



CLASS VII

Subject: English

Date: 28.05.2020

Topic: Atilla (Prose)

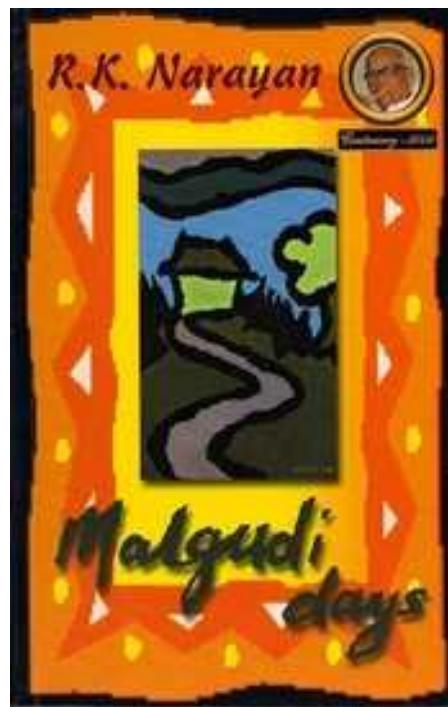
Time Limit: 60 Minutes

Worksheet 12

Copy the notes given below on a sheet of paper and keep them filed to be submitted on the opening day.

Are you an animal lover? Do you have a pet? How does it behave when somebody comes to your house? Does it behave alike with friends and strangers? This story is about a pet dog, named *Atilla*, who behaves differently than other dogs.

This story is actually taken from a collection of short stories, *Malgudi Days*, written by R. K. Narayan and published by Indian Thought Publications in India in the year 1943.



For someone, who spent his vacations in a village amongst trees, lush green paddy fields, and domesticated animals, *Malgudi Days* can bring out those old memories flooding back. Each story deals with common village folks and the issues they face in their day-to-day life.

Out of the 30 odd stories, the story named *Attila* is, actually, about a dog that's named *Attila*, after the ferocious conqueror, Attila the Hun. But, in reality the dog happens to be a very soft natured and a friendly animal that begins to play with a burglar out of sheer boredom and in the confusion, the burglar tries to run away but he trips over the playful dog and falls down and he is eventually captured and arrested along with the loot, and the dog becomes a hero overnight!



Cross-curricular Connection

Attila, frequently called Attila the Hun, was the ruler of the Huns from 434 until his death in March 453. He was also the leader of a tribal empire consisting of Huns, Ostrogoths, and Alans among others, in Central and Eastern Europe.

Attila and his elder brother, Bleda, received instruction in archery, sword fighting and how to ride and care for horses. They also spoke—and perhaps read—both Gothic and Latin, and learned military and diplomatic tactics.

He was one of the most fearsome enemies, the Romans ever faced. Attila claimed the Romans had violated the treaty and led a devastating series of attacks through Eastern Roman cities in 441 CE.



✓ STEP 1

- Let's know about *The Author and his Biography*:



R. K. Narayan (1906–2001) was one of the best known and most esteemed Indians writing in English. He was essentially a storyteller and he did not blaze new trails in fiction writing, but he tried to convey a sense of the land and the people he knew so well.

He was the first English writer to win the Sahitya Akademi Award. Narayan's simple, unassuming narrative continues to strike a chord with literary enthusiasts. Mysore nurtured Narayan's fancy and imagination. It provided him ample material for his fiction. He was instinctively resistant to the world of job and routine employment.

Among Narayan's other landmark works are *The Bachelor of Arts* (1973), *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher* (1945) and *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955) and the novella, *Grandmother's Tale* (1992).

In 1941, he founded his own publishing house and his works quickly found place in the bookshelves of Indian homes. At the peak of his fame, Narayan was awarded a Padma Bhushan in 1964 and 36 years later, just a year before his death at 94, a Padma Vibhushan in 2000.



✓ STEP 2

- Let's read the story, *Attila* together:

The family wanted a strong and formidable dog who could prevent break-ins and theft in their house. A two-month-old black-and-white puppy was brought home. He was named 'Attila' after the Scourge of Europe. He had square jaws, red eyes, a pug nose and a massive head. He gave no hope that he would do credit to his name.

Q The puppy, as I have already indicated, did not have a very prepossessing appearance and was none too playful, but this did not prevent his owners from sitting in a circle around him and admiring him. There was a prolonged debate as to what he should be named. The youngest suggested, 'Why not call him Tiger?'

'Every other street-mongrel is named Tiger,' came the reply.

'Why not Caesar?'

'Caesar! If a census was taken of dogs you would find at least fifteen thousand Caesars in South India alone...'

'Why not Fire?'

'It is fantastic.'

'Why not Thunder?'

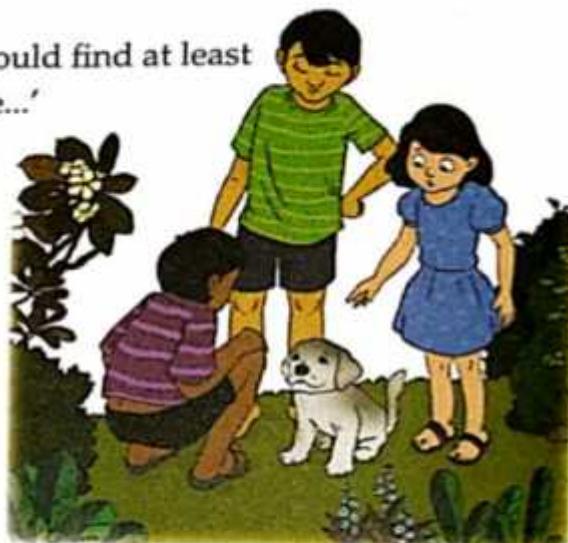
'It is too obvious.'

'Grip?'

'Still obvious, and childish.' There was a deadlock. Someone suggested Attila, and a shout of joy went up to the skies. No more satisfying name was thought of for man or animal.

But as time passed our Attila exhibited a love of humanity which was sometimes disconcerting. The Scourge of Europe—could he ever have been like this?

They put it down to his age. What child could help loving all creatures? In their zeal to establish this fact, they went to the extent of delving into ancient history to find out what the Scourge of Europe was like when he was a child. It was rumoured that as a child he clung to his friends and to his parents' friends so fast that often he had to be beaten and separated from them. But when he was fourteen he showed the first sign of his future: he knocked down a fellow who tried to touch his marbles. Ah, this was encouraging. Let our dog reach the parallel of fourteen years and people would get to know his real nature.



prepossessing: charming

prolonged: continued for a long time

delving: trying hard to find out more information about something

But this was a vain promise. He stood up twenty inches high, had a large frame and a forbidding appearance on the whole—but that was all. A variety of people entered the gates of the house every day: mendicants, bill-collectors, postmen, trades-men and family friends. All of them were warmly received by Attila. The moment the gate clicked he became alert and stood up looking towards the gate. By the time anyone entered the gate Attila went blindly charging forward. But that was all. The person had only to stop and smile, and Attila would melt. He would behave as if he apologised for even giving an impression of violence. He would lower his head, curve his body, tuck his tail between his legs, roll his eyes and moan as if to say, 'How sad that you should have mistaken my gesture! I only hurried down to greet you.' Till he was patted on the head, stroked and told that he was forgiven, he would be in extreme misery.

Gradually he realised that his bouncing advances caused much unhappy misunderstanding. And so when he heard the gate click he hardly stirred. He merely looked in that direction and wagged his tail. The people at home did not like this attitude very much. They thought it rather a shame.

'Why not change his name to Blind Worm?' somebody asked.

'He eats like an elephant,' said the mother of the family. 'You can employ two watchmen for the price of the rice and meat he consumes. Somebody comes every morning and steals all the flowers in the garden and Attila won't do anything about it.'

'He has better business to do than catch flower thieves,' replied the youngest, always the defender of the dog.

'What is the better business?'

'Well, if somebody comes in at dawn and takes away the flowers, do you expect Attila to be looking out for him even at that hour?'

'Why not? It's what a well-fed dog ought to be doing instead of sleeping. You ought to be ashamed of your dog.'

'He does not sleep all night, Mother. I have often seen him going round the house and watching all night.'

'Really! Does he prowl about all night?'

'Of course he does,' said the defender.

'I am quite alarmed to hear it,' said the mother. 'Please lock him up in a room at night, otherwise he may call in a burglar and show him round. Left alone, a burglar might after all be less successful. It wouldn't be so bad if he at least barked. He is the most noiseless dog I have ever seen in my life.'

The young man was extremely irritated at this. He considered it to be the most uncharitable cynicism, but the dog justified it that very night.

Ranga lived in a hut, three miles from the town. He was a 'gang coolie'—often employed in road-mending. Occasionally at nights he enjoyed the thrill and profit of breaking into houses. At one o'clock that night Ranga removed the bars of a window on the eastern side of the house and slipped in. He edged along the wall, searched all the trunks and almirahs in the house and made a neat bundle of all the jewellery and other valuables he could pick up.

He was just starting to go out. He had just put one foot out of the gap he had made in the window when he saw Attila standing below, looking up expectantly. Ranga thought his end had come. He expected the dog to bark. But not Attila. He waited for a moment, grew tired of waiting, stood up and put his forepaws on the lap of the burglar. He put back his ears, licked Ranga's hands and rolled his eyes. Ranga whispered, 'I hope you aren't going to bark . . .'

'Don't you worry. I am not the sort,' the dog tried to say.

'Just a moment. Let me get down from here,' said the burglar.

The dog obligingly took away his paws and lowered himself.

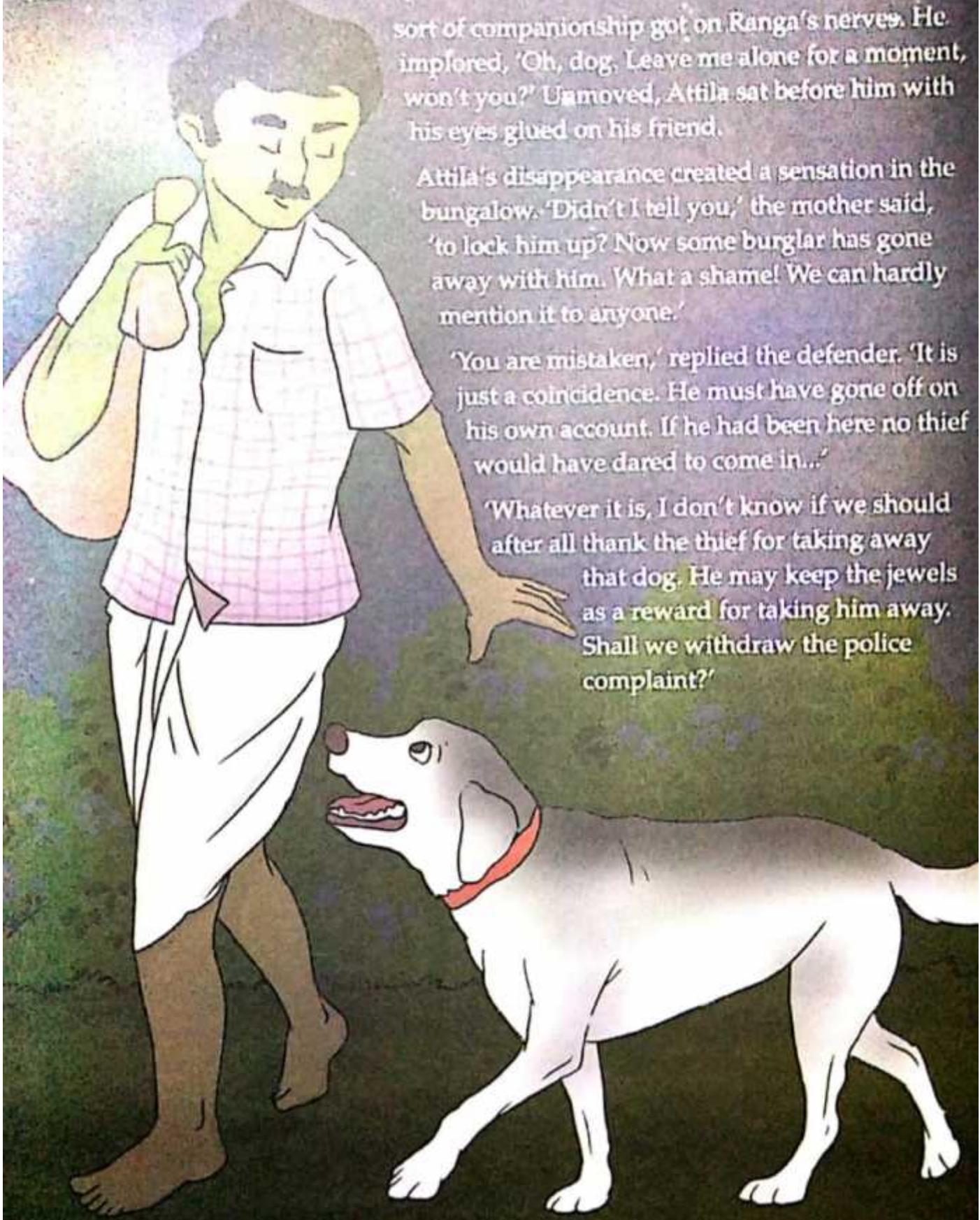
'See there,' said Ranga, pointing to the backyard, 'there is a cat.' Attila put up his ears at the mention of the cat and dashed in the direction indicated. One might easily have thought he was going to tear up a cat, but actually he didn't want to miss the pleasure of the company of a cat if there was one.

As soon as the dog left him Ranga made a dash for the gate. Given a second more he would have hopped over it. But the dog turned and saw what was about to happen and in one spring was at the gate. He looked hurt. 'Is this proper?' he seemed to ask. 'Do you want to shake me off?'

He hung his heavy tail down so loosely and looked so miserable that the burglar stroked his head, at which he revived. The burglar opened the gate and went out, and the dog followed him. Attila's greatest ambition in life was to wander in the streets freely. Now things seemed to be shaping up ideally.



cynicism: distrust



Attila liked his new friend so much that he wouldn't leave him alone even for a moment. He lay before Ranga when he sat down to eat, sat on the edge of his mat when he slept in his hut, waited patiently on the edge of the pond when Ranga went there now and then for a wash, slept on the roadside when Ranga was at work. This

sort of companionship got on Ranga's nerves. He implored, 'Oh, dog. Leave me alone for a moment, won't you?' Unmoved, Attila sat before him with his eyes glued on his friend.

Attila's disappearance created a sensation in the bungalow. 'Didn't I tell you,' the mother said, 'to lock him up? Now some burglar has gone away with him. What a shame! We can hardly mention it to anyone.'

'You are mistaken,' replied the defender. 'It is just a coincidence. He must have gone off on his own account. If he had been here no thief would have dared to come in...'

'Whatever it is, I don't know if we should after all thank the thief for taking away that dog. He may keep the jewels as a reward for taking him away. Shall we withdraw the police complaint?'

This facetiousness ceased a week later, and Attila rose to the ranks of a hero. The eldest son of the house was going towards the market one day. He saw Attila trotting behind someone on the road.

'Hey,' shouted the young man, at which Ranga turned and broke into a run. Attila, who always suspected that his new friend was waiting for the slightest chance to desert him, galloped behind Ranga.

'Hey, Attila!' shouted the young man, and he also started running. Attila wanted to answer the call after making sure of his friend, and so he turned his head for a second and galloped faster. Ranga desperately doubled his pace. Attila determined to stick to him at any cost. As a result, he ran so fast that he overtook Ranga and clumsily blocked his way, and Ranga stumbled over him and fell. As he rolled on the ground a piece of jewellery (which he was taking to a receiver of stolen property) flew from his hand. The young man recognised it as belonging to his sister and sat down on Ranga. A crowd collected and the police appeared on the scene.

Attila was the hero of the day. Even the lady of the house softened towards him. She said, 'Whatever one might say of Attila, one has to admit that he is a very cunning detective. He is too deep for words.'

It was as well that Attila had no powers of speech. Otherwise he would have burst into a lamentation which would have shattered the pedestal under his feet.



R K Narayan

R K Narayan was born in Chennai, South India. He was an Indian writer known for his works set in the fictional South Indian town of Malgudi. His first novel *Swami and Friends* (1935) and its successor *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) are both set in the enchanting fictional territory of Malgudi. His novel *The Guide* (1958), which was later adapted into a film, won him the National Prize of the Indian Literary Academy.

facetiousness: not being serious about a serious subject

pedestal: the base that a statue rests on

lamentation: an expression of great sadness

✓ **STEP 3**

- Now, Copy ***The Meanings***, provided along with the text as well as ***The Author and his Biography*** on a sheet of paper.
- Make your presentation neat.

