

A House is Not a Home

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Chapter Sketch

The story 'A House is Not a Home' is about a teenager who joins a new school. He misses his old friends, teachers and old school. His house gets destroyed in a fire and he loses all his belongings and his pet cat. His fellow students in the new school help him by gifting him study material and clothes. This act of kindness touches him and he makes friends with them.

One day, while he was overlooking the construction of his new house, a lady comes and gives him his missing cat. He is overjoyed to get his pet cat back and suddenly all his feelings of tragedy and insecurity go away.

About the Characters

The Teenager The teenager is a high school student. He joins a new school and misses his old school, teachers and friends.

The Pet Cat The pet cat is very dear to the teenager. She is a red coloured cat.

The Stranger The stranger lives a mile away from the teenager. She is very helpful as she takes care of his pet cat, finds out the details of owner of cat from phone no, on cat's collar.

Summary of the Chapter

Teenager Joins A New School

The teenager joins a new high school. He finds it strange and awkward as his closest friends are in a different school. He misses his old friends and teachers and goes to meet his old teachers regularly.

Teenager's House Catches Fire

One day, while the teenager is doing his home work, his house catches fire. He and his mother run outside the house. He goes to his neighbours to call the fire brigade while his mother rushes inside to get some important documents and the pictures of his father. He is terrified on seeing his mother go inside the burning house and in the process of saving his mother, forgets about his pet cat.

They Shift to His Grandparent's House

After five hours, the firemen are successful in extinguishing the fire. The teenager suddenly realises that his pet cat is missing. He searches it everywhere but is unable to find it. He cries for the loss of his cat. He and his mother shift to his grandparents' home as their house has been completely destroyed by the fire.

Teenager Goes to School

The next day, the teenager goes to school. His clothes look weird and he does not have any books or school bag as everything was destroyed in the fire. He feels strange going like this to the school and wants to die as his old school, his friends, his house and his pet cat have been taken away from him.

Teenager Revisits the House

After school, the teenager revisits his house and finds that the damage due to the fire is huge. His heart misses his cat and he is unable to find it. He visits the house every now and then in the hope of finding his cat. But, it seems to be nowhere.

| Word | Meaning |
|----------------|--|
| plight | a dangerous, difficult or otherwise unfortunate situation |
| milling | to move in a confused or disorderly manner within a limited area. |
| shove | push someone or something roughly |
| stuff | things |
| genuine | sincere |
| outpouring | an outburst of strong emotion |
| PAGE 53 | |
| instant | moment |
| sigh | make a long, deep audible breath expressing sadness, relief, tiredness etc |

| Word | Meaning |
|----------------|---|
| insecurity | uncertainty or anxiety about oneself |
| curb | a short border along the edge of a street that is usually made of stone or concrete |
| leapt | move quickly and suddenly |
| grabbed | to grasp or seize something suddenly and roughly |
| PAGE 54 | |
| freaked | terrified |
| sorely | to a very high degree or level of intensity |
| gratitude | the quality of being thankful |
| overwhelming | (of an emotion) very strong |

NCERT FOLDER

(Here we have covered questions given in the NCERT textbook along with their answers.)

Think About It (Page 54)

- 1 What does the author notice one Sunday afternoon? What is his mother's reaction? What does she do?

Ans. The author noticed smoke coming through the seams of the ceiling of his house on a Sunday afternoon. He and his mother came out of the house. His mother ran back into the house to fetch the important documents and photographs of his father.

- 2 Why did he break down in tears after the fire?

Ans. He broke down in tears after the fire as he was unable to find his pet cat. He thought that he had suffered a big loss as he had joined a new school, his house got burned and now his pet cat was missing.

- 3 Why is the author deeply embarrassed the next day in school? Which words show his fear and insecurity?

Ans. The author was deeply embarrassed the next day in school as his clothes looked weird, he had no books or homework and his backpack was destroyed in the fire. The words 'outcast', 'geek' and 'zombie' show his fear and insecurity.

- 4 The cat and the author are very fond of each other. How has this been shown in the story? Where was the cat after the fire? Who brings it back and how?

Ans. The author missed the cat badly when she got lost. Many times he would go to his damaged house to search for it. He would also remember the time he spent with the cat. The cat used to climb on him and crawl into his pocket to sleep when it was a kitten. She would also follow him. All this shows that the author and the cat were very fond of each other. The cat was terrified when the author's house caught fire. She ran over a mile away. A lady brought the cat back by holding it in her arms.

- 5 What actions of the schoolmates change the author's understanding of life and people, and comfort him emotionally? How does his loneliness vanish and how does he start participating in life?

Ans. The author's schoolmates gave him school supplies, notebooks and clothes as his house had been completely destroyed by the fire. They also introduced themselves to him and invited him to their house. All these things comforted the author emotionally.

This incident made the author think for the first time that things are going to be okay in the future. It made his loneliness vanish and led him to make new friends.

- 6 What is the meaning of "My cat was back and so was I"? Had the author gone anywhere? Why does he say that he is also back?

Ans. "My cat was back and so was I" means that the author is back to normal after finding his cat. No, the author had not gone anywhere.

Exam Practice

Extract Based Questions

[4 Marks each]

Read the following extracts carefully and choose the correct option.

1 I missed my old teachers so much that I would go back and visit them. They would encourage me to get involved in school activities so that I could meet new people.

- (i) Why would the author visit them?
(a) Because he wanted to hurt them
(b) Because he had lost his cat
(c) Because he missed them
(d) Because he wanted to invite them to his home

(ii) Which 'school' is referred in the extract?

- (a) Author's old school
(b) Author's new school
(c) Author's friend's school
(d) Author's mother's school

(iii) Find a word from the extract which means 'persuade someone to do something by giving support and advice'.

- (a) Discourage (b) Hamper
(c) Involve (d) Encourage

(iv) What is the opposite of 'encourage'?

- (a) Invite
(b) Hearten
(c) Dishearten
(d) Animate

Ans. (i) (c) Because he missed them

(ii) (b) Author's new school

(iii) (d) Encourage

(iv) (c) Dishearten

2 I was about to run after her when I felt a large hand hold me back. It was a fireman. I hadn't even noticed that the street had already filled with fire trucks.

(i) Who is 'her' in the above extract?

- (a) Author's sister
(b) Author's cat
(c) Author's mother
(d) Author's grandmother

(ii) Why was the author about to run after 'her'?

- (a) As she was about to commit suicide
(b) As she was leaving forever
(c) As she was unable to walk properly
(d) As she had gone inside the burning house

(iii) Find a word from the extract that means 'seen'.

- (a) Noticed (b) Witnessed
(c) filled (d) Hold

(iv) Which part of speech is 'already'?

- (a) Adjective (b) Adverb
(c) Noun (d) Pronoun

Ans. (i) (c) Author's mother

(ii) (d) As she had gone inside the burning house

(iii) (a) Noticed

(iv) (b) Adverb

3 It always seems that bad news spreads quickly, and in my case it was not different. Everyone in high school, including the teachers, was aware of my plight. I was embarrassed as if somehow I were responsible.

(i) Which 'bad news' is referred in the extract?

- (a) The news of the author's mother getting trapped in the fire
(b) The news of the author's belongings getting lost in the fire
(c) The news of the author's house getting destroyed in the fire
(d) The news of the author's cat getting trapped in the fire

(ii) What was the author's plight?

- (a) He lost his mother in the fire
(b) He lost all his belongings in the fire
(c) He lost his pet cat in the fire
(d) Both (b) and (c)

(iii) Which part of speech does the word 'quickly' belong to?

- (a) Adjective (b) Pronoun
(c) Adverb (d) Noun

(iv) in the extract is the opposite of 'excluding'.

- (a) Inclusive
(b) Comprising
(c) Aware
(d) Including

Ans. (i) (c) The news of the author's house getting destroyed in the fire

(ii) (d) Both (b) and (c)

(iii) (c) Adverb

(iv) (d) Including

4 While we sat there on the curb, planning my new bedroom, I heard someone walk up to me from behind and say, "Does this belong to you?" When I turned to see who it was, I couldn't believe my eyes.

(i) Who are 'we' in the extract?

- (a) Author and his cat
- (b) Author and his mother
- (c) Author and his two old friends
- (d) Author and his two new friends

(ii) Why was the author unable to believe his eyes?

- (a) As his dog had returned after disappearing for a month
- (b) As his cat had returned after disappearing for a year

(c) As his cat had returned after disappearing for a month

(d) As his mother had returned

(iii) Give the opposite of the word 'behind'.

- (a) Above
- (b) Ahead
- (c) Below
- (d) Across

(iv) What does 'curb' mean?

- (a) A raised edge along the side of a street
- (b) To control or limit something
- (c) To make a plan
- (d) To fail

- Ans.** (i) (d) Author and his two new friends
 (ii) (c) As his cat had returned after disappearing for a month
 (iii) (b) Ahead
 (iv) (a) A raised edge along the side of a street

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

[2 Marks each]

1 Why was the author's first year of high school awkward?

Ans. The first year of the author's high school was awkward as he had joined a new school and his old friends were in a different school. Apart from this, his house was destroyed in a fire and he lost his belongings and his pet cat. Nothing was going well for him at all.

2 What were the author and his cat doing when the fire broke out?

Ans. The author was sitting on his dining table doing his homework when the fire broke out. His cat was lying on top of his papers, purring loudly and playing with his pen. When he smelled something strange and noticed smoke coming out through the seams of the ceiling.

3 What two things were rescued by the author's mother and why?

Ans. The author's mother rescued a small metal box and his father's pictures and letters. The metal box was rescued as it contained important documents and the pictures and letters were rescued as they were a token of remembrance of his father who had died when he was small.

4 'I just wanted to curl up and die'. When and why did the author say these words?

Ans. The author said these words when he had to go to school after his house was destroyed by fire. He said this as all his belongings had been destroyed and he had to go to school wearing borrowed shoes and without a bag and homework.

5 Why did the author get attention in his new school? Why didn't he like it?

Ans. The author got a lot of attention in his new school as everyone, including the teachers, came to know that his house had been completely destroyed in the fire. He didn't like it as he thought that somehow he was responsible for the fire.

6 Describe the author's pet cat. When was she rescued?

Ans. The author's pet cat was a red tabby cat. It was rescued by the author when she was a kitten and somehow she knew that the author was responsible for giving her a good life. The cat was loved by the author very much.

7 What was the author doing when he got his cat back? Who was with him?

Ans. The author was watching his house being rebuilt and planning his new bedroom when he got his cat back.

His two friends from his new school were also with him when a lady approached him with his pet cat and asked if the cat belonged to him.

8 Whom all did the author feel grateful to after getting his cat?

Ans. After getting his cat, the author felt grateful to his life, his new friends, the kindness of the stranger and his beloved pet cat. He was back to the life and so was his cat whom he loved very much. He was grateful for everything now and very happy as his cat was back.

Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

[8 Marks each]

- 1 Compare and contrast the author's life before and after the fire incident.

Ans. The author was leading a peaceful life before the fire broke out in his house. He was a bit disappointed for he was missing his old school, friends and teachers. He was trying to be normal with everything in his life. At this very moment, the fire broke out in the house. Before the fire had broken out in his house, the author had joined a new high school. It felt strange to him starting all over as a fresher.

The author felt very lonely as his closest friends were sent to a different high school. He used to miss his old school, teachers and friends and went to meet his teachers regularly. After the fire incident, the author was completely devastated.

The loss of all his belongings and his pet cat added to the misery of joining a new school. He felt no inclination to go to his new school and at one point of time wanted to die. He missed his pet cat very much and used to go to the place where his house once stood to search for her.

- 2 Describe the hardships faced by the author and his family in the story 'A House is not a Home'.

Ans. Hardships are the part of the life. One can't avoid it if it is destined. You can overcome it only with perseverance and determination. If you lose courage then the situation will get worsened only and it will improve only with your steadfastness. The author and his family faced a lot of hardships in the story 'A House is not a Home'. The author's house was completely destroyed in the fire.

As a result, he lost all his belongings and his pet cat and he and his mother had to take refuge at his grandparents' home. His mother had to borrow money from his grandparents as her money, credit cards and identification proofs are lost in the fire.

The author had to face a lot of mental trauma as he had to go to school without his school bag, notebooks and homework. He even had to borrow shoes from his aunt in order to attend the school.

He feels like an oddball going to the school like this and at one point of time he wants to die. He also misses his pet cat badly and goes to search her every now and then.

- 3 Justify the title of the story 'A House is not a Home'.

Ans. The title 'A House is not a Home' is apt in relation to the story. In the story, the author's house gets completely destroyed in a fire. Due to this, he and his mother had to take refuge at his grandparents' home and later in a rented apartment. The places where the author lived after the fire incident cannot be called a home. A home is the place where one gets comfort, coziness and the joy of longings. One can find the true happiness and comfort within the premises of home. On the other hand, a house is without these sentiments and emotions. House is just a confined place made-up of the four walls. It can never be a match to a home.

They were merely places where he took shelter. A home is where one has comfort, security and freedom of doing whatever one wishes to. Moreover, these places were without the belongings and things which the author loved.

As one has a sense of belonging to his home, it cannot be fulfilled by a place where one takes temporary shelter. Hence, the title of the story 'A House is Not a Home' is justified.

Self Assessment

Extract Based Question

Read the following extract carefully and choose the correct option.

- 1 The next day at school, people were acting even more strange than usual. I was getting ready for gym class at my locker. People were milling around me, asking me to hurry up.
- (i) Who are the 'people' mentioned in the extract?
- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| (a) The principal | (b) The teachers |
| (c) The students | (d) The clerks |
- (ii) Why were they asking him to hurry up?
- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| (a) To gift him things they had brought for him | (b) To teach him a lesson |
| (c) To speak to him | (d) To go to his house |
- (iii) Find a word from the extract that means the same as unusual.
- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| (a) Strange | (b) Odd |
| (c) Milling | (d) Uneven |
- (iv) What is the opposite of 'strange'?
- | | |
|-----------|---------------|
| (a) Usual | (b) Necessary |
| (c) Even | (d) Odd |

Short Answer (SA) Type Questions

- 2 What did the teachers advise the author?
- 3 How did the firemen help the author and his mother?
- 4 Describe an incident from the story which shows that the author is kind towards animals.
- 5 Describe the author's first day in school after the fire destroyed his house.
- 6 How were the author's father's photographs saved? Why were they saved?

Long Answer (LA) Type Questions

- 7 What all disturbed the author in the story 'A House is not a Home'? How did he come to a state of normalcy?
- 8 Describe the author's attachment to his pet cat in your own words based on the story 'A House is not a Home'.