In those days, one had to book an appointment 24 hours prior to make an international call. On the first day, the telephone line did not work properly. On the next day, it did not work either because of a public holiday. After the torturous wait of five days, his mail finally arrives.

**3. How does he get the otter? Does he like it? Pick out the words that tell you this.**

**Ans:** He carries his mail to his bedroom when he gets it. There he sees two Arabs and a sack beside them which twists from time to time. The Arabs hand him a note from his friend which says that he has sent him an otter.

Yes, he does like it. It is evident from the term “otter fixation” that he uses to express his feelings towards the otter. He feels that his strong attachment towards otters is a feeling which he shares with the people who have ever had an otter.

#### **4. Why was the otter named ‘Maxwell’s otter’?**

**Ans:** The otter belonged to a race that was unknown to science. It was named by zoologists as *Lutrogale perspicillata* Maxwell or Maxwell’s otter.

#### **5. Tick the right answer. In the beginning, the otter was**

**Aloof and indifferent**

**Friendly**

**Hostile**

**Ans:** The otter was aloof and indifferent in the beginning.

#### **6. What happened when Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom? What did it do two days after that?**

**Ans:** The otter goes wild with happiness in the water when Maxwell takes him to the bathroom. He starts jumping and rolling in the water, he goes up and down in the bathtub and makes enough splashes for a hippo.

After two days, it escaped to the bathroom from his bedroom. By the time Maxwell gets there, the otter is on the end of the bathtub. He fumbles at the taps with his paws and it turns the tap and some water comes out and, in a moment, water comes with full flow.

#### **7. How was Mij to be transported to England?**

**Ans:** Maxwell first books a flight to Paris and from there he would go to London. The airline says that Mij should travel in a box which must not be more than 18 inches square and the box should be placed on the floor near Maxwell’s feet.

### **8. What did Mij do to the box?**

**Ans:** Mij tries to escape from the box because the metal sheet lining of the box was uncomfortable for him. When Mij tries to escape, he tears the metal lining of the box and ends up hurting himself and starts to bleed.

### **9. Why did Maxwell put the otter back in the box? How do you think he felt when he did this?**

**Ans:** The only way to carry Mij to London was to put him in the box so Maxwell had to do it. He felt pity and worried about the fact that the otter had hurt himself.

### **10. Why does Maxwell say the air hostess was “the very Queen of her kind”?**

**Ans:** Maxwell says this because the air hostess was kind and helpful. He tells her about the incident that happened with the box. She suggests that he put his pet on his knees. He feels immense admiration towards her after this because she understands the pain of the otter and himself.

### **11. What happened when the box was opened?**

**Ans:** Mij goes out of the box when it opens. He goes down the aircraft at high speed and disappears. Everyone was crying around. A woman stands up on her seat screaming that there is a rat. Maxwell sees Mij’s tail moving beneath an Indian passenger’s legs. He dives to get it but he misses Mij. The airhostess tells Maxwell to sit and that we would find it. Mij returns to him after some time. It climbs on his knee and he rubs its neck and face.

### **12. What game had Mij invented?**

**Ans:** Mij came up with the idea for a ping-pong ball game. He used to put the ball on one side of a sloping lid and then tried to grab it as it went down to the other side.

### **13. What are ‘compulsive habits’? What does Maxwell say are the compulsive habits of**

## 1) School children

## 2) Mij

**Ans:** Compulsive habits are a person's strange or weird activities or behaviour which s/he shows without any clear reason.

When going to/coming from the school, children do this weird thing where they place their feet right at the centre of each paving block. Mij had created a similar habit where he jumped to the school wall and galloped all the thirty yards of its length.

### 14. What group of animals do otters belong to?

**Ans:** They belong to a group called Mustellines which is a comparatively smaller group of animals. It shares the group with the mongoose, badger, weasel, stoat, mink and others.

### 15. What guesses did the Londoners make about what Mij was?

**Ans:** According to Maxwell, an otter is not recognized by an average Londoner. They made various guesses about what Mij was. They guessed it to be a baby seal, a walrus, a squirrel, a hippo, a beaver, a leopard, a bear cub and a brontosaur.

## Thinking about the Text

### 1. What things does Mij do which tell you that he is an intelligent, friendly and fun-loving animal who needs love?

**Ans:** It can be said that Mij was an intelligent animal by looking at his activities. It invented its own game with ping-pong balls. He screwed that tap by himself until the water flowed out and then he played in it. He had grown an attachment with Maxwell. He tried to get out when he was put in a box by Maxwell. After he got out, he clung to Maxwell's feet. It was a fun-loving kind of animal. He played and enjoyed all kinds of games like, ping-pong balls, rubber fruit, marbles and a terrapin shell. It also longed for Maxwell's affection and love and got it as well.

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**2. What are some of the things we come to know about otters from this text?**

**Ans:** Otters belong to a small group of animals known as Mustellines. The group is shared by others - mongoose, badger, weasel, stoat, mink and others. The race of Maxwell's otter was unknown to science and thus named by zoologists as *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli* or Maxwell's otter. They are majorly found in marshes. The Arabs often tame them. Otters love to play in water and the water should be kept in the move and they would sit and splash in it. They also love to play games, especially with balls.

**3. Why is Mij's species now known to the world as Maxwell's otter?**

**Ans:** The race of Maxwell's otter was unknown to science and thus named by zoologists as *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli* or Maxwell's otter.

**4. Maxwell in the story speaks for the otter, Mij. He tells us what the otter feels and thinks on different occasions. Given below are some things the otter does. Complete the column on the right to say what Maxwell says about what Mij feels and thinks.**

**Ans:**

<b>What Mij does</b>	<b>How Mij feels or thinks</b>
Plunges, rolls in the water and makes the water splish and splash	Went wild with joy
Screws the tap in the wrong way	Irritated and disappointed
Nuzzles Maxwell's face and neck in the aeroplane	Distressed chitter of recognition and welcome

**5. Read the story and find the sentences where Maxwell describes his pet otter. Then choose and arrange your sentences to illustrate those statements below that you think are True.**

**Maxwell's description**

**(i) makes Mij seem almost human, like a small boy.**

**Ans:** True – He spent the majority of his time playing.

**(ii) shows that he is often irritated with what Mij does.**

**Ans:** False

**(iii) shows that he is often surprised by what Mij does.**

**Ans:** True – I stood there in awe as he cranked the tap far enough to generate a trickle of water in far less than a minute, then increased the flow to full flow after a few moments.

**(iv) of Mij's antics is comical.**

**Ans:** False

**(v) shows that he observes the antics of Mij very carefully.**

**Ans:** True – On the way home, a bag I had brought to Iraq had been broken, and the top, when closed, stayed at a slope from one end to the other. Mij realised that if he put the ball on the top of the luggage, it would roll down the length of it. He'd dash around to the opposite end to ambush its arrival, hide from it while crouched, then jump up and catch it off guard, grab it, and trot away with it. It's not surprising, I guess, that the ordinary Londoner doesn't recognize it.

**(vi) shows that he thinks Mij is a very ordinary otter.**

**Ans:** False

**(vii) shows that he thinks the otter is very unusual.**

**Ans:** True - It's not surprising that the typical Londoner doesn't recognize an otter, but the wide range of answers as to what kind of animal this is surprised me. Mij was far from an otter.

## Thinking about Language

1. From the table below, make as many correct sentences as you can using **would** and/or **used to**, as appropriate. (Hint: First decide whether the words in *italics* show an action, or a state or situation, in the past.) Then add two or three sentences of your own to it.

<b>Emperor Akbar</b>	<b>would</b>	<b>be found of musical evenings.</b>
<b>Every evening we</b>		<b>take long walks on the beach</b>
<b>Fifty years ago, very few people</b>	<b>used to</b>	<b>own cars.</b>
<b>Till the 1980s, Shanghai</b>		<b>have very dirty streets.</b>
<b>My uncle</b>		<b>spend his holidays by the sea.</b>

**Ans:**

1. Musical evenings were a favourite pastime of Emperor Akbar.
2. We used to go for lengthy walks on the beach every evening.
3. Car ownership was uncommon fifty years ago.
4. Shanghai's streets were notoriously filthy until the 1980s.
5. My uncle likes to spend his vacations at the sea.
6. My uncle liked to go for lengthy beach walks.
7. Musical evenings became a favourite pastime of my uncle's.

## 2. Noun Modifiers

1. Look at these examples from the text, and say whether the modifiers (in italics) are Nouns, proper nouns, or adjectives plus nouns.

(i)	An <i>otter</i> fixation	(iv)	The <i>London</i> streets
(ii)	The <i>iron</i> railings	(v)	Soft <i>velvet</i> fur
(iii)	The <i>Tigris</i> marshes	(vi)	A <i>four - footed</i> soccer player

Ans:

- (i) Noun
- (ii) Noun
- (iii) Proper noun
- (iv) Proper noun
- (v) Adjective plus noun
- (vi) Adjective plus noun

2. Given below are some nouns and a set of modifiers (in the box). Combine the nouns and modifiers to make as many appropriate phrases as you can. (Hint: The nouns and modifiers are all from the texts in this book.)

<b>temple</b>	<b>three girls</b>	<b>triangle</b>	<b>dresses</b>
<b>person</b>	thoughts	boys	roar
<b>gifts</b>	scream	farewell	expression
<b>time</b>	subject	landscape	handkerchief



<b>crossing</b>	flight	chatterbox	profession
<b>physique</b>	coffee	view	celebration

<b>college</b>	<b>rough</b>	<b>hundred</b>	<b>stone</b>	<b>ordinary</b>
<b>love</b>	uncomfortable	white	slang	slack
<b>bare</b>	railroad	tremendous	family	marriage
<b>plump</b>	invigorating	panoramic	heartbreaking	birthday
<b>incorrigible</b>	ridiculous	loud	first	

**Ans:**

Temple – white temple, stone temple, first temple

Person – incorrigible person, ridiculous person

Gifts – hundred gifts, ordinary gifts, birthday gifts

Time – college time, first time, rough time

Crossing – railroad crossing, first crossing

Physique – plump physique, ordinary physique

Three girls – incorrigible three girls, first three girls

Thoughts – incorrigible thoughts, uncomfortable thoughts, ridiculous thoughts,

Heartbreaking thoughts, first thoughts, ordinary thoughts

Scream – tremendous scream, loud scream

Subject – college subject, ordinary subject

Flight – rough flight, first flight

Coffee – invigorating coffee, ordinary coffee

Triangle – love triangle

Boys – college boys, rough boys, incorrigible boys, hundred boys

Farewell – college farewell, heartbreaking farewell

Landscape – bare landscape, white landscape, rough landscape

Chatterbox – incorrigible chatterbox

View – tremendous view, panoramic view, ordinary view

Dresses – hundred dresses, birthday dresses, ordinary dresses, marriage dresses

Roar – tremendous roar, loud roar

Expression – bare expression, slack expression, slang expression

Handkerchief – white handkerchief, ordinary handkerchief

Profession – family profession, ordinary profession, first profession

Celebration – tremendous celebration, family celebration, birthday celebration

**2. Match the words on the left with a word on the right. Some words on the left can go with more than one word on the right.**

<b>(i)</b>	<b>a portion of</b>	<b>- blood</b>
<b>(ii)</b>	<b>a pool of</b>	<b>- cotton</b>
<b>(iii)</b>	<b>flakes of</b>	<b>- stones</b>
<b>(iv)</b>	<b>a huge heap of</b>	<b>- gold</b>

(v)	<b>a gust of</b>	<b>- fried fish</b>
(vi)	<b>little drops of</b>	<b>- snow</b>
(vii)	<b>a piece of</b>	<b>- water</b>
(viii)	<b>a pot of</b>	<b>- wind</b>

**Ans:**

- i. A portion of – fried fish
- ii. A pool of – blood
- iii. Flakes of – snow
- iv. A huge heap of – stones
- v. A gust of – wind
- vi. Little drops of – water
- vii. A piece of - cotton
- viii. A pot of – gold

**3. Use a bit of/a piece of/a bunch of/a cloud of/a lump of with the italicised nouns in the following sentences. The first has been done for you as an example.**

(i)	<b>My teacher gave me some advice.</b>	<b>My teacher gave me a bit of advice.</b>
(ii)	<b>Can you give me some clay, please.</b>	
(iii)	<b>The information you gave was very useful.</b>	

(iv)	<b>Because of these factories, smoke hangs over the city.</b>	
(v)	<b>Two stones rubbed together can produce sparks of fire.</b>	
(vi)	<b>He gave me some flowers on my Birthday.</b>	

**Ans:**

- i. My teacher gave me some suggestions.
- ii. Can you give me a lump of clay, please?
- iii. The piece of information you gave was very useful.
- iv. Because of these factories, a cloud of smoke hangs over the city.
- v. Two pieces of stones rubbed together can produce sparks of fire.
- vi. He gave me a bunch of flowers on my birthday.