

2. The Little Pencil

"The earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed."

– Mahatma Gandhi

One day a 13-year-old boy called Arun was walking home from school. He had in his hand a notebook, a writing pad and a little pencil. He had been using the pencil for many days and now it was a short stub. The pencil was too small and he needed a new one, Arun thought. He decided to ask his grandfather for a new pencil. Sure that he would get one, he tossed the old pencil into the bushes and walked home.



That evening, Arun went to his grandfather and asked for a new pencil. But he was surprised when his grandfather, instead of giving him a new pencil, started asking questions. What had happened to the old pencil, how did it become small, where did he throw it away, and so on. Arun could not understand why his grandfather was making such a fuss over a little pencil. But that was not all. Grandfather, not satisfied with Arun's answers, asked him to go and look for the pencil.

Arun was taken aback. "You must be joking! You don't expect me to go out and look for a pencil in the dark!"

Grandfather said, "Oh yes, I do, and here's a torch." And he sent Arun out with the torch to look for the pencil. The boy spent two or three hours searching for it.

7. The People's President

"Look at the sky. We are not alone. The whole universe is friendly to us and conspires only to give the best to those who dream and work."

– A P J Abdul Kalam



A P J Abdul Kalam
15 October 1931–27 July 2015

Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam, or Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, was the 11th president of India. Before he became president, he was a well-known scientist. Dr Kalam came from a humble background. He was the youngest of five children in a poor family. His father, Jainulabdeen, owned a ferry boat and his mother was a homemaker. They lived in Rameswaram on Pamban Island in Tamil Nadu. Kalam took up odd jobs to contribute to his family's income. But he never neglected his studies. At school, Kalam was a bright and hardworking student. He was curious to learn new things. He enjoyed studying for hours. His favourite subjects were mathematics and physics.

Kalam went on to study aeronautical engineering in college. Young Kalam dreamt of becoming a fighter pilot in the Indian Air Force, but missed the chance by a single rank. He stood ninth, and only the first eight were selected. This did not hold him back. He studied hard, worked hard, led a simple life and became a scientist. He designed a small helicopter for the Indian Army. Later, he played a major role in India's space programme. He also helped in building missiles for the country's defence, which earned him the nickname "Missile Man of India".

5. The Vain King

"The only lasting beauty is the beauty of the heart."

– Rumi

Once upon a time, there lived a prince. His father, the king, was a strict man and the people in the kingdom were afraid of him. The prince grew up surrounded by courtiers who doted on him. The young prince loved their attention, but did not realise that their love was more a show they put up in fear of his father. So, he believed them when they said that he was the most handsome prince in the world. He was proud of his good looks. Every now and then, he would look at himself in the mirror and smile. He would straighten his turban or change the way his moustache curled.

When his father died, the prince was crowned the king. The young king looked good in his new clothes and crown. When he sat in court, a traveller came to pay his respects to the new king. The king said to him, "You have travelled far and wide. You have visited many kingdoms. Have you ever seen anyone as handsome as me?"



Exercises

A. Answer these.

1. What did the doctors tell young Stephen?
2. Why is Stephen Hawking admired around the world?
3. What problems did Wilma face before she became an Olympic champion?
4. Why is Sudha Chandran considered a remarkable person?



B. Fill in the blanks.

1. Wilma suffered from _____ in her childhood.
2. Sudha looks at her accident as a _____ in disguise.
3. Christopher Reeve used to play _____ in the movies.
4. Blind people can read with the help of _____.
5. T Sriramanujam realised his dream of becoming a _____.

C. Some famous people overcame disability and became successful. Match to show who these people are.

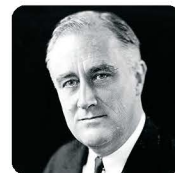
This great scientist did not speak until the age of three.

American president for 12 years, he suffered from polio.

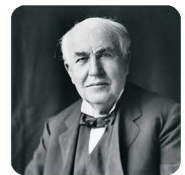
This great German composer became deaf, yet produced beautiful music.

Despite being deaf and blind, she went to college and wrote many books.

Most famous for inventing the light bulb, this inventor had lost his hearing by the age of 12.



Franklin D Roosevelt



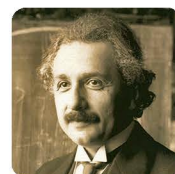
Thomas Edison



Ludwig van Beethoven



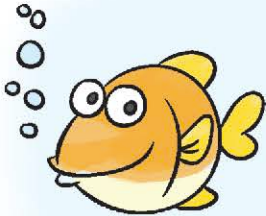
Helen Keller



Albert Einstein

Things to Do

C. Share your knowledge with your friends in class. Choose a topic suggested here (or any other) and make a presentation on it.



How things happen

How do fish breathe in water?
How does day turn into night?
How do plants breathe?
How do earthquakes happen?



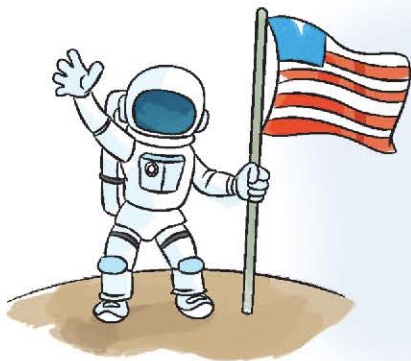
How things work

How does an aircraft fly?
How do mobile phones work?
How does a microwave oven cook food?
How do we get electricity?



Tell me why

Why do stars twinkle?
Why do children lose their milk teeth?
Why do we cry while slicing onions?
Why do we yawn?



Who was the first

human to land on the moon?
human to reach the North Pole?
woman prime minister of a country?
Indian to win a Nobel Prize?

For the teacher Let the children individually or in small groups choose a topic and make a simple presentation, in which they should explain the topic with the help of pictures or diagrams. All the students or groups should be given a round of applause. The names of the best ones can be put up on the board.