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**380**

**BÀI LUẬN**

**MẪU**

**TIẾNG ANH**

**Phần 1**

## 1. ABOUT MYSELF

### TÔI

I am an eleven year old Indian girl. I come from a family of three. I have two elder brothers. Both my parents are teachers. I am a primary six student at Fairfield Primary School. My **complexion**<sup>1</sup> is light brown and I have dark, short hair.

I am very hardworking and always try to get the best grades in class. I must get a good education to **fulfil**<sup>2</sup> my **ambition**<sup>3</sup>. My ambition is to be a nurse. I like to take care of the sick and old.

I dislike outdoor activities and rarely **participate**<sup>4</sup> in games. I enjoy doing things with my hands, like painting, gardening and sometimes I try simple cooking. I spend my free time in our small garden. I grow all kinds of plants in my garden. There are rose plants, **hibiscus**<sup>5</sup> and **morning glory**<sup>6</sup>. Sometimes I help my mother with the windows. I dust the furnitures, iron the clothes and clean the windows.

My best friend is John. He lives in our neighbourhood. We go to the same school. On Sundays John comes to my house to play with me.

My parents love me very much and give me the best of everything. I am a very happy little girl.

1. complexion /kəm'plekʃn/ (n) màu sắc và vẻ tự nhiên của da – nước da

2. fulfil /fʊl'fɪl/ (v) thỏa mãn, đáp ứng (một nguyện vọng, nhu cầu v.v...)

3. ambition /æm'bɪʃn/ (n) tham vọng, hoài bão

4. participate /pɑ:'tɪsɪpeɪt/ (v) tham gia vào (một hoạt động)

5. hibiscus /hɪ'bɪskəs/ (n) cây dâm bụt

6. morning glory /,mɔ:nɪŋ 'glɔ:rɪ/ (n) cây bìm bịp hoa tím

## 2. MYSELF

### TÔI

If you ever see a tall and skinny Chinese boy with a **mole**<sup>1</sup> on his chin, you will know that it's me. My name is Fang Yaorong and I will be twelve on the first of June this year. I wear thick glasses because I did not take proper care of my eye-sight when I was young.

I attend school in the morning **session**<sup>2</sup> at Ghim Moh Primary School. My school is within **a stone's throw**<sup>3</sup> of my house. Every morning, I walk to school with my neighbour, John, who is also my class-mate.

My hobbies are playing football and **assembling**<sup>4</sup> model aeroplanes. I am very proud of my model aeroplane collection. Most of the models were given to me as presents over the years. The rest were bought with the pocket-money I saved.

As the eldest child in the family, I always try to **set a good example**<sup>5</sup> for my twin sisters. My parents often praise me for being a obedient boy. When I grow up, I want to be a doctor. I want to be able to **cure**<sup>6</sup> patients. In order to fulfil my ambition, I must study hard to go to the university.

1. mole /məʊl/ (n) nốt ruồi

2. session /'seʃn/ (n) buổi

3. a stone's throw /ə stəʊns θrəʊ/ (idm) một khoảng cách ngắn

4. assemble /ə'sembl/ (v) lắp ráp

5. to set example /set ɪg'zɑ:mpl/ (idm) làm gương, nêu gương

6. cure /'kjʊə (r)/ (v) chữa trị (một chứng bệnh v.v...)

### 3. MY SCHOOL TRƯỜNG TÔI

I study in Secondary School. It is one of the best schools in Singapore. It consists of several Roman style buildings. Our school has all the **facilities**<sup>1</sup> of a modern school, such as well **furnished**<sup>2</sup> and airy class rooms, best **laboratories**,<sup>3</sup> a big library with a huge collection of books, a vast play ground and even a swimming pool.

Our school building is situated in the middle. There is motorway leading from the main entrance. The playground is on the left of the motorway and a big garden on the right. When you enter the building, the **principal's**<sup>4</sup> room is on the left. They are all well furnished. There are twenty classrooms. Our laboratories are well equipped. The school library has an up-to-date collection of books on many subjects. Our librarian and her two assistants are very helpful.

Our school, like others school, has **prescribed**<sup>5</sup> a uniform for us. We have to wear white trousers, white shirts and a black tie. The girls have to wear white shirts and skirts.

Our principal is very strict as he pays strict attention to behaviour, punctuality and cleanliness. The most well-behaved and punctual student will be assigned as the class **prefect**.<sup>6</sup>

Our principal is a strict **disciplinarian**.<sup>7</sup> He accepts the help and advice of all teachers. Though our principal is strict, he is fair and loving. He tries to find out the reason and guides us. If one violates any rules, he will be punished. Our principal is very strict in this aspect.

Our teachers are also very strict. They teach us with the utmost care, guide us with our **assessments**<sup>8</sup> and other preparations and help us in times of need.

I like my school very much and am proud to be a student of that school.

1. facilities /fə'sɪlɪtɪs/ (n) *những tiện nghi*

2. furnish /'fɜːnɪʃ/ (v) *trang bị đồ đạc, dụng cụ, v.v...*

3. laboratory /lə'bɒrətɪrɪ/ (n) *phòng thí nghiệm*

4. principal /'prɪnsɪpl/ (n) *hiệu trưởng*

5. prescribe /prɪ'skraɪb/ (v) *quy định*

6. prefect /'priːfekt/ (n) *lớp trưởng*

7. disciplinarian /dɪsəplɪ'neəriən/ (n) *người tin và giữ nghiêm kỷ luật*

8. assessment /ə'sesmənt/ (n) *sự đánh giá*

#### 4. MY SCHOOL

##### TRƯỜNG TÔI

There is a white three-storey building, surrounded by **greenery**,<sup>1</sup> located at Simei Town Central. That is Simei Primary School. That is also the place where I have **schooled**<sup>2</sup> for the last five years or so.

My school uniform is white. The boys wear a white shirt and white shorts while the girls wear a white blouse and skirt. The uniform must always be worn with the school **badge**<sup>3</sup> which bears our school **motto**<sup>4</sup> "Nothing without labour" It means that we must be willing to work to get our reward. We are also taught to be honest and polite all the time.

Most of the teachers in my school are just and kind. However, there are some teachers who show **favouritism**.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the students who are favoured by these teachers are very proud and like to **bully**<sup>6</sup> the others. In general, however, we all treat one another like **siblings**<sup>7</sup> and live in harmony.

I am sad that I will have to leave my school at the end of this year. It has given me knowledge, friends and happy moments. I will always remember my school and the fond memories it holds.

1. greenery /'grɪ:nəri/ (n) *tán lá xanh hoặc các cây xanh*
2. school /sku:l/ (v) *rèn luyện, đào tạo*
3. badge /bædʒ/ (n) *huy hiệu*
4. motto /'mɒtəʊ/ (n) *phương châm, khẩu hiệu*
5. favouritism /'feɪvərɪtɪzəm/ (n) *sự thiên vị*
6. bully /'bʊli/ (v) *bất nạt, hà hiếp*
7. sibling /'sɪblɪŋ/ (n) *anh chị em ruột*

## 5. MY SCHOOL TUCK-SHOP<sup>1</sup>

My school tuck-shop is **situated**<sup>2</sup> next to a block of classrooms. My classroom happens to be the nearest to the tuck-shop and before each break, we can always smell the **aroma**<sup>3</sup> of **appetizing**<sup>4</sup> food.

There are a number of food **stalls**<sup>5</sup> in the tuck-shop and this gives us a wide choice of food. They are the prawn noodles stall, the laksa stall, the porridge stall, the Malay food stall, the Indian rojak stall and the **beverages**<sup>6</sup> and snacks stall. You can tell by the length of the **queue**<sup>7</sup> in front of the rojak stall that it is the most popular stall. My favourite is the laksa stall as the laksa is both delicious and cheap.

Usually, the tuck-shop is packed during **peak hours**<sup>8</sup> like during lunch time and during breaks. It is difficult to get a seat at these times. Therefore, we should be considerate and vacate our seats once we have finished eating.

The food sold in the canteen is tasty and the standard of **hygiene**<sup>9</sup> is high. The vendors clean the tables and benches often and scrub the tuck-shop floor at the end of each day. Sometimes, health inspectors come to check on the vendors' preparation of food too. As a result, we do not have to worry that the food is not clean.

1. tuck-shop /tʌk ʃɒp/ (n) *cửa hàng bán bánh, kẹo, v.v... (những thứ mà trẻ em thích ăn)*
2. situate /'sɪtʃəɪt/ (v) *đặt chỗ, đặt vị trí*
3. aroma /ə'rəʊmə/ (n) *mùi thơm*
4. appetizing /'æpɪtaɪzɪŋ/ (adj) *kích thích sự ngon miệng, ngon lành*
5. stall /stɔ:l/ (n) *quầy hàng*
6. beverage /'bevərɪdʒ/ (n) *thức uống*
7. queue /kju:/ (n) *hàng (người, xe cộ, v.v...) xếp nối đuôi nhau*
8. peak hour /pi:k'aʊə (r)/ (n) *giờ cao điểm*
9. hygiene /'haɪdʒɪn/ (n) *vệ sinh*

## 6. MY TEACHER

### CÔ GIÁO TÔI

The name of my teacher is Miss Lim Swee Lan. She is a very pleasant lady. Miss Lim likes children very much. She herself has many brothers and sisters at home. Most of them are going to school and she helps them in their lessons.

What she does for her own brothers and sisters she also does for the children in the class-room. She does not get angry easily. If some pupils are slow to learn, she takes great **trouble**<sup>1</sup> to explain all the lessons slowly so that all the pupils can understand the lessons well. Sometimes, she also brings certain things into the class-room to explain a lesson. For example, one day she brought a toy **ape**<sup>2</sup> to explain what an ape was. This makes her lessons very interesting indeed.

Miss Lim, sometimes, also takes all her pupils out for a visit to some interesting places. She believes that children could learn a lot by travelling. Last year she took our whole class to Kuala Lumpur where we visited many interesting places such as the museum, the zoo and the famous Batu **Caves**.<sup>3</sup>

I am indeed very proud of my teacher, Miss Lim.

1. trouble /'trʌbl/ (n) *công sức*

2. ape /æp/ (n) *khỉ không đuôi (gồm có khỉ độc, hắc tinh tinh, đuôi uơi, vượn)*

3. cave /keɪv/ (n) *hang động*

## 7. MY FAVOURITE TEACHER

### CÔ GIÁO YÊU THÍCH NHẤT CỦA TÔI

Everyone sat up **expectantly**.<sup>1</sup> It was a **maths**<sup>2</sup> period and all of us waited eagerly for our maths teacher, Mrs Huang, to come into the class. She is very popular among us. In fact, she is my favourite teacher.

Mrs Huang has short curly hair and wears thick glasses which makes her look **stern**.<sup>3</sup> However, she is actually very **approachable**<sup>4</sup> and is always ready to lend an ear to our problems. She is motherly and cares very much for us. I remember once when I fell and hurt my knee. Mrs Huang helped me to stop the bleeding and took me to the **clinic**.<sup>5</sup> I was very grateful to her.

I used to dislike maths when I was younger because I found it far too **complicated**.<sup>6</sup> Mrs Huang always makes maths lessons interesting and easy to understand. She is very patient in explaining maths problems to us and always makes sure everyone understands. Under her guidance, my maths has improved **by leaps and bounds**.<sup>7</sup>

I have grown to love maths and I always score high marks in my maths tests now. And it's all because of my favourite teacher.

1. expectant /ɪk'spektənt/ (adj) mong chờ, chờ đợi (một điều tốt đẹp) - expectantly /-lɪ/ (adv)
2. maths /mæθs/ (n) (= mathematics) môn toán học
3. stern /stɜ:n/ (adj) nghiêm khắc, khắt nghiệt
4. approachable /ə'prəʊtʃəbl/ (adj) thân thiện, dễ gần
5. clinic /'klɪnɪk/ (n) trạm xá
6. complicated /'kɒmplɪkeɪtɪd/ (adj) rắc rối, phức tạp
7. by leaps and bounds /baɪ li:ps ənd baʊndz/ (idm) rất nhanh

## 8. MY CLASSMATES

### BẠN CÙNG LỚP

Thirty-five unique individuals make up our interesting class. Of course, there are some of us who are more popular than the others.

First, there is fat Steven. He is the **joker**<sup>1</sup> of the class. He **cracks**<sup>2</sup> all kinds of jokes, even practical jokes. Once, he left an artificial lizard in the chalk box to scare our stern science teacher, Miss Xiano. Her **horrified**<sup>3</sup> expressions amused us so much that we **split our sides with laughter**.<sup>4</sup> However, the whole class was punished for that joke. In spite of this, we still like Steven because he is always brave enough to **own up**<sup>5</sup> to playing tricks.

We also have a **bookworm**<sup>6</sup> in the class. Xiaoming is a small boy with thick glasses. Wherever he goes, he will have a book with him. He brings glory to the class by winning the various language **quizzes**<sup>7</sup> organized by the school.

The most respected person in our class is our monitor, Evelyn. She is helpful, friendly and responsible. Without her, our class would be in **chaos**.<sup>8</sup>

The teachers who teaches us always say that we a **mischievous**<sup>9</sup> but hardworking **bunch**.<sup>10</sup> I am proud to belong to my class.

1. joker /'dʒɔ:kə (r)/ (n) người thích đùa
2. crack /kræk/ (v) kể (chuyện đùa)
3. horrified /'hɔ:rɪfaɪd/ (adj) hoảng sợ, khiếp sợ
4. to split one's side with laughter (idm) cười không giữ được, cười vỡ bụng
5. own up /əʊn ʌp/ (v) thú nhận, thú tội
6. bookworm /'bʊkwɜ:m/ (n) người đọc sách nhiều, mọt sách
7. quiz /kwɪz/ (n) cuộc thi đố
8. chaos /'keɪɒs/ (n) sự hỗn loạn
9. mischievous /'mɪstʃɪvəs/ (adj) nghịch ngợm
10. bunch /bʌntʃ/ (n) nhóm, tập thể

## 9. MY GOOD FRIEND NGƯỜI BẠN TỐT CỦA TÔI

Chang is my neighbour. He is the same age as me. He is my best friend. He is also studying the same school. We go to school together.

Chang comes from an educated family. His father is a school principal. His mother is also a teacher. He is punctual, well educated, and has **amiable**<sup>1</sup> manners. He is hard working. He does his homework and does well in his studies. He is well dressed and well behaved. All the teachers have a high opinion of him.

Chang has a well-built body. He is an early riser and **jogs**<sup>2</sup> with me daily. He is gentle but fearless. He takes part in all sports, **scout**,<sup>3</sup> **trekking**<sup>4</sup> and mountaineering activities. He has a good heart. He is truthful, honest and obedient.

Chang is fond of pets. He has a pair of rabbits and parrots. He has two fish tanks containing gold fish. He patiently feeds them and looks after them with care. He has been trained by his parents to be neat and tidy. He has a room to himself. All his books are neatly arranged on the shelves. His bed is always neat and tidy. He plays badminton with me. He also plays the guitar. Though gardening is his favourite hobby, he is unable to do so because he lives in an apartment. He makes his parents very proud of him in examinations. He **secures**<sup>5</sup> good marks and is usually top of his class in examinations. He is very helpful and helps me in my lesson. He **inspires**<sup>6</sup> me to work harder. He keeps away from bad company.

Chang is a good son to his father. I am happy to have such a friend.

1. amiable /'eɪmiəbl/ (adj) tử tế, đáng yêu, hòa nhã
2. jog /dʒɒg/ (v) chạy bộ (tập thể dục)
3. scout /skaʊt/ (n) hướng đạo sinh
4. trek /trek/ (v) thực hiện một cuộc hành trình dài và khó khăn (nhất là đi bộ)
5. secure /sɪ'kjʊə(r)/ (v) đạt được (cái gì) bằng nỗ lực
6. inspire /ɪn'spaɪə(r)/ (v) thôi thúc, truyền cảm hứng

## 10. MY BEST FRIEND

### BẠN THÂN NHẤT CỦA TÔI

When I was in Primary Four, a new boy joined my class during the second semester. As I was sitting next to him, I was asked to help him to **get used to**<sup>1</sup> the new environment. We **hit it off**<sup>2</sup> instantly. Two years have passed since. Now, we have become the best of friends. That boy's name is Xie Zhiwei.

Zhiwei is much taller and skinner than I. He is also very **agile**.<sup>3</sup> That is why he has **qualified**<sup>4</sup> for our school basketball team. He is also one of our school's best athletes. He specializes in the **hurdles**<sup>5</sup> and high jump events.

Though Zhiwei is very involved in sports and games, he is very disciplined. He always finishes his homework on time. In fact, he has always been one of the top students in class.

One major belief that both of us agree on is that friends should share their thoughts and knowledge. This enables us to know each other very well. Thus, in spite of the fact that he is an **extrovert**<sup>6</sup> and I am not, we are still such close friends. I really **treasure**<sup>7</sup> this friendship and hope that it will last forever.

1. get used to /get ju:zd tə/ (*idm*) quen với
2. to hit it off (with s.b) /hit it ɒf/ (*idm*) ăn ý, tâm đầu ý hợp
3. agile /'ædʒaɪl/ (*adj*) nhanh nhẹn, linh lợi
4. qualify /'kwɒlɪfaɪ/ (*v*) có đủ tư cách / khả năng / điều kiện
5. hurdle /'hɜ:dl/ (*n*) cuộc chạy đua vượt rào
6. extrovert /'ekstrəvɜ:t/ (*n*) người hướng đạo
7. treasure /'treʒə (r)/ (*v*) quý trọng, trân trọng, giữ gìn

## 11. A NEW FRIEND

### *BẠN MỚI*

When the school reopened after the mid-year school holidays, we had a new classmate. Her name is Cheng Siew Hong and she has **emigrated**<sup>1</sup> with her family from Hong Kong to Singapore.

The class was excited and I was especially so because she happened to sit next to me. My **form teacher**<sup>2</sup> told us to make her feel at ease with us. Siew Hong is a cheerful-looking girl and an active athlete. She runs fast, swims well and even takes part in high-jump competitions. Siew Hong and I soon became very good friends because of our common interest in sports. We never **run out of**<sup>3</sup> topics to talk about. We have lots of fun together, both in class and out on the field. I help Siew Hong **cope**<sup>4</sup> with the English language while she helps me out with the Chinese language.

Since this was the first time she's been in Singapore, the class decided to bring Siew Hong to some of the local tourist attractions like Sentosa and Botanic Garden. We also brought her to Satay Club to let her try the tasty local **specialities**.<sup>5</sup> With our help, Siew Hong fitted into the class in no time. She is glad to join our class and we are glad to have her as a new friend.

1. emigrate /'emɪɡreɪt/ (v) *di cư*

2. form teacher /fɔ:m 'ti:tʃə (r)/ (n) *giáo viên chủ nhiệm*

3. to run out of (sth) /rʌn aʊt əv/ (idm) *hết sạch, cạn sạch*

4. cope /kəʊp/ (v) *đương đầu, đối phó*

5. speciality /speʃi'æləti/ (n) *(về món ăn) đặc sản*

## 12. A POPULAR PERSON IN YOUR OWN AGE GROUP

### MỘT NGƯỜI ĐƯỢC YÊU THÍCH TRONG TẬP THỂ ĐỒNG TRANG LỨA

James Yap is a popular person not only in our class, but also throughout the school. James is the kind of person who is **talented**<sup>1</sup> as well as **outgoing**.<sup>2</sup>

Most students in the school know him as a champion swimmer. James always **represents**<sup>3</sup> the school in freestyle swimming and has won a lot of medals in competitions. He is also a member of the water polo team. Last year, in the district championship, James was the one to score the winning goal for our school team. He is well-remembered by his schoolmates for this.

James is friendly with almost everyone, and he is known as the class joker. Sometimes, before the teacher comes to the class, he would stand in front of the class and throw us a **riddle**.<sup>4</sup> His favourite riddle is the one which asks "do you know why..." Actually, he never gives us time to answer. He would shout out the answer almost immediately, and the class would **burst out**<sup>5</sup> with laughter.

Even when James is called upon to answer a question by a teacher, his answer often contains a joke or a remark which makes us laugh. Usually, because his jokes are funny and not rude, the teacher would laugh along with us.

James also likes to organise outings and gatherings. Unlike some people who only invite certain groups to these functions, James often organize them on a class basis. Once, he organised a class outing to the zoo. Towards the end of the visit, to show our appreciation, James had arranged a special treat for our class teacher who was accompanying us. It turned out that he had **reserved**<sup>6</sup> for her the zoo's special offering - tea with the **orang utan**<sup>7</sup>! Of course, the animal was **tame**<sup>8</sup> and had been trained to sit quietly with human visitors. We all, including the teacher, had a good laugh.

On another occasion, we had a class gathering at his house. James come from a rich family, and lives in a bungalow with a big garden. Most of us already know about James' **background**<sup>9</sup> because he used to come to school in a chauffeur-driven car. When James was in secondary three, he told his father that he preferred to take public transport. He wanted to be more independent.

I suppose the fact that James is not **affected**<sup>10</sup> by his talent, nor his wealth adds to his popularity. But some students say that even though it seems that James leads such a charmed life, he does not see **eye to eye**<sup>11</sup> with his father about his future.

James' father owns a business and he would like James to work in the family business after he graduates. But James is keen to pursue a career in sports or entertainment.

At this stage, it is still too early for this disagreement between James and his father to develop into a real **conflict**.<sup>12</sup> I hope, as an adult, James wil continue to make full use of the talents that has made him such a popular boy in school.

1. talented /'tæləntɪd/ (adj) có tài, có khiếu

2. outgoing /'aʊtɡəʊɪŋ/ (adj) thân mật và thoải mái

3. represent /reprɪ'zent/ (v) làm người đại diện cho (một người, một nhóm)

4. riddle /'rɪdl/ (n) câu đố

5. burst out /bɜːst aʊt/ (v) đột ngột bắt đầu (làm cái gì)

6. reserve /rɪ'zɜ:v/ (v) *đăng ký trước*
7. orang utan /ɔ:ræŋu:'tæn/ (n) *con đười ươi*
8. tame /teɪm/ (adj) *đã thuần hóa*
9. background /'bækgraʊnd/ (n) *lai lịch*
10. affect /ə'fekt/ (v) *ảnh hưởng, tác động*
11. to see eye to eye (idm) *cùng nhìn về một hướng*
12. conflict /kɒn'flikt/ (n) *cuộc xung đột*

### 13. MY CLASS AND TWO OF ITS INTERESTING CHARACTERS

#### LỚP TÔI VÀ HAI NHÂN VẬT THÚ VỊ CỦA LỚP

**Prefects**<sup>1</sup> are driven crazy by our mischief, teachers are **perplexed**<sup>2</sup> by the lack of **consistency**<sup>3</sup> in our work, but the principal is always impressed by our **angelic**<sup>4</sup> behaviour everytime he enters our "little-home". It may seem, from this description, that we are actors or professional deceivers. We are, however, a group of teenagers who spend most of our time together in our **cramped**<sup>5</sup> but cosy classroom.

Our school is an all-girl school. Thus where behaviour within the classroom is concerned, we are completely **uninhibited**.<sup>6</sup> It is no wonder that an observer can often see unusual **manifestations**<sup>7</sup> of peculiar behaviour. There are two particularly interesting characters in my class who, I am sure, I'll remember for a long time.

The first one is "Hero" as we call her. She is a pretty girl, with **dimpled**<sup>8</sup> rosy cheeks. However, her build does not suit her lovely face. She has straight shoulders that swing from side to side when she walks, and, mind you, she even walks like a man. She is tall and has strong **muscular**<sup>9</sup> legs. She has earned her title justly as she always defends us when big boys from the neighbouring schools bully us. She even fights for us. She does not have to worry about revealing too much of her legs while fighting as she perpetually wears knee-length shorts under her skirt.

The funny thing is that none of the girls envy her beautiful face, instead, her masculinity is the object of their admiration. Some girls will even slip little gifts into her bag. I have heard that girls are having a **crush**<sup>10</sup> on her. Well, whatever it is, I always feel that our "Hero" will one day be a beautiful lady, admired and courted by many men.

The other character is a highly respected one. We call her our very own "Computer" as she is so good at solving mathematical problems. While most of us spend hours trying to solve a difficult sum, she does it while walking to the canteen during break. There was one instance when she solved a problem that our Senior Maths teacher could not solve.

The most interesting thing about her is that she does not look intelligent at all. She does not wear thick glasses which is typical of the intelligent ones in our school. She is also not the quiet, inhibited and serious type. She mixes freely with all of us. In fact, her closest friends are those who are weak in their studies. She chooses them to be her friends ; and she never hesitates to help them with their problems with such clarity that our maths teacher often uses her skill and help in the classroom to advantage. I think "Computer" has great **potential**<sup>11</sup> and one day she will make it to the ranks of the great mathematicians and may even win a "Nobel Prize". As time and space does not allow for a description of a few more characters in my class, I conclude with the satisfaction that I have written about the two most interesting ones. I am sure these two will be remembered by all of us for a long time.

1. prefect /'pri:fekt/ (n) lớp trưởng
2. perplex /pə'pleks/ (v) làm khó xử, làm bối rối
3. consistency /kən'sɪstənsɪ/ (n) tính nhất quán, tính kiên định
4. angelic /æŋ'dʒelɪk/ (adj) như thiên thần, rất tốt
5. cramped /kræmpt/ (adj) (về không gian) chật hẹp

6. uninhibited /ʌnɪn'hibɪtɪd/ (adj) tự nhiên, không bị ức chế
7. manifestation /mænɪfe'steɪʃn/ (n) sự biểu lộ, sự thể hiện
8. dimple /'dɪmpl/ (v) lúm đồng tiền
9. muscular /'mʌskjʊlə(r)/ (adj) thuộc về cơ bắp - muscularity /mʌskjʊ'lærəti/ (n) bắp thịt, cơ bắp
10. crush (on) /krʌʃ/ (n) sự say mê (ai/cái gì) có tính ngắn ngủi và tạm thời
11. potential /pə'tenʃl/ (n) khả năng, tư chất, tiềm lực

## 14. MY COUNTRY

### ĐẤT NƯỚC TÔI

My country is Singapore. Singapore is a small island lying to the south of the Malay Peninsula. It has an area of 600 sq km and a population of about 2.6 million people. Singapore is a **multi-racial**<sup>1</sup> society, where Chinese, Malays and Indians live in harmony. It is a **tolerant**<sup>2</sup> society, in which no one is labelled, **condemned**<sup>3</sup> or **persecuted**<sup>4</sup> because he thinks differently, behaves differently or worships a different god.

Singapore is a clean city. **Littering**<sup>5</sup> is an offence and people caught littering are severely punished. Singaporeans **take great pain**<sup>6</sup> to keep their city clean.

Tourism is one of the main sources of income to Singapore. Tourists from all over the world flock to this paradise island. The various cultures and traditions of the people fascinate the tourists. There are many places of interest in Singapore. The zoological garden is one of the tourist attractions. Many different **species**<sup>7</sup> of animals from all over the world can be found here. The Bird Park is another place of interest. There are about six hundred different species. The man-made waterfall is said to be the highest of man-made waterfalls. The Changi International Airport is one of the best airports in the world.

Singapore is a fast developing country. It is a very popular country with hardworking people.

1. multi-racial /ˌmʌltɪ 'reɪsl/ (adj) gồm nhiều chủng tộc, đa chủng tộc
2. tolerant /'tɒlərənt/ (adj) có hoặc thể hiện sự dung thứ
3. condemn /kən'dem/ (v) lên án
4. persecute /'pɜːsɪkjʊːt/ (v) ngược đãi, khủng bố
5. littering /'lɪtərɪŋ/ (n) hành động vứt rác bừa bãi
6. to take great pain /teɪk greɪt peɪn/ (idm) rất chú ý để thực hiện điều gì
7. species /'spiːʃiːz/ (n) loài

## 15. MY HOME TOWN

### THỊ TRẤN QUÊ HƯƠNG TÔI

I was born in a small sea-side town in Malaysia called Mersing. It is situated in the south-east of Malaysia, near the South China Sea. It is a small town with a population of about fifty thousand people. It is a peaceful and beautiful town.

The main **occupation**<sup>1</sup> of the people there is fishing. The sea is their **livelihood**.<sup>2</sup> Besides fishing, tourism has also become quite popular. Tourists **stop over**<sup>3</sup> at Mersing on their way to the islands off Mersing. The most popular island is Pulau Tioman.

The population here is made up of Malays, Chinese and Indians. The majority of the people are Malays. They are either fishermen or farmers. The Chinese are mostly shopkeepers and restaurant and hotel owners. The Indians who are the **minority**<sup>4</sup> are either civil servants or rubber tappers.

The town consists of three streets of shops. There are three schools, a Chinese, a Malay and an English medium schools. There is a hospital and a few private clinics, a cinema hall, library and a big wet market by the sea. There are a number of hotels to **accommodate**<sup>5</sup> tourists who **flock**<sup>6</sup> to Mersing to visit the Islands.

The people in my home town live in peace and **harmony**.<sup>7</sup> I love the peace and quiet of my little home town.

1. occupation /'ɒkjʊ'peɪʃn/ (n) nghề nghiệp

2. livelihood /'laɪvɪhʊd/ (n) kế sinh nhai, sinh kế

3. stop over /stɒp 'əʊvə (r)/ (v) ngừng chuyến đi để ở lại đâu đó một thời gian

4. minority /maɪ'nɔrəti/ (n) dân tộc thiểu số

5. accommodate /ə'kɒmədeɪt/ (v) cung cấp nơi ở hoặc phòng cho ai

6. flock /flɒk/ (v) tụ tập, tập trung

7. harmony /'hɑ:məni/ (n) sự hòa thuận, sự hòa hợp

## 16. MY HOME NGÔI NHÀ CỦA TÔI

Of all the places in the world I judge my home to be a **paradise**.<sup>1</sup> As the old saying goes, "East or West, my home is the best". My home offers **affection**<sup>2</sup> and **security**.<sup>3</sup> I live with my parents, my elder brother and younger sister.

I belong to a middle class family. My father is a **supervisor**<sup>4</sup> in a factory and my mother is a production **operator**<sup>5</sup> in the same factory. We have a four-room flat in Bedok Reservoir area. Our drawing-cum-front hall is decorated in a tasty<sup>6</sup> manner. The northern corner has a television deck. Some ten metres from that end, there is a morgohany sofa set with an **ornamented**<sup>7</sup> tea table in front.

Our kitchen is fully equipped with multi cabinets and a small store. A small dining table with four chairs are placed near the **sink**.<sup>8</sup> A big refrigerator stands silent in the corner. Our home has been decorated with many memorable souvenirs which remind us of our visits to different places. Our home has three bedrooms. The master bedroom is occupied by my parents. I share the second bedroom with my younger sister. The third bedroom is solely occupied by my brother. Sometimes, it is used as a guest room for our relatives from Malaysia. They usually visit us during festival season. Ours is a small and happy family where every member has consideration for the needs and comforts of the others. All of us do our share of housework. Most mornings, the place looks busy as everyone rushes about doing one's morning chores. We normally have a light and quick breakfast. Every evening, my family will have dinner together. This is the time of day I like best.

We keep our home neat and tidy. Everything is kept in order and in its place. I am very proud of my home and I love it very much.

1. paradise /'pærədəis/ (n) nơi lý tưởng hoặc hoàn hảo – thiên đường
2. affection /ə'fekʃn/ (n) cảm giác yêu thích, yêu mến
3. security /sɪ'kjʊərəti/ (n) sự an ninh, sự an toàn
4. supervisor /'su:pəvaɪzə (r)/ (n) người giám sát
5. operator /'ɒpəreɪtə(r)/ (n) người điều hành
6. tasty /'teɪstɪ/ (adj) có thẩm mỹ, trang nhã
7. ornament /'ɔ:nəment/ (v) trang hoàng, trang trí
8. sink /sɪŋk/ (n) bồn rửa mặt

## 17. MY NEIGHBOURS

### LÁNG GIỀNG TÔI

We all have neighbours. Some neighbours are good while some are bad. Both my neighbours are good.

The Lim family lives next door on our right. Mr Lim is a Post-Master and Mrs Lim is a housewife. They have two **adorable**<sup>1</sup> children. A boy and a pretty girl. Mr Lim is a very helpful man. He helps to pay our telephone bills for us. Whenever we have any letters or parcels to post, we give it to Mr Lim and he posts it for us. Mrs Lim takes great pride in her garden. She grows all kinds of plants. Her garden is always full of bright coloured flowers. She helps me with my garden. She has taught me a lot of things about gardening. She is a good cook and loves baking delicious cakes for her family and neighbours. The Lims are friendly, helpful and honest people.

The neighbours who live on our left are Mr and Mrs Rao. Mr Rao is a businessman. He **deals in**<sup>2</sup> **carpets**,<sup>3</sup> and owns a big carpet shop. Mrs Rao is a school-teacher. They have no children. Mr Rao is rarely at home. He is always away on business trips. We only see him on Sundays. Mrs Rao loves children. She used to buy sweets and chocolates for the children in the neighbourhood. On every Deepavalli **eve**,<sup>4</sup> the Rao's hold a children's party. And all the children in the neighbourhood are invited. We enjoy going to the Rao's party. All kinds of cakes, sweets and ice-creams are served. At the end of the party, presents are given to all the children.

I like both my neighbours. I feel very fortunate to have such good neighbours.

1. adorable /ə'dɔ:rəbl/ (adj) rất đáng yêu
2. deal in /di:l in/ (v) bán (cái gì), buôn bán (cái gì)
3. carpet /'kɑ:pɪt/ (n) thảm
4. eve /i:v/ (n) ngày hoặc đêm trước lễ hội hoặc kỳ nghỉ tôn giáo

## 18. NEW NEIGHBOURS

### LÁNG GIỀNG MỚI

When I was waiting for the **lift**,<sup>1</sup> I saw a girl of about my age **dragging**<sup>2</sup> two big boxes of **household**<sup>3</sup> items to the lift. When the door of the lift opened, I helped her to drag one of the boxes into the lift.

She thanked me and explained that her family had just moved into a **flat**<sup>4</sup> in the block. I was surprised when she moved the boxes into the flat next to mine.

I came to know later that my new neighbours are the Tan family. The girl whom I met in the left is Debbie. Her elder brother is Desmond and the eight-year-old younger brother is Danny.

Debbie and I soon became good friends. Though we do not attend the same primary school, we hope to get into the same secondary school next year.

My mother **gets along**<sup>5</sup> well with Mrs Tan. They exchange **recipes**<sup>6</sup> and go to the market together. In fact, the Tan family is very **easy-going**<sup>7</sup> and they fit well into our neighbourhood.

I am glad the Tan family lives next door. I hope we will always be neighbours.

1. lift /lɪft/ (n) thang máy

2. drag /dræg/ (v) kéo lê

3. household /'haʊshəʊld/ (adj) dùng trong gia đình

4. flat /flæt/ (n) căn hộ

5. get along (with sb) /get ə'lon/ (idm) hòa hợp, ăn ý

6. recipe /'resəpi/ (n) công thức làm món ăn

7. easy-going /'i:zi ˌgəʊɪŋ/ (adj) dễ dàng trong cư xử, dịu dàng, khoan dung

## 19. MY PET DOG

### CON CHÓ CÙNG CỦA TÔI

Rosy is a dog which I have been keeping for the past four years. It was by **sheer**<sup>1</sup> accident that Rosy came into my hands. Our neighbour, Mr. Jones, was a dog lover. He had a good **kennel**<sup>2</sup> in his house where he **reared**<sup>3</sup> different types of dogs. Suddenly, he got transferred from the town and he wanted to **dispose**<sup>4</sup> some of the dogs he had. He was talking about his problem to my father. Then I told my father that we could have one of the puppies ; though reluctant, my father agreed. That was how Rosy came into my possession.

Why it was named Rosy I can't say. It is an Alsatian. It is of medium height, grey in colour with dark spots near her belly, a bushy and **glistening**<sup>5</sup> eyes. It grew into a beautiful and magnificent dog much to the envy of others.

Rosy can be seen about our house when she is not engaged in playing or when she is not sleeping. She takes pleasure in **sniffing**<sup>6</sup> about the corners when she has nothing particular to do. She is as **docile**<sup>7</sup> as a deer in our presence. When we are not at home she will be **at her mettle**<sup>8</sup> and no one can easily come near our gate or house. Though she doesn't bite, she will bounce on the person baring her teeth so much so that she can **paralyse**<sup>9</sup> any **intruder**<sup>10</sup>. She recognizes the postman as a friend and so does not do him any harm.

I give her spartan food. She takes some biscuits and milk in the morning, rice and curry in the afternoon. Usually she is not given any food in the night. When we are at our table, Rosy keeps company with me but she shows no eagerness to touch even a crumb unless offered. So my father likes it. Rosy cries in a peculiar way. It is between **barking**<sup>11</sup> and **howling**<sup>12</sup>. Sometimes, she raises a cry like **moaning**<sup>13</sup>. That means she wants to go out for toilet.

Whenever I go out in the evening, she accompanies me. My friends are afraid of her because she doesn't like silly mischievous boys. She shows her displeasure by barking and that is enough to unnerve the boys. My father says, Rosy would soon become a mother. Then I will have a litter of nice puppies.

1. sheer /ʃiə (r)/ (adj) hoàn toàn
2. kennel /'kenl/ (n) cũi chó, chuồng chó
3. rear /riə (r)/ (v) nuôi nấng, trông nom
4. dispose /di'spəʊz/ (v) tổng quát, vứt bỏ (ai/cái gì)
5. glistening /'glɪstnɪŋ/ (adj) long lanh
6. sniff /snɪf/ (v) đánh hơi, ngửi, hít
7. docile /'dɒsəɪl/ (adj) (về người hay vật) dễ bảo, dễ sai khiến
8. be at one's mettle /'metl/ (idm) đầy nhiệt tình, khí thế
9. paralyse /'pærəlaɪz/ (v) làm tê liệt, làm đờ ra (vì sợ)
10. intruder /ɪn'trudə (r)/ (n) kẻ xâm nhập
11. bark /bɑ:k/ (v) (về chó) sủa
12. howl /haʊl/ (v) (về chó) hú, tru
13. moan /məʊn/ (v) rên rỉ

## 20. THE CAT MELLISSA

### *CÔ MÈO MELLISSA*

Melissa is a **glossy**,<sup>1</sup> midnight-black cat, **arrogant**<sup>2</sup> as a **tyrant**<sup>3</sup> of old, **fierce**<sup>4</sup> as the most ruthless **savage**,<sup>5</sup> or **affectionate**<sup>6</sup> as the most loving child. Whenever arrogance is her role, she gives her whole heart to it. Roused from soft sleep and feeling a vague need for a lap of milk or a mouthful of liver, she will move toward her dishes unhurriedly and gracefully like a **duchess**.<sup>7</sup> No calls to play, no rolling balls, no **tantalizingly**<sup>8</sup> **twitched**<sup>9</sup> strings will **divert**<sup>10</sup> her determined progress toward the kitchen. From a gentle **stroke**<sup>11</sup> along her back or a soft scratching under ears and chin, she will ooze away as elusively as quicksilver. With tail at a proud angle and with haughty dignity, she will quietly and persistently pursue her way.

Even when just fed, with drops of milk or flecks of beef upon her narrow, triangular chin, she grows alert to the impertinent chatter of **sparrows**<sup>12</sup> reminding her that hunting is one of her dearest sports and a test of her greatest skills. Then the countless ages that separate her from the forests and jungles of the Far East dissolve. Standing on the doorstone of a twentieth-century house in the middle of a great city, she becomes again the savage hunter. The dusty, feathery smell of the sparrows fighting for crumbs comes to her sensitive nose. A few blades of grass and a discouraged city bush

may be Melissa's only cover. Nevertheless, she snaps her tail purposefully, steps off the doorstone, and by a series of running, fluid steps reaches the bush. In these steps her body **elongates**<sup>13</sup> and her legs contract tensely holding her close to the ground. In the shelter of the bush she watches fixedly her still unwary **prey**.<sup>14</sup> Now by flattening her ears, she gains great confidence, for all cats know that thus protected they become invisible. **Crouched**<sup>15</sup> and delicately **poised**<sup>16</sup> for her deadly pounce, she moves not a **whisker**.<sup>17</sup> A tiny breeze ruffles the soft **fur**<sup>18</sup> of her sides. The very tip of her long graceful tail twitches with every passing decision to leap, to wait, to watch. Thus she **savors**<sup>19</sup> in anticipation the delightful instant when her steel **claws**<sup>20</sup> will slide through crisp feathers, clutch tender flesh, and hold her excitingly lively prey until she can **snatch**<sup>21</sup> it in her strong, razor-sharp teeth. Birds are too messy for her to eat except for a mouthful or two to prove that she knows a toothsome **morsel**<sup>22</sup> when she finds it. But to catch--well, there is something Melissa can't explain ; every so often she just has to prove that she is a good hunter.

Back inside her home, no more than minutes later in time but several **aeons**<sup>23</sup> later in civilization, Melissa looks for appreciation and affection. She is a great and skillful hunter home safely and successfully from the **chase**.<sup>24</sup> The descendant of ancient gods in Egypt, still goddess in her own home, she unbends now to seek not only applause, but also a chance to express her affection. She hunts a warm, secure lap that she can happily **knead**,<sup>25</sup> a pair of hands that are firm, soothing, and trained to **tickle**<sup>26</sup> the right spots, **scratch**<sup>27</sup> others, and softly smooth the rest. Melissa raises sleepy eyes and a gently prodding head to rub the length of her cheek and neck against the wrist behind her head. The proud cat in search of food and the cruelly persistent sportsman have been momentarily forgotten in the sleepy, gently **purring**<sup>28</sup> companion.

1. glossy /'glɒsɪ/ (adj) *nhẵn nhụi, bóng loáng*
2. arrogant /'ærəgənt/ (adj) *kiêu căng, hách dịch, ngạo mạn - arrogance /-s/ (n)*
3. tyrant /'taɪərənt/ (n) *bạo chúa, kẻ bạo ngược*
4. fierce /'fɪəs/ (adj) *hung tợn, dữ dội*
5. savage /'sævɪdʒ/ (n) *người man rợ / dã man*
6. affectionate /ə'fekʃənət/ (adj) *(biểu lộ sự) trìu mến, âu yếm*
7. duchess /'dʌtʃɪs/ (n) *nữ công tước*
8. tantalizing /'tæntəlaɪzɪŋ/ (adj) *(có tính) nhử, trêu*
9. twitch /'twɪtʃ/ (v) *giật giật, co rúm*
10. divert /daɪ'vɜːt/ (v) *làm đổi hướng, làm chuyển hướng*
11. stroke /strəʊk/ (n) *hành động vuốt ve, âu yếm*
12. sparrow /'spærəʊ/ (n) *chim sẻ*
13. elongate /'iːləŋgeɪt/ (v) *kéo dài ra*
14. prey /preɪ/ (n) *con mồi*
15. crouch /kraʊtʃ/ (v) *thu mình lại (để ẩn nấp)*
16. poised /pɔɪzd/ (adj) *ở tư thế thăng bằng*
17. whisker /'wɪskə(r)/ (n) *ria (mèo, chuột, v.v...)*
18. fur /fɜː(r)/ (n) *lông mao, lông thú*
19. savor /'seɪvə(r)/ (v) *thưởng thức*
20. claw /klɔː/ (v) *(cổ súc) cào xé bằng móng hoặc vuốt*
21. snatch /snætʃ/ (v) *vồ, chớp*
22. morsel /'mɔːsl/ (n) *mẩu, miếng*
23. aeon /'iːən/ (n) *một giai đoạn dài đến mức không thể tính được – niên kỷ, vạn kỷ*
24. chase /tʃeɪs/ (v) *đuổi theo, săn đuổi*
25. knead /niːd/ (v) *xoa bóp, đấm bóp*
26. tickle /'tɪkl/ (v) *mơn trớn, kích thích*
27. scratch /skrætʃ/ (v) *gãi*
28. purr /pɜː(r)/ (v) *kêu rừ rừ*

## 21. MY SCHOOL SPORTS DAY NGÀY HỘI THỂ THAO Ở TRƯỜNG TÔI

This year our school sports day was held on Friday. There were seven **booths**<sup>1</sup> at the sports ground. Our class planned in advance how to decorate our booth. We wanted to win the first prize for the best decorated booth so I helped my classmates to decorate our booth in a **spectacular**<sup>2</sup> manner.

Around 1.30 pm, the sports day was declared open by the Guest-of-Honour - our local Member of Parliament. All the students taking part in the sportsday lined up for the march past. We **marched**<sup>3</sup> past the stand where the Guest-of-Honour and our headmaster stood to attention. As we marched past, he took the **salute**.<sup>4</sup>

The day started with track **events**<sup>5</sup>. There were 50, 100 and 200 metres races. There was tremendous **applause**<sup>6</sup> from the spectators which included teachers and parents. Then the field events - **tug of war**,<sup>7</sup> long jump, high jump, **shot put**<sup>8</sup> and **discus**<sup>9</sup> were held. Every event drew cheers and applause from the spectators. The sports day turned out to be grandest day of the year for the school.

The day went by very fast. I came in first in the long jump event, and second in the 100 metres race and shot put. At about five o'clock, our Guest-of-Honour gave away the **trophies**<sup>10</sup> to the winners. My class was overall runners-up. We were also awarded with the first prize for the best decorated booth.

After that, to mark the end of the sports meet, there was another march past. The **national anthem**<sup>11</sup> was played to close the sports day.

We went home tired but happy.

1. booth /bu:ð/ (n) *rạp, lễ u v.v... dựng tạm thời ở khu ở chợ, sân vận động v.v...*
2. spectacular /spek'tækjələ(r)/ (adj) *đẹp mắt, ngoạn mục*
3. march /mɑ:tʃ/ (v) *đi diễu hành* -(n) *cuộc diễu hành*
4. salute /sə'lu:t/ (n) *việc chào mừng* - to take the salute : *chào đáp lễ*
5. event /i'vent/ (n) *môn thi đấu (trong các cuộc thi thể thao)*
6. applause /ə'plɔ:z/ (n) *sự tán dương nhiệt liệt (bằng cách vỗ tay)*
7. tug of war /tʌg əv wɔ:(r)/ (n) *trò chơi kéo co*
8. shot put /ʃɒt pʊt/ (n) *môn ném tạ*
9. discus /'dɪskəs/ (n) *môn ném đĩa*
10. trophy /'trɒfi/ (n) *(trong thể thao) cúp*
11. national anthem /,næʃnəl 'ænthəm/ (n) *bài quốc ca*

## 22. SPORTS DAY NGÀY HỘI THỂ THAO

Sports Day fell on the eighth of September. On that day, the school was beautifully decorated with colourful flags. Parents were invited to watch their children participate in the various events.

First, there was the lower primary students' telematches. Every class was divided into four groups which **competed**<sup>1</sup> against one another. They used balls, **hoops**,<sup>2</sup> skipping-ropes and bean bags in the competition. The little children ran swiftly and we could hardly tell who the winners were.

Next, we had more interesting events. The upper primary students competed in events like hurdles, **relay races**,<sup>3</sup> short distance races, high jump and long jump. There were individual and team events. Every **participant**<sup>4</sup> tried his best to win as many trophies as possible for his class. However, there was bound to be some **losers**.<sup>5</sup>

The prize-giving ceremony marked the end of the exciting day. The winners were cheered and carried on their classmates' shoulders. The losers showed good **sportsmanship**<sup>6</sup> by joining in the cheers and not **sulking**.<sup>7</sup> Though we were very tired, we had enjoyed ourselves tremendously.

1. compete /kəm'pi:t/ (v) *đua tranh, đua tài, thi đua*
2. hoop /hu:p/ (n) *vòng (bằng gỗ, kim loại v.v... dùng trong thể thao)*
3. relay race /,ri:leɪ 'reɪs/ (n) *cuộc chạy tiếp sức*
4. participant /'pɑ:tɪsɪpənt/ (n) *người tham gia*
5. loser /'lu:zə(r)/ (n) *người thua cuộc, người bại trận*
6. sportsmanship /'spɔ:tmənʃɪp/ (n) *tinh thần thể thao*
7. sulk /sʌlk/ (v) *giận dỗi, dỗi hờn*

### 23. TEACHERS' DAY

#### NGÀY HIỂN CHƯƠNG NHÀ GIÁO

Teachers' Day falls on the the twentieth of November. Every year, our school will celebrate this day by holding a **concert**<sup>1</sup> specially for the principal and teachers. This year was no exception.

On that day, the whole school proceeded to the hall after morning assembly. Every class was involved in the concert. There were dances, **sketches**,<sup>2</sup> **mimes**<sup>3</sup> and songs. All the **performers**<sup>4</sup> did their best and the concert was a great success.

After the concert, we went back to our classes to have our class parties. My classroom was **transformed**<sup>5</sup> into a party hall. When our form teacher came into the class, she was very surprised indeed. We had food, drinks and presents for her. Some of us even made cards for her and she was very **touched**.<sup>6</sup>

At the end of the day, everyone was in a good **mood**.<sup>7</sup> I felt that, as students, we should thank our teachers for teaching us our lessons so patiently and cheerfully. What better opportunity is there for us to show our appreciation than on Teachers' Day ?

1. concert /'kɒnsət/ (n) buổi hòa nhạc
2. sketch /sketʃ/ (n) vở hài kịch ngắn
3. mime /maɪn/ (n) kịch câm
4. performer /pə'fɔ:mə(r)/ (n) người trình diễn, người biểu diễn (trước khán giả)
5. transform (into) /'trænsfɔ:m/ (v) biến đổi thành
6. touched /tʌtʃt/ (adj) xúc động, cảm động
7. mood /mu:d/ (n) tâm trạng

## 24. MOTHERS' DAY NGÀY LỄ CỦA CÁC BÀ MẸ

Yesterday was the second Sunday in the month of May. It was also Mothers' Day. My sister and I woke up early to prepare breakfast for our mum. We had **tuna fish**<sup>1</sup> sandwiches, scrambled eggs and coffee. Mum had a pleasant surprise when she woke up to the small **feast**<sup>2</sup> prepared for her.

After breakfast, we brightened Mum's day by giving her a big **bouquet**<sup>3</sup> of flowers made of **crepe paper**.<sup>4</sup> It took us one whole week to make those flowers.

For the rest of the day, we were very obedient and did most of the household **chores**.<sup>5</sup>

In the evening, my mum was relieved of cooking dinner by my dad. After a delicious meal, we had a cake-cutting ceremony to thank our mum for all that she has done for us.

I also presented Mum a very huge Mother's Day card. She was **overjoyed**.<sup>6</sup>

All of us were glad that Mum had a great day. However, I feel that Mother's Day is not the only opportunity for us to show our love for our mothers. We should show our mothers that we love them by respecting and obeying them every day of the year.

1. tuna /'tju:nəl/ (n) cá ngừ Californi - tunafish /'tju:nɒfɪl~l/ (n) thịt cá ngừ này

2. feast /fi:st/ (n) bữa tiệc

3. bouquet /bʊ'keɪ/ (n) bó hoa

4. crepe paper /kreɪp 'peɪpə(r)/ (n) giấy kẻp (có gợn như nhĩều)

5. chore /tʃɔ:(r)/ (n) việc vặt hàng ngày

6. overjoyed /,əʊvə'dʒɔɪd/ (adj) rất đỗi vui mừng

## 25. CHINESE NEW YEAR

### TẾT NGUYỄN ĐÁN

Chinese New Year is celebrated on the first day of the Lunar New Year. A month before the New Year, the Chinese clean the house and paint the walls. New clothes are bought for the occasion. A week before the festival, housewives bake special **cookies**<sup>1</sup> and other delicious **goodies**.<sup>2</sup>

On the eve of the New Year, the whole family gets together for a **reunion**<sup>3</sup> dinner. Every member of the family should be present during the dinner. Many different kinds of dishes are served during the dinner.

On Chinese New Year morning, the young members of the family pay their respects to the elders. In return they receive "Hongbaos". Hongbao is a red packet containing money. Then they go and visit friends and relatives. Some of our friends and neighbours visit us.

Besides visiting friends and relatives, there is the Chingay **procession**<sup>4</sup> to see. It is very amusing to see the lion rising on its hind legs trying to get the "Hongbao" which is **suspended**<sup>5</sup> in mid-air. The drums and **cymbals**<sup>6</sup> played for the lion dance performance are deafening but **rhythmic**.<sup>7</sup>

On the fifteenth day, another grand dinner is held to mark the end of the festival. I always enjoy myself greatly during the Chinese New Year.

1. cookie /'kʊki/ (n) *bánh bích qui*

2. goody /'gʊdi/ (n) *thức ăn ưa thích (kẹo, bánh ngọt, v.v...)*

3. reunion /ri:'ju:niən/ (n) *sự sum họp, cuộc họp mặt*

4. procession /prə'seʃn/ (n) *đám rước, đám diễu hành*

5. suspend /sə'spend/ (v) *treo lơ lửng*

6. cymbal /'sɪmbəl/ (n) *cái chũm chọe*

7. rhythmic /'rɪðmɪk/ (adj) *nhịp nhàng*

## 26. MY DIARY<sup>1</sup>

### QUYỂN NHẬT KÝ CỦA TÔI

I have a diary which has been with me for about half a year. It is a blue book given to me by my dad as a new year present. He hoped that I would develop the **habit**<sup>2</sup> of writing in my diary and I am glad that I have not **disappointed**<sup>3</sup> him.

It has become a habit for me to write in my diary every night before I go to bed. My diary knows all that happens to me ; it's a silent friend who knows all my joys and **grievances**.<sup>4</sup>

Whenever I am free, I will read my diary like I read a novel. This enables me to look back **objectively**<sup>5</sup> at all the things that I have done. As a result, I am able to **detect**<sup>6</sup> my mistakes and correct them. Similarly, I will take note of the things which I have done right and will try to do even better.

I feel that keeping a diary has made me a better person. My writing skill has improved a lot. Besides, writing in my diary every night has trained me to be more disciplined and I have learnt to spend my time wisely. Thus, I strongly **encourage**<sup>7</sup> my friends to keep a diary too.

1. diary /'daɪəri/ (n) *sổ nhật ký*
2. habit /'hæbɪt/ (n) *thói quen*
3. disappoint /dɪsə'pɔɪnt/ (v) *làm thất vọng*
4. grievance /'gri:vns/ (n) *lời kêu ca phàn nàn, nỗi bất bình, sự phiền muộn*
5. objective /əb'dʒektɪv/ (adj) *khách quan* - objectively (adv)
6. detect /dɪ'tekt/ (v) *nhận ra, khám phá*
7. encourage /ɪn'kʌrɪdʒ/ (v) *khuyến khích, khích lệ*

## 27. WHEN I AM ANGRY

### KHI TÔI GIẬN DỮ

Different people **react**<sup>1</sup> differently when they are angry. They also react differently in different situations. When I am angry, I will sulk, shout or cry, depending on who I am angry with.

When my parents **reprimand**<sup>2</sup> me for something which, I feel, is not my fault, I will shut myself in my room. I will refuse to talk to anyone, even to my granny whom I'm very fond of. Sometimes, I also throw things around and **mess up**<sup>3</sup> the whole bedroom.

When my brother and I quarrel with each other, I will scream and shout at the top of my voice. If I cannot beat him verbally, I will kick him. As a result, I usually end up crying because he is much bigger and stronger.

When I am angry with a friend, I will not talk to her until she **apologizes**<sup>4</sup> to me. My **stubbornness**<sup>5</sup> has caused me to lose a few good friends in the past.

I know that I am **intolerable**<sup>6</sup> when I am angry. Therefore, I have been trying to **control**<sup>7</sup> my **temper**.<sup>8</sup> However, I have not been very successful. I still need to put in more effort.

1. react /rɪ'ækt/ (v) *phản ứng*

2. reprimand /'reprɪmɑ:nd/ (v) *quở trách, khiển trách*

3. mess up /mes ʌp/ (v) *làm bừa bãi, lộn xộn*

4. apologize /ə'pɒlədʒaɪ/ (v) *xin lỗi*

5. stubbornness /'stʌbənɪs/ (n) *sự bướng bỉnh, sự ngoan cố*

6. intolerable /ɪn'tɒlərəbl/ (adj) *không thể chịu đựng nổi*

7. control /kən'trəʊl/ (v) *điều khiển*

8. temper /'tempə(r)/ (n) *khí chất, tính khí*

## 28. MY FAVOURITE HAUNT<sup>1</sup>

### *NƠI TÔI THƯỜNG LUI TỚI*

I live in a flat at East Coast. Every morning, my brother and I would go for a short jog near the beach at East Coast Park. It has become my favourite haunt.

On Sundays before dawn, I will sit on the beach, watching the sun rise. It gives me a very warm feeling as I always see hope in the beginning of a new day.

Whenever I am unhappy, I will climb up the rocks and listen to the **soothing**<sup>2</sup> sound of the waves **splashing**<sup>3</sup> against the rocks. The cool **breeze**<sup>4</sup> and fresh air clear my mind and help me to **sort out**<sup>5</sup> any problems I may have.

Sometimes, my good friends and I come to cycle at the cycling track. It is a lot of fun to race one another down the lane. When we get tired, we will **paddle**<sup>6</sup> in the sea. Sometimes, we also swim in the sea and all of us get very dark indeed.

This is the place where I go to most frequently. I believe I will continue to do so as its calm and beautiful **scenery**<sup>7</sup> will always attract me.

1. haunt /hɔːnt/ (n) nơi thường được (ai) lui tới thăm viếng

2. soothing /'suːðɪŋ/ (adj) êm dịu, dịu dàng

3. splash /splæʃ/ (v) bắn, tóe

4. breeze /briːz/ (n) làn gió nhẹ và mát

5. sort out /sɔːt aʊt/ (v) giải quyết

6. paddle /'pædl/ (v) chèo xuồng

7. scenery /'siːnəri/ (n) cảnh vật thiên nhiên

## 29. AN INTERESTING PLACE

### MỘT ĐỊA ĐIỂM THÚ VỊ

There is a very lovely place that I enjoy visiting. I am never tired of visiting it. My place of interest is full of greenery, **serenity**<sup>1</sup> and is a huge, beautiful garden of various flowers. It has flowers, trees and **shrubs**<sup>2</sup> of various kinds. This place is the Singapore **Botanical Gardens**.<sup>3</sup> It is located on the outskirts of the city.

The Botanical Garden is a lovely place to take **strolls**.<sup>4</sup> In the morning, people frequent the place to jog, walk or do other exercises. The air is fresh and it is very refreshing to sit by the huge pond. Ducks and swans often swim by and it is quite common to see people throwing in **crusts**<sup>5</sup> of bread. There are also fishes in the pond.

At the Botanical Gardens there is a wide variety of plants and trees to see and many interesting and **exotic**<sup>6</sup> **orchids**<sup>7</sup> are also grown there. You can see a clock made of small plants. I love taking quiet walks there. The natural surroundings help me to relax. I like going to the Botanical Gardens as it is a very interesting place.

1. serenity /sɪ'renəti/ (n) sự yên tĩnh và thanh bình
2. shrub /frʌb/ (n) cây bụi
3. Botanical Garden /bɒ'tænɪkl 'gɑ:dn/ (n) vườn thực vật, vườn bách thảo
4. stroll /strɔ:l/ (n) sự đi tản bộ, sự đi dạo
5. crust /krʌst/ (n) vỏ bánh
6. exotic /ɪg'zɒtɪk/ (adj) ngoại nhập
7. orchid /'ɔ:kɪd/ (n) cây lan, cây phong lan

### 30. SINGAPORE SCIENCE CENTRE *TRUNG TÂM KHOA HỌC SINGAPORE*

The Singapore Science Centre is located on a six-hectare site in Jurong. At the centre, we can discover the wonders of science and technology in a fun way. Clap your hands and colourful bulbs will light up. Start a wheel spinning and it will set off a fan churning. It is a place to answer our curiosity and capture our imagination.

The centre features over four hundred **exhibits**<sup>1</sup> covering topics like solar **radiation**,<sup>2</sup> communication, electronics, mathematics, nuclear energy and evolution. It aims to **arouse**<sup>3</sup> interest in science and technology among us and the general public. The centre is the first science centre to be established in South East Asia. It was opened in 1977 and it now receives an average of

one thousand, two hundred visitors a day. The exhibits can be found in four exhibition **galleries**.<sup>4</sup> They are the Lobby, Physical Sciences, Life Sciences and Aviation. These exhibits are renewed annually so as to encourage visitors to make return visits to the centre.

Instead of the usual "Hands off" notices found in exhibition halls, visitors are invited to touch and feel the exhibits, push the buttons, turn the cranks or pedals. This is an interesting way to learn science even if you hate the subject. A Discovery Centre was built for children between the ages of three and twelve. This new exhibition gallery was completed in 1985. Lately this year a stone age exhibit was built. It shows us about the animals and people which are **extinct**.<sup>5</sup>

1. exhibit /ɪɡ'zɪbɪt/ (n) vật trưng bày
2. radiation /reɪdɪ'eɪʃn/ (n) sự phóng xạ, sự bức xạ
3. arouse /ə'raʊz/ (v) khơi gợi, thức tỉnh
4. gallery /'gæləri/ (n) phòng trưng bày nghệ thuật
5. extinct /ɪk'stɪŋkt/ (adj) tuyệt chủng

### 31. SHOPPING CENTRES

#### TRUNG TÂM MUA BÁN

Shopping is an enjoyable experience for the Singaporeans. All shopping centres are crowded with people. This is because all the things one needs can be **purchased**<sup>1</sup> in one shopping **complex**.<sup>2</sup> Singapore is blessed with so many shopping centres which have supermarkets, departmental stores, restaurants and a chain of other retail shops **specialising**<sup>3</sup> in specific and general products. Singaporeans find it convenient as when everything is available under one roof instead.

Singapore's major shopping complexes are situated in the Orchard area and others are **scattered**<sup>4</sup> over **satellite**<sup>5</sup> towns and new town areas. The major advantage of shopping in these complexes is that all items from foodstuffs to household utensils are available in different brands from different countries. One has a variety of choices, the healthy competition benefits everyone as quality products can be purchased at economical prices. Supermarkets offer vegetables, fish, meat, **cutlery**,<sup>6</sup> **crocker**y,<sup>7</sup> **stationery**<sup>8</sup> and **textiles**.<sup>9</sup>

The shopping complex provides various facilities to attract the customers. It provides a clean environment with full lights, air conditioning and the products neatly **displayed**.<sup>10</sup> Convenient car parks and additional facilities such as food stalls and fast food outlets are also given.

The shoppers are not bothered by the rain or sunshine when they are in the shopping centre. Shopping offers a few hours of relaxation from their daily routine jobs.

Singapore becomes a shoppers' paradise during the festival seasons especially during Christmas, New Year, Chinese New Year, Hariraya.

1. purchase /'pɜ:tʃəs/ (v) mua, sắm, tậu

2. complex /'kɒmpleks/ (n) khu liên hợp

3. specialise /'speʃəlaɪz/ (v) chuyên về

4. scatter /'skætə (r)/ (v) rải rác, phân tán

5. satellite /'sætəlaɪt/ (n) vệ tinh

6. cutlery /'kʌtləri/ (n) dao, nĩa, thìa, v.v...

7. crock /krɒk/ (n) chén, đĩa, v.v... làm bằng đất sét nung

8. stationery /'steɪʃnəri/ (n) văn phòng phẩm

9. textile /'testaɪl/ (n) hàng vải dệt

10. display /'dɪspleɪ/ (v) trưng bày

## 32. AT THE BUS-STOP

### TẠI TRẠM XE BUÝT

Every morning, I wait at a bus-stop near my flat to take a bus to school. It is always very crowded. While waiting for the bus, I usually **observe**<sup>1</sup> the people at the bus-stop. Some of them I have come to know by sight.

One person who caught my attention is a tall and thin man wearing thick glasses. He always drops his files whenever his bus is coming. I guess that is because he is over-anxious to **board**<sup>2</sup> the bus.

Another person I have noticed is a **shabbily-dressed**<sup>3</sup> old woman. Every morning, she carries one big bag full of pieces of cloth to the bus-stop. Once, she came with two big bags instead of one and she **got stuck**<sup>4</sup> in the door of the bus. Luckily, the kind man with the thick glasses helped her to free herself. However, he dropped his files again while doing so.

There is also a rude school-boy who always pushes his way up the bus instead of queuing up like the other passengers. This angers the other passengers. Once, he tried pushing his way past the old lady with the big bag. To my amusement, he was almost knocked down by the fat bag.

There are indeed interesting things to note at a bus-stop if only one is observant.

1. observe /əb'zɜ:v/ (v) *quan sát*
2. board /bɔ:d/ (v) *lên (tàu, xe, v.v...)*
3. shabbily-dressed /'ʃæbɪli drest/ (adj) *ăn mặc tối tân*
4. get stuck /get stʌk/ (idm) *bị mắc kẹt, bị sa lầy*

### 33. A POPULAR PLACE IN MY TOWN

#### NƠI ĐƯỢC YÊU THÍCH Ở THỊ TRẤN CỦA TÔI

I live in Seremban, the capital of Negri Sembilan in Malaysia. Seremban is just about 60 km south of Kuala Lumpur, the nation's capital. Compared to busy Kuala Lumpur, living in Seremban is very much less hectic and the residents have more time for **relaxation**.<sup>1</sup>

The most popular place where the **residents**<sup>2</sup> go to for relaxation has to be the Lake Gardens. Situated just beside the centre of town, it has two small lakes surrounded by lush green **vegetation**.<sup>3</sup> A jogging **track**<sup>4</sup> through the vegetation circles the area. Just beside the larger lake is a flower garden and an **aviary**.<sup>5</sup>

The flower garden contains many varieties of beautiful flowers. This place is the favourite of shutter-bugs. One can always see people posing for pictures beside the flowers. On Sundays the place is especially busy as brides and grooms flock to it to have their pictures taken.

The aviary holds a modest number of birds. There are eagles, **mynahs**,<sup>6</sup> parrots and others. The last time I was at the aviary, there was even a peacock that would not show his glory and a **crane**<sup>7</sup> that stood so still that at first I mistook it for a dead tree.

Every morning before the sun rises, people start to go towards the Lake Gardens. The Tai Chi **brigade**<sup>8</sup> gets there first. These are usually senior citizens who practice this ancient Chinese art to stay healthy and **supple**.<sup>9</sup> Judging by the number of practitioners of this art, I have to say it is very popular.

As the sun rises younger people can be seen jogging around the jogging track. Some just walk briskly. Yet others just sit stroll leisurely on the grass taking in the cool morning air.

After 4 p.m. the people come again. This time it is mainly young men and women who come to jog or just exercise themselves. Some come to visit the flower garden and the aviary together with their families.

This goes on till dusk and when night takes over, the Lake Gardens is virtually deserted except for **courting**<sup>10</sup> couples. Then peace reigns over the Lake Gardens until the next morning when once again the place comes alive.

1. relaxation /ri:'lækseɪʃn/ (n) sự giải trí

2. resident /'rezɪdənt/ (n) cư dân (ở một vùng, v.v...)

3. vegetation /vedʒɪ'teɪʃn/ (n) hoa cỏ, cây cối

4. track /træk/ (n) đường hoặc vòng đua

5. aviary /'eɪvɪəri/ (n) chuồng chim

6. mynahs /maɪnə/ (n) loài sáo đá ở Đông Nam Á, có khả năng bắt chước tiếng người

7. crane /kreɪn/ (n) con sếu

8. brigade /brɪ'geɪd/ (n) nhóm người có tổ chức

9. supple /'sʌpl/ (adj) linh hoạt, mềm mại, dẻo dai

10. court /kɔ:t/ (v) hò hẹn, tỏ tình

### 34. A PLACE OF GREAT NATURAL BEAUTY *MỘT NƠI CÓ CẢNH SẮC THIÊN NHIÊN TUYỆT ĐẸP*

It was the hour when the sun's golden hue filled the horizon. I settled down comfortably on a huge rock **jutting**<sup>1</sup> out from the foot of a cliff. It was a moment of joy as I watched the evening migration of the seagulls. I felt a strong urge to walk, and so I did. A strong **craving**<sup>2</sup> for freedom arose in me as I walked on that lonely but nevertheless beautiful evening. My intention of visiting this place was to enjoy the peace and serenity that it offered. At the same time I longed to catch **glimpses**<sup>3</sup> of the familiar yet extraordinary beauty of God's creation. Indeed, I found that moment excellent for relaxing the stressful and tension filled minds of man who lives in this **materialistic**<sup>4</sup> society.

As I strolled along the beach, my rough feet touched the smooth white sand which seemed to **gleam**<sup>5</sup> under the thin and dim rays of the setting sun. It was so gentle that I felt as if I was walking on a carpeted floor of a grand hotel. I looked ahead at the green, calm sea and my little heart was touched.

The beauty of which I was then the witness, was beyond description. I only wished that I was born an artist so that I could **capture**<sup>6</sup> this wonder and preserve it in my paintings. Walking on, I was visited by **ecstasy**<sup>7</sup> when the naughtily noisy waves splashed on my bare feet. Far along the other end of the beach were some fishermen busy preparing their fishing nets and touching up their boats before they resume their daily work in the open sea.

Feeling tired after the long walk, I stopped and sat on a fallen coconut tree trunk. Even at this moment I could capture another aspect of the wonder of that evening. I was **enthralled**<sup>8</sup> by the neat rows of coconut trees standing upright as if mocking the fishermen who were sweating and **toiling**<sup>9</sup> to earn a living. The trees dancing and **swaying**<sup>10</sup> to the music of the rushing waves made my heart sing to the matchless rhythm.

As time passed, the sun was almost disappearing behind the horizon. Nevertheless, there was still a group of young boys, naked, playing police and thief and making **sandcastles**.<sup>11</sup> They were happy in their innocence. The still evening air brought their laughter over the sands and into my ears. Somehow, within me glowed the strong urge to shout and tell the world the **unsurpassable**<sup>12</sup> joy I was then feeling and to reveal my pleasure and **gratitude**<sup>13</sup> to God, the Creator.

Looking above me, at the clear blue sky, I could see tiny dots of stars beginning to appear jointly in the darkening sky. Then, my eyes caught the most beautiful sight. The beauty was inimitable. It was a group of long-necked swans gently flying over the enormous ball of fire which was, a moment ago, shining in all its glory. The moon then appeared, taking the place of the sun. It was difficult to grasp the idea that the moon's brightness is but a mere **reflection**<sup>14</sup> of the sun's light. This to me, pointed to the harsh reality behind the beauty of man-made laws.

As it was already dark, the fishing boats were out of sight and the children have gone home. Feeling lonely, I left the **realm**<sup>15</sup> of all emotions, of love and trust and of life and death, which is the beautiful beach. The beauty will remain **engraved**<sup>16</sup> in my heart for all eternity. This is the only place that narrates, on its own, the beauty of nature.

1. jut (out) /dʒʌt/ (v) *nhô ra, chìa ra*
2. craving (for) /'kreɪvɪŋ/ (n) *sự khao khát mãnh liệt*
3. glimpse /ɡlɪmp/ (n) *cái nhìn thoáng qua - catch glimpse of sb/sth (idm) thoáng trông thấy*
4. materialistic /mə'tɪəriəlɪstɪk/ (adj) *thuộc chủ nghĩa vật chất, thiên về vật chất*
5. gleam /ɡli:m/ (v) *ánh lên, lấp lánh*
6. capture /'kæptʃə(r)/ (v) *nắm bắt lấy*
7. ecstasy /'ekstəsi/ (n) *(cảm xúc hay trạng thái) cực kỳ sung sướng hay hạnh phúc*
8. enthrall /ɪn'tʁɔ:l/ (v) *làm say đắm, làm mê hoặc*
9. toil /tɔɪl/ (v) *làm việc cặm cùi / quần quật*
10. sway /sweɪ/ (v) *lắc lư, đong đưa*
11. sandcastle /'sændkæsl/ (n) *lâu đài trên cát*
12. unsurpassable /ʌnsə'pæsəbl/ (adj) *không thể vượt qua / trội hơn*
13. gratitude /'grætɪtju:d/ (n) *lòng biết ơn*
14. reflection /rɪ'flekʃn/ (n) *sự phản chiếu*
15. realm /reɪlm/ (n) *vương quốc*
16. engrave /ɪn'ɡreɪv/ (v) *có ấn tượng sâu sắc đối với trí nhớ, tâm trí v.v... - khắc sâu, hằn sâu*

### 35. A BUS RIDE

#### MỘT CHUYẾN ĐI BẰNG XE BUÝT

The bus finally arrived ! I quickly **hopped**<sup>1</sup> onto it and chose a seat near the exit. Glancing at my watch, I realized that I would be in good time to meet Susan at the library. I then turned my attention to the rest of the passengers.

The **rattle**<sup>2</sup> of the engine and the heat of the **blazing**<sup>3</sup> sun had sent some tired students on the bus into a deep sleep. I was amused to see them nodding like old men. One boy was even **snoring**<sup>4</sup> away ! The **prim**<sup>5</sup> girl sitting next to him looked at him disapprovingly. I wondered how she could bear the heat in her long back gown. She **alighted**<sup>6</sup> when the bus came to a beautiful **mosque**.<sup>7</sup>

Next to the mosque was a field where some boys were playing football. As the bus moved on, the trees and tall buildings seemed to **whiz**<sup>8</sup> by. At this rate, I would be early for the appointment.

In a short time, the bus reached the library. I alighted and walked towards the library. Construction work for an MRT station was underway nearby. Very soon, I would have an alternative means of transport to the library.

1. hop (onto sth) /hɒp/ (v) *nhảy nhanh vào (xe buýt, v.v...)*
2. rattle /'rætl/ (n) *tiếng nổ (của máy móc, động cơ, v.v...)*
3. blazing /'bleɪzɪŋ/ (adj) *chiếu (sáng rực)*
4. snore (away) /snɔ:(r)/ (v) *thở mạnh và to tiếng khi ngủ - ngáy*
5. prim /prɪm/ (adj) *ngghiêm nghị, đoan trang*
6. alight /ə'laɪt/ (v) *xuống xe*
7. mosque /mɒsk/ (n) *thánh đường Hồi giáo*
8. whiz /wɪz/ (v) *chạy vèo vèo*

### 36. A CABLE-CAR<sup>1</sup> RIDE *ĐI XE TREO TRÊN DÂY CÁP*

A ride in the cable-car is one of the most exciting and enjoyable experiences one can have. The cable-car is really a carriage which hangs from a strong steel cable suspended in the air. It moves along the cable with other cars on **pulleys**,<sup>2</sup> the wheels of which are turned by electric motors. The cars are painted in **eye catching**<sup>3</sup> colours and spaced at regular **intervals**.<sup>4</sup> Each car can **take up**<sup>5</sup> to six person. After the passengers have entered a car, they are locked in from outside by an attendant. They have no control over the movement of the car.

Before long, the passengers get a **breath-taking**<sup>6</sup> view, through the glass windows, of the modern city of Singapore, the **bustling**<sup>7</sup> harbour, and the several islands **off the coast**.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to the fast moving traffic on the ground, the cars in the air move in a leisurely manner, allowing passengers more than enough time to take in the scenery during the brief trip to the island of Sentosa. The return journey is no less exciting than the outward trip.

1. cable-car /'keɪbl kɑ:(r)/ (n) toa kéo bằng dây cáp
2. pulley /'pʊli/ (n) cái ròng rọc
3. eye-catching /aɪ 'kætʃɪŋ/ (adj) gây ấn tượng và đáng chú ý – bắt mắt
4. interval /'ɪntəvəl/ (n) khoảng cách (giữa hai hoặc nhiều vật)
5. take up /teɪk ʌp/ (v) chiếm (không gian hoặc thời gian)
6. breath-taking /'breɪθteɪkɪŋ/ (adj) rất hấp dẫn, ngoạn mục
7. bustling /'bʌslɪŋ/ (adj) nhộn nhịp, tấp nập
8. off the coast /ɒf ðə kəʊst/ (idm) ngoài khơi

### 37. A SLOW TRAIN JOURNEY

#### MỘT CUỘC HÀNH TRÌNH CHẬM CHẠP BẰNG XE LỬA

There is only train **plying**<sup>1</sup> from X to Y. I had no other choice. The line is a narrow **gauge**.<sup>2</sup> It passed through farming country and it mainly carried farm produce, although passengers were often using it too. At every station on the way to be **loaded**<sup>3</sup> and unloaded involving much **shunting**<sup>4</sup> which took a lot of time. Remember it took nearly four hours for a distance of 60km.

I travelled once by that train. At first I could not believe that a train (in this age) could go so slowly. I had to **put up with**<sup>5</sup> it. The train moved at a snail's pace and one could almost get down and get back on it. I did not try it because it was not safe for such foolhardy experiments.

The train stopped to pick up baskets of eggs, hens, vegetables and other farm produce. Naturally, those who travelled by this wonderful train were farm workers moving either from one estate to another or going to town for a change. The train was not clean. The familiar sights of newspaper and magazines were not found at the stations. The stations on the way were **manned**<sup>6</sup> by a skeleton staff, the station master and the pointsman doing all the duties. There are only two trains for the whole day and life to them is boring.

The journey was interesting for me and I got down whenever the train stopped to load or unload. There was no milling crowd or colour I could see. There was not even a soft beverage to drink. I could see how they shunted the wagons. It was interesting to see the people who came to take their goods. There were all sorts of baskets, hampers and baggages. Once the loading was done, the train would start again and go on.

Since the train ran through farming country, I could see farms all the way, with their gardens, poultry, cattlesheds and **granary**.<sup>7</sup> I couldn't see any tall building. I could see a calf looking with fear at the steaming train ; a half naked boy **goggling**<sup>8</sup> at the passing train and people engaged in farming activities.

After a while, it all got very boring. Anyway, it was good to relax from a **hectic**<sup>9</sup> city life.

1. ply /plaɪ/ (v) (về xe buýt, tàu hỏa, v.v...) *qua lại thường xuyên trên một tuyến đường – chạy tuyến*
2. gauge /geɪdʒ/ (n) *bề ngang đường sắt*
3. load /ləʊd/ (v) *chất hàng* - unload /ʌn'ləʊd/ (v) *dỡ hàng*
4. shunt /ʃʌnt/ (v) *lái (xe lửa, v.v...) đi từ đường này sang đường khác*
5. to put up with /pʊt ʌp wɪð/ (idm) *chịu đựng*
6. man /mæn/ (v) *cung cấp (người) cho cái gì*
7. granary /'grænəri/ (n) *kho chứa thóc hoặc ngũ cốc*
8. goggle /'gɒɡl/ (v) *giương mắt nhìn*
9. hectic /'hektɪk/ (adj) *sôi động*

### 38. ON A RAINY DAY VÀO MỘT NGÀY MƯA

This year, the summer season was unduly long and extremely hot compared to past years. The average temperature was between 25 degrees to 34 degrees Celsius. Adding to the misery, the water **consumption**<sup>1</sup> was rising daily, sending an alarming hue and cry from the authorities. The schools had re-opened. The **scorching**<sup>2</sup> sun and the **stifling**<sup>3</sup> heat made our school life uncomfortable.

One morning, just when the classes started, there was a sudden darkness. We saw threatening black clouds gathered in the sky. There were vivid flashes of lightning too. Suddenly, it started to rain. In the beginning, it was only a **drizzle**.<sup>4</sup> But soon, the drizzle turned into a heavy **downpour**.<sup>5</sup>

The rain continued for hours. We regretted not bringing our umbrellas. Some of my classmates rushed out to play in the rain refreshing themselves with the cool air and rain. The rain slowly **receded**<sup>6</sup> and we all rushed out.

The plight of the bus **commuters**<sup>7</sup> was of course pitiable. Buses were late and overcrowded. Some of my friends decided to take a walk in the cool weather instead of standing in the long queue.

Nearing home, I saw children playing with paper boats in the pool of water outside our centre court yard.

It is **exhilarating**<sup>8</sup> to watch pouring rain and even more exhilarating to play in it. However, I was happy to be home and to be relieved of my wet clothes.

1. consumption /kən'sʌmpʃn/ (n) mức tiêu thụ, mức sử dụng
2. scorching /'skɔ:tʃɪŋ/ (adj) rất nóng, nóng như thiêu đốt
3. stifling /'staɪflɪŋ/ (adj) ngột ngạt
4. drizzle /'drɪzl/ (n) mưa bụi, mưa phùn
5. downpour /'daʊpɔ:(r)/ (n) trận mưa như trút
6. recede /rɪ'si:d/ (v) ngớt dần
7. commuter /kə'mju:tə(r)/ (n) người đi làm hàng ngày bằng xe lửa, xe buýt, ô tô v.v...
8. exhilarating /ɪg'zɪləreɪtɪŋ/ (adj) hân hoan

### 39. A RAINY MORNING MỘT BUỔI SÁNG TRỜI MƯA

Outside the rain poured. It was so **snug**<sup>1</sup> and comfortable in bed. I did not want to get up, but unfortunately it was a Monday morning. I could see the light of morning coming through my window and I knew I had to get up. Why can't today be Sunday ? I thought. Then I would not have to get out of the warm bed. It was so pleasant there. However, the rain did not care whether it was a Monday or a Sunday. So I reluctantly got up.

After going through my morning routine in the toilet, I felt a little more alive. The warm bed was still inviting but I had to get ready to go to school. So I dressed up, picked up my bag and **descended**<sup>2</sup> the stairs to the dining room below.

My parents, sisters and brothers were already having their breakfast. I sat down and helped myself. Everyone was quiet as we ate our breakfast. Anyway the noise made by the pouring rain made conversation a bit hard and recently awakened people tended to be on the quiet side. Anyway rain always made me hungry so I had a hearty breakfast.

Although the time showed seven, the sky was still not very bright. The dark clouds and the pouring rain kept the sky looking **drab**<sup>3</sup> and grey. My father said that we have to get going, rain or not, or we would be late for school. My mother **countered**<sup>4</sup> by saying that it was better to be late than wet. My father **relented**<sup>5</sup> and so we waited for a while in the house for the rain to subside.

Fifteen minutes later, the rain slowed down sufficiently for my father to reverse out his car. We all packed ourselves into it, all five children. We waved farewell to our mother and soon we were on our way to school.

My father drove very carefully. He switched on the headlights and **wiper**.<sup>6</sup> Soon the screen misted up and he had to switch on the air conditioner.

On the way to school I saw other not-so-fortunate school children and adults walking along the road or waiting for the bus. Each of them had some kind of raincoat on or carried an umbrella. There were **puddles**<sup>7</sup> of water on the road, by the side of the road, in fact, everywhere. The rain had not stop and the drains were filled to the brim. Water overflowed onto the road, making it **hazardous**<sup>8</sup> for the users.

Anyhow we arrived at our schools without any **mishaps**.<sup>9</sup> My sisters got out at the **convent**<sup>10</sup> while my brothers and I went further on to another school. The rain had slowed to a drizzle so as soon as we got out of the car, we dashed to our classrooms. We had to be careful not to slip. Anyway we made it to our classrooms. Some of my classmates were already there. Some were **soaking**<sup>11</sup> wet while others were slightly wet like me.

The school bell rang but not even half the class was present. Even the teacher had not come. So we sat down in the class and waited for the others to come. Meantime there was nothing to do but to talk with each other and wished that we were all in our warm beds.

Outside it **drizzled**<sup>12</sup> on.

1. snug /snʌɡ/ (adj) ấm cúng và dễ chịu
2. descend /'dɪsɛnt/ (v) đi xuống (cái gì)
3. drab /dræb/ (adj) buồn tẻ, xám xịt

4. counter /'kaʊntə(r)/ (v) *phản công, đáp lại với quan điểm trái ngược*
5. relent /rɪ'lent/ (v) *giảm bớt sự nghiêm khắc / kiên quyết*
6. wiper /'waɪpə(r)/ (n) *(ở xe hơi) thanh gạt nước*
7. puddle /'pʌdl/ (n) *vũng nước nhỏ, nhất là nước mưa đọng trên đường đi*
8. hazardous /'hæzədəs/ (adj) *nguy hiểm*
9. mishap /'mɪʃæp/ (n) *việc rủi ro*
10. convent /'kɒnvent/ (n) *nữ tu viện*
11. soaking /'səʊkɪŋ/ (adj) *(cũng soaking wet) ướt đẫm, ướt sũng*
12. drizzle /'drɪzl/ (v) *mưa phùn, mưa lất phất*

## 40. A DAY AT THE MARKET

### MỘT NGÀY Ở CHỢ

Last Sunday, I woke up early to go to the market with my mother. After taking breakfast, I carried my mother's shopping basket and we left for the market.

The market is only a few blocks away from my flat. When we reached the place, it was already very crowded. I was surprised to see men in the market besides the housewives. There were also a few children following their mothers obediently. The whole place was very noisy. I could hear the stallkeepers and their customers **bargaining**<sup>1</sup> loudly over the prices of the goods.

There were many stalls in the market. First, we went to the vegetable stall to buy some **cabbages**,<sup>2</sup> carrots and tomatoes. Then we bought some **pork**<sup>3</sup> from the **butcher**<sup>4</sup> and a **salmon**<sup>5</sup> and some **prawns**<sup>6</sup> from the **fishmonger**.<sup>7</sup> After that, we proceeded to the **poultry**<sup>8</sup> stall to get a fat chicken.

Very soon, we found that we could hardly carry any more things. However, my mother **insisted**<sup>9</sup> that we buy some fruits before going home. Despite of being very tired, I was glad that I had been of help to my mother.

1. bargain /'bɑ:ɡɪn/ (v) *mặc cả*
2. cabbage /'kæbɪdʒ/ (n) *bắp cải*
3. pork /pɔ:k/ (n) *thịt heo*
4. butcher /'bʌtʃə(r)/ (n) *người bán thịt*
5. salmon /'sæməŋ/ (n) *cá hồi*
6. prawn /prɔ:n/ (n) *tôm pan-dan*
7. fishmonger /'fɪʃmʌŋɡə(r)/ (n) *người buôn cá*
8. poultry /'pəʊltrɪ/ (n) *gia cầm (gà, vịt, ngỗng, v.v...)*
9. insist /ɪn'sɪst/ (v) *khăng khăng đòi, cố nài*

## 41. FIRE DRILL

### THỰC TẬP CỨU HỎA

Fire drills help students to be prepared mentally and physically when a fire breaks out. It is held in all schools. My school is no **exception**.<sup>1</sup>

Yesterday, when we were attending an English lesson, the school bell rang continuously. The whole class did not know what was going on. Our form teacher, Miss Li, realized that it was a fire drill and told us so. All of us got up from our seats immediately and queued up in an orderly manner along the **corridor**.<sup>2</sup> With the class **register**<sup>3</sup> in her hands, Miss Li led us to the field. We walked **swiftly**.<sup>4</sup> At the field, we saw the other classes and teachers gathering excitedly. Miss Li then took our class attendance, making sure that everyone was present.

When everyone was at the field, our principal made a short speech. He said that we had **responded**<sup>5</sup> rather well to the fire drill. However, he felt that we could have done better. Firstly we took quite a while to realize what the ringing of the bell meant. Secondly, some students wasted time packing their books.

The fire drill had indeed been **beneficial**.<sup>6</sup> If a fire ever broke out in school, we would know what to do.

1. exception /ɪk'sepʃn/ (n) ngoại lệ
2. corridor /'kɒrɪdɔ:(r)/ (n) hành lang
3. register /'redʒɪstə(r)/ (n) sổ ghi danh
4. swift /swɪft/ (adj) nhanh chóng, mau lẹ - swiftly /-li/ (adv)
5. respond /rɪ'spɒnd/ (v) phản ứng nhanh chóng
6. beneficial /benɪ'fiʃl/ (adj) có lợi, có tác dụng

## 42. A WEDDING CELEBRATION

### MỘT LỄ CƯỚI

Weddings are grand affairs. Normally, it only occurs once - in - a - lifetime. It brings about a **bondage**<sup>1</sup> between a man and a woman. Recently I attended the wedding of my classmate's sister. It was performed in a community centre **auditorium**.<sup>2</sup> The auditorium was converted into a fairyland. The stage was all **illuminated**<sup>3</sup> with different colour bulbs and decorated with pots of flowers, pots and other glittering decorations. A magnificent platform was **erected**<sup>4</sup> which held two **throne**<sup>5</sup>-like chairs for the **bridge**<sup>6</sup> and the bridegroom.

The platform and the stage looked like the banquet hall of a fivestar hotel with its thick red carpets and floral decorations. The cool **fragrance**<sup>7</sup> was so strong that everyone felt sleepy. There was a place by the side for music troops with their enormous music instruments. They played loud and soft music. The wedding day was on Sunday. The guests were very well dressed and added to the atmosphere.

The bridegroom party arrived in seven cars, they were welcomed by the band. Dancing was also arranged. They were pleased with the warm welcome. Two video and cameramen, photographers were busy capturing the scenes with their equipment. The bridegroom was **escorted**<sup>8</sup> to the throne. The bride followed in her glittering red dress, escorted by her friends. They walked in a slow and doll-like pace. After some minor ceremonies they were officially announced as man and wife.

The wedding was also an occasion for socialising. Many of my friends were there and we had many happy moments. As one by one went to the stage to offer them best wishes and presents, I also stood in line to offer them my best wishes with a present. Then I went home taking with me the pleasant memories.

1. bondage /'bʌndɪdʒ/ (n) sự ràng buộc
2. auditorium /ɔ:di'tɔ:riəm/ (n) phòng lớn (của nhà hát, v.v...)
3. illuminate /'lu:mɪneɪt/ (v) soi sáng, chiếu sáng
4. erect /'ɪ'rekt/ (v) dựng, dựng lên
5. throne /θrəʊn/ (n) ngai, ngai vàng
6. bride /braɪd/ (n) cô dâu - bridegroom /'braɪdɡru:m/ (n) chú rể
7. fragrance /'freɪgrəns/ (n) mùi thơm dễ chịu, hương thơm
8. escort /'ɪ'skɔ:t/ (v) hộ tống, đưa đi

### 43. A FASHION SHOW

#### CUỘC BIỂU DIỄN THỜI TRANG

Fashion show is one of the ways of advertisement. This is to attract the attention of the public and to educate them on the coming fashion. If it is put crudely, it is to brain wash the public that these shows are held. Unlike the advertisement in the newspapers, a fashion show has the **glamour**<sup>1</sup> of music, colour, light and all theatrical effect. Since live **models**<sup>2</sup> are used, it becomes very realistic and the audience has got a chance to see, discuss and criticise, and have some fun at the expense of the models. So there is no **denying**<sup>3</sup> the fact that the fashion shows have become the fashion of the day and they have become pace setters of a fashion.

Thus recently I had an occasion to attend a fashion show organised by the Textile Mills Association and the Garment Makers' **guild**.<sup>4</sup> This was held in the City Hall on a Sunday so that more people could attend. The Hall was very tastefully decorated. The stage was set in such a way that the models could be viewed to advantage. The lighting was first class with **concealed**<sup>5</sup> lights and provision for colour lighting. Admission was by special invitation ; otherwise the organizers could not control the crowd. Since my father received an invitation, we went to the show. Some soft music was played to **enliven**<sup>6</sup> the show.

The selected models were ones who had been taken for their attractive personality. There were men's, women's and children's models. One by one they **paraded**<sup>7</sup> on the stage and when they came there and walked across the stage showing their dress to the audience, some salesmen at the microphone would describe the **fabric**,<sup>8</sup> the name of the mill that had produced it and the name of the fashion. At the same time, printed forms of the fashion was distributed to the audience.

Men wearing office dress, casuals, hunting dress, sports wear and dinner dress appeared on the stage. The Olympic suit specially created for the coming Olympics was shown. A team of athletes wearing the suit paraded on the stage. Women in all types of dresses both oriental and occidental were there. The materials of which their dresses were made varied from cotton to polyester. There were women wearing Indian sarees, Japanese kimonos, bikinis and swim suit and Maxi's. There was also a model who was wearing a casual dress made of paper. The announcer said that the paper dress was cheaper and disposable and it could be used in the operation theatres and so on.

It was not all a show of the grown-ups. There were children between three and eight, both boys and girls who presented the latest version of children's wear. Some of the children who appeared on the stage were very smart and they enjoyed the fun.

What attracted me most was the beach dress which when worn could give a **camouflage**<sup>9</sup> effect. Besides it was said that the material was **waterproof**,<sup>10</sup> non smelling and light.

It was a delightful show and the audience had an enjoyable evening. The fashions book which was for sale was in great demand. So there is no gain saying that I too enjoyed the show very much.

1. glamour /'glæmə(r)/ (n) sức quyến rũ, sức mê hoặc
2. model /'mɒdl/ (n) người mẫu thời trang

3. deny /di'naɪ/ (v) *phủ nhận*
4. guild /ɡɪld/ (n) *phường, hội*
5. conceal /kən'si:l/ (adj) *che khuất*
6. enliven /ɪn'laɪvnl/ (v) *làm sống động, làm sôi nổi*
7. parade /pə'reɪd/ (v) (về biểu diễn thời trang) *đi qua lại (trên sân khấu để trình diễn)*
8. fabric /'fæbrɪk/ (n) *vải dệt*
9. camouflage /'kæməflɑ:ʒ/ (n) *sự ngụy trang*
10. waterproof /'wɔ:təpru:f/ (adj) *không thấm nước*

#### 44. A NIGHT MARKET *PHIÊN CHỢ ĐÊM*

Two days before the Chinese New Year, there is always a night market in our place. The night market is put up every year during this season.

It happened this year that I took my sister to the night market. When we arrived at the market it was crowded. Slowly people increased and there was soon a very big and noisy crowd.

At the market, there were many things **on sale**<sup>1</sup> : toys, clothes, books, stationery, **edible**<sup>2</sup> things, flowers, materials, kitchen wares, **cosmetics**<sup>3</sup> and many other things. Stall-keepers were shouting at the tops of their voice trying to attract buyers. Customers were talking and bargaining. Housewives were looking for things they wanted to buy.

My sister and I were moving from one stall to another stall. While we were looking at the things, there was a big noise two stalls away. A fat woman was quarelling with a thin stall-keeper about the price of some goods. They were **shouting**<sup>4</sup> angrily at each other. More and more people gathered to watch the **quarrel**.<sup>5</sup> After a while the fat woman threw back the thing and left.

After watching the quarrel we decided to go home. We were tired and our legs were aching, but we enjoyed the visit.

1. on sale /ɒn seɪl/ (*idm*) (về hàng hóa) có bán, sẵn sàng để bán

2. edible /'edɪbl/ (*adj*) (về đồ ăn) có thể ăn được

3. cosmetics /kɒz'metɪks/ (*n*) mỹ phẩm

4. shout /ʃaʊt/ (*v*) la hét

5. quarrel /'kwɒrəl/ (*n*) cuộc cãi lộn

## 45. UNDERWATER DISCOVERY

### KHÁM PHÁ DƯỚI MẶT NƯỚC

One Sunday, I managed to **talk my uncle into**<sup>1</sup> bringing me along on a **snorkelling**<sup>2</sup> trip. My uncle is a diver and I have been taking swimming lessons under his instruction for a few years.

We spent ten minutes warming up before we **dived**<sup>3</sup> into the deep blue sea. I was surprised to find myself swimming alongside sea **creatures**.<sup>4</sup> Fishes of all shapes and sizes swam by. There were also strange-looking plants and I was **enchanted**<sup>5</sup> by the beautiful underwater world.

I saw huge plants with numerous finger-like "**petals**",<sup>6</sup> opening and closing restlessly. Some small fishes swimming near the plant were caught amongst the "petals" as they closed. I also saw a sea-horse swimming right in front of my eyes. I was very excited and tried to grab it, but it was too quick for me. Then came a **jelly-fish**<sup>7</sup> which looked like a gigantic mushroom dancing gracefully in the deep sea-water. I avoided it as I did not wish to be **stung**.<sup>8</sup>

I was **reluctant**<sup>9</sup> to surface but my uncle insisted that it was time to go back. However, I was very pleased with the beautiful and rare **corals**<sup>10</sup> I had picked up. It was certainly an exciting and fruitful trip.

1. to talk sb into /tɔ:k/ (*idm*) thuyết phục ai

2. snorkelling /'snɔ:kəlɪŋ/ (*n*) (hành động hoặc môn thể thao) bơi lặn dưới nước bằng ống thở

3. dive /daɪv/ (*v*) lặn

4. creature /'kri:tʃə(r)/ (*n*) sinh vật, đặc biệt là động vật

5. enchanted /ɪn'tʃɑ:ntɪd/ (*adj*) bị mê hoặc

6. petal /'petl/ (*n*) cánh hoa

7. jelly-fish /'dʒelɪ fɪʃ/ (*n*) con sứa

8. sting /stɪŋ/ (*v*) (stung-stung) cắn, chích, đốt

9. reluctant /rɪ'lʌktənt/ (*adj*) miễn cưỡng

10. coral /'kɒrəl/ (*n*) san hô

## 46. THE SINGAPORE AEROSPACE EXHIBITION

### CUỘC TRIỂN LÃM NGÀNH DU HÀNH KHÔNG GIAN Ở SINGAPORE

The Singapore Aerospace Exhibition was **held**<sup>1</sup> at the Changi Airport Terminal for four days. The last two days were opened to the public. As Sunday was the last day, I went with my friends to see the exhibition. Special buses were arranged from Tampines **interchange**<sup>2</sup> to the **venue**<sup>3</sup> of the exhibition.

We all arrived there by 9 a.m and were shocked to see a very long queue of people at the Changi bus stop. We has no other choice but to join in the queue. The sun was hot and it was only at 10 o'clock that we were able to buy our entry tickets. There was a drink stall which offered ice cold drinks and it was a great relief for us.

We went inside the first **gallery**.<sup>4</sup> A big red **strikerjet**<sup>5</sup> welcomed us. There were officers everywhere guiding us. There were representative companies from all over the world. Major companies such as Boeing, Lock-head, Rolls Royce and other European companies **monopolised**<sup>6</sup> the show. Equipment were neatly arranged. There were catalogues everywhere. **Hangars**<sup>7</sup> were **converted into**<sup>8</sup> galleries. We were **astounded**<sup>9</sup> to see the various types of aircrafts.

Starting from trainer single seater aircraft, there were planes, jets, small, medium and big dragon size **helicopters**.<sup>10</sup> We posed in front of the aircrafts and took many photos. The next section was fighter aircraft, like F.16, F.18, Jaguars Mig 18, 21, 29... Each aircraft had its own improvised system. We only partially understood the explanation given by the officers.

We had to queue for a bus to see the passenger aircrafts which range from ordinary one to the most luxurious one. There was a large crowd as these aircraft are familiar to most people unlike the fighter jets and helicopters. At 3 pm the Singapore Air Force performed the spectacular airshow over the Changi sea. On seeing the show our tiredness disappeared. Determined to become pilots, we came home.

1. hold /həʊld/ (v) (held-held) *tổ chức*
2. interchange /'ɪntətʃeɪndʒ/ (n) *giao điểm*
3. venue /'venju:/ (n) *nơi gặp gỡ*
4. gallery /'gæləri/ (n) *phòng trưng bày nghệ thuật*
5. strikerjet /'straɪkədʒet/ (n) *máy bay phản lực chiến đấu*
6. monopolise /mə'nɒpələɪz/ (v) *giữ độc quyền*
7. hangar /'hæŋə(r)/ (n) *làn rộng hình khung dùng để máy bay*
8. convert (into) /kən'vɜ:t/ (v) *chuyển đổi thành*
9. astounded /ə'staʊndɪd/ (adj) *kinh ngạc, sửng sốt*
10. helicopter /'helɪkɒptə(r)/ (n) *máy bay phản lực*

## 47. TRISHAW<sup>1</sup> RIDER NGƯỜI CHẠY XE BA BÁNH

Trishaw riders can be seen in areas frequented by tourists, in particular around Little India. A trishaw rider is no doubt a hardworking man. In Singapore trishaw riders are source of attention to the visiting tourists from developed countries.

A trishaw rider is **tactful**<sup>2</sup> and understands the **temperament**<sup>3</sup> of tourists. He acts as guide to the tourists. The nature of his work requires energy and strength. A trishaw rider enjoys taking tourists around and acts as a host. The tourist feels relaxed and takes in the city sights.

A trishaw rider has to ride his vehicle on the roads. He has to work in any weather. He has to be ready to take the passenger to any **destinations**.<sup>4</sup>

A trishaw knows few joys and entertainment. All his joys rest with the service he **renders**<sup>5</sup> to the passengers. The tourist brings home with him the memory of the trishaw rides.

1. trishaw /'traɪʃə:/ (n) *một loại xe đạp nhẹ có ba bánh thông dụng ở miền Viễn Đông*
2. tactful /'tæktfəl/ (adj) *khéo xử, lịch thiệp*
3. temperament /'tempərəmənt/ (n) *khí chất, tính khí*
4. destination /destɪ'neɪʃn/ (n) *nơi đến*
5. render /'rendə(r)/ (v) *đáp lại, trả lại*

## 48. THE LIFE OF A FARMER CUỘC SỐNG CỦA NGƯỜI NÔNG DÂN

Mr. Lim is a farmer by profession and he is proud of being one. His holdings are small, but he feels they are enough for him.

He owns a few **hectares**<sup>1</sup> of good land, a **ploughing machine**<sup>2</sup> and a small **cottage**.<sup>3</sup> His fields are fed with water from a stream. As a modern farmer he has a **pumpset**<sup>4</sup> for pumping water. So his fields are never allowed to go dry. He grows mainly **paddy**,<sup>5</sup> in a small patch of land he has the vegetable garden.

Usually he is an early riser. He starts his pump and waters his fields. He will be going round to see whether water does not overflow. He may remove the weeds from among the plants. He goes into the vegetable garden to see if there is any pick for the day. He **trims**<sup>6</sup> the **hedges**,<sup>7</sup> **digs**<sup>8</sup> the **plots**<sup>9</sup> or dresses them up for the next planting. He is fond of his flower pots of which he has a few. He takes pride in them.

After these morning rounds he takes his breakfast. It is his gossiping time. He meets others and takes part in the village gossip. He cannot read, he learns about with morning news. As is common nowadays, he discusses with his friend the day's politics. Sometimes, the commission agent may come, and our friend will talk to him about the market **prospects**.<sup>10</sup>

In the afternoon, after a wash and a lunch, he stretches himself for a mid-days **siesta**.<sup>11</sup> He gets up and after a cup of tea, goes to the fields and sees everything is in order. Then he takes a stroll in the nearby towns and makes some purchases for the house. That is also the time for him to meet friends and exchange views.

He returns home and had an early dinner. He plans for the next day. Sometimes it may be taking the grains to the market, it may be **transplanting**<sup>12</sup>; some other times it may be taking the machine for repair. Thus he leads a simple life and he is contented.

1. hectare /'hektə:(r)/ (n) (viết tắt ha) đơn vị đo diện tích trong hệ mét, bằng 10.000m<sup>2</sup> hoặc 2,471 mẫu Anh

2. ploughing machine /,pləʊɪŋ mə'ʃi:n/ (n) máy cày

3. cottage /'kɒtɪdʒ/ (n) nhà tranh

4. pumpset /'pʌmpset/ (n) hệ thống máy bơm

5. paddy /'pædɪ/ (n) lúa

6. trim /trɪm/ (v) xén, tỉa

7. hedge /hedʒ/ (n) hàng rào (bằng cây bụi)

8. dig /dɪg/ (v) đào, bới

9. plot /plɒt/ (v) mảnh đất nhỏ, miếng đất

## 49. FADLEY'S FAMILY

### GIA ĐÌNH FADLEY

My best friend is Fadley Noor. He is a short Malay boy with big eyes and **chubby**<sup>1</sup> cheeks. We spend every day together, studying and playing at each other's home. I have been to his home so many times that I know his family rather well now.

Fadley comes from a large family of nine. He has three brothers and one sister. Since Fadley is the youngest in the family, his grandparents and parents **dote on**<sup>2</sup> him.

Fadley's parents are **hawkers**.<sup>3</sup> They sell "roti prata", "soup kambing" and other Malay food in a hawker centre at Hill Street. Fadley's parents are very hardworking. They wake up early each morning to go to the market and to prepare the food.

Fadley's brothers study in the neighbouring secondary school. They often join Fadley and me in our games. His sister is pretty and has a **winsome**<sup>4</sup> smile. She is seldom at home as she works every day as salesgirl in Metro Grand.

Fadley's grandparents are very kind and generous old people. Whenever I visit them, they will make some dessert for me.

I think Fadley is very lucky to have such a loving family.

1. chubby /'tʃʌbi/ (*adj*) *mũm mĩm, phúng phính*
2. dote (on) /dəʊt/ (*v*) *quá cưng yêu, yêu mê mẩn*
3. hawker /'hɔ:kə(r)/ (*n*) *người đi chào bán hàng*
4. winsome /'wɪnsəm/ (*adj*) *quyến rũ, hấp dẫn*

## 50. A HOUSE I WOULD LIKE TO LIVE IN NGÔI NHÀ TÔI THÍCH SỐNG

I would like to live in a house by the sea where I can see the sun rise and set every day. This is how I will want my house to be like : after passing the front gate, there will be a lovely rose garden. Then, the big white house comes into view. When I walk through the door, a white sitting room with a pink sofa set will greet me. Paintings of beautiful flowers hanging on the walls will make the room look comfortable and fresh.

The three bedrooms will be on the second level. One is for my parents, one for my brother and one for me. I will like my room to be painted pink. Above my bed, I will hang a big picture of a **ballerina**<sup>1</sup> dressed in white. The grey carpet on the floor will be **strewn**<sup>2</sup> with many cushions for me to lie on and enjoy a novel. I will do my homework at my study table by the window through which I can see the stars at night.

On the highest level there will be an open space which overlooks the sea. It will be used for **barbecues**<sup>3</sup> in the evening.

No matter how fine this house may seem, it is just a dream. What is reality for me is a three-room flat in Tiong Bahru.

1. ballerina /bælə'ri:nə/ (n) nữ diễn viên múa ba lê

2. strew /stru:/ (v) (strewed-strewn) trải

3. barbecue /'bɑ:bɪkjʊ:/ (n) bữa tiệc ngoài trời, ăn thức ăn nướng bằng vỉ kim loại trên lửa lộ thiên

## 51. AN IDEAL HOUSE NGÔI NHÀ LÝ TƯỞNG

At first when I thought of purchasing a house, I wanted one that was neither too far nor too near a town. If it was too far, I may feel lonely and then, there was the question of transport. Finally, I chose an elevated, land enabling easy **drainage**<sup>1</sup> and firm. The site is spacious allowing ground for the house and a decent big garden. I wanted an elegant look for the house I intended to build.

The house has four rooms with a well-furnished kitchen and modern bathroom facilities. The living rooms are comfortable. The furniture has been chosen with great care. The walls have been painted with soft colours to match the curtains, the materials of which had been bought from the best textile manufacturing company. Each room is fitted with a radio so that one can enjoy programmes from the bed. The drawing room is elegantly furnished with sofas, chairs and a central table. The walls are lined with built-in cupboards, a library to house well-chosen **volumes**<sup>2</sup> by master novelists. There is a **niche**<sup>3</sup> for the television and the room can be used for viewing programmes. All the rooms are airy and air-conditioned.

The kitchen is beautifully done up. It is fitted with electric grills and things can be stacked neatly away in specially designed cabinets. It is provided with modern **gadgets**<sup>4</sup> for grinding, **pulverizing**<sup>5</sup> or cutting.

In front of the house there is an **artificial**<sup>6</sup> pool with a fountain **spray**.<sup>7</sup> One or two fish tanks are kept in the big porch to add the beauty of the place. There is a garage at the side of the house for my car, cattle and poultry. There I keep a few **fowls**<sup>8</sup> of the high breed like the white leg horn, Black Monorca, and Rhode Island from which I get a supply of eggs and meat. I have two jersey cows in the shed which supply the milk for the family. In the backyard there are a few fruit bearing trees. On the margin of the house, there are some coconut trees. In front of the house there are certain bushes of croton and exotic plants. The well-kept lawn with luscious green grass is very pleasing to the eye. There is also a small playground for my children with a swing.

I have a couple of chandeliers in the drawing room showing rainbow coloured lights whenever light falls on them. I could specially mention the marble Buddha I got from Sian and a bronze Nataraja from India. There are a few selected pictures by masters in gilded frames.

Thus I am surrounded by beauty and peace.

1. drainage /'dreɪnɪdʒ/ (n) hệ thống thoát nước
2. volume /'vɒljʊ:m/ (n) (về sách) quyển, tập
3. niche /ni:ʃ/ (n) hốc tường
4. gadget /'gædʒɪt/ (n) thiết bị hoặc dụng cụ cơ khí nhỏ – đồ dùng
5. pulverizing /'pʌlvərəɪz/ (v) giã nhỏ như cám, tán thành bột
6. artificial /ɑ:'tɪfɪʃəl/ (adj) nhân tạo
7. spray /spreɪ/ (n) thiết bị phun (nước, v.v...)
8. fowl /faʊl/ (n) gà trống hay mái nuôi ở nhà

## 52. A PERFECT HOUSE OF MINE *NGÔI NHÀ HOÀN HẢO CỦA TÔI*

I can now sit back and **heave**<sup>1</sup> a big sigh of relief. The finished **decor**<sup>2</sup> of my house is worth every cent of my hard-earned money and every unit of my energy. Now, I can simply enjoy the little paradise that I have created.

By observing the **exterior**,<sup>3</sup> one will get the impression of a cottage in the country-side. The **stark**<sup>4</sup> white colour of the house is toned down by the rows of palm trees and shrubs in the front lawn. The multi-coloured flowers greet me every morning as I sit on my rocking chair and enjoy the fresh morning air.

Within the house, a similar condition prevails. The perpetual-open windows allow for healthy **ventilation**<sup>5</sup> and full view of the serene and beautiful garden. The living room boasts of a dark **mahogany**<sup>6</sup> sofa set which is complemented by **parquet**<sup>7</sup> flooring. Just a few metres away, I have created a "corner of peace" as I call it ; and this is for the purpose of relaxation. I have placed a large durable rug, some cushions, some magazines and books for leisure reading and a small, portable radio.

Contrary to the condition of informality of the areas I have mentioned, the dining area portrays unmatched grandeur. The entrance to it consists of magnificent **archways**<sup>8</sup> and pillars which will remind one of the intricate Roman architecture. The windows are deliberately draped with dramatic purple-coloured **velvet**<sup>9</sup> curtains done up with **frills**<sup>10</sup> and **tassles**.<sup>11</sup> To top them all, I have purposely chosen my furniture that bears an Elizabethan air of **supremacy**.<sup>12</sup> To complete the atmosphere, I have added a beautiful **chandelier**<sup>13</sup> to brighten up the dining area. This part of my house is the source of my pride especially on occasions when I have to entertain important guests.

The kitchen is another place of extreme importance. I have managed to come up with a splendid arrangement of kitchen cabinets, refrigerator and cookers and an undoubtedly perfect colour combination. Because this area is where food is prepared, I made sure that I allowed for maximum hygiene. I have my oven and refrigerator built into the cabinet. My cooker is next to the wash basin and my little portable waste basket which comes with tight-fitting lid is directly below it. The kitchen also offers an extended table attached to the cabinet that can be utilised as an informal dining area. The toilets, not to be ignored, have also been scrupulously planned. To withstand continuous splashing of water, I have chosen durable, tinted sliding doors. I have also thrown rubber mats on the floor of the bathroom to prevent accidents such as slipping while bathing. In short, my relatively small kitchen has great utility value.

Finally, I take pleasure in describing the bedrooms which I have enjoyed decorating. The master bedroom has been furnished with a chrome-plated bed that comes with side tables, a made-to-order wardrobe that has an efficient storage system and a full length mirror to give me the pleasure of looking at myself from head to toe. I have used a range of fabrics from the Laura Ashley collection. The pale, muted blue flowery print blends well with the plain blue **textured wallpaper**.<sup>14</sup> The bed sheets, the curtains and even the cushion covers are of the same Laura Ashley collection.

The guestroom, however, makes use of bright yellow as its main hue. There are two single beds separated by a light yellow rug. The beds come with drawers for keeping clothes neat and tidy. The drawers can also be converted into a bed when the need arises.

To conclude, I feel proud and happy that I was able to **design**<sup>15</sup> and decorate my house so well without the **expertise**<sup>16</sup> and help of professional house **renovators**.<sup>17</sup> The emergence of my dreamhouse readily gives me the utmost pleasure and satisfaction.

1. heave /hi:v/ (v) *thốt ra* - heave a sign of relief : *thốt ra tiếng thở dài khuấy khỏa*
2. decor /'dekɔ:(r)/ (n) *cảnh trí*
3. exterior /ɪk'stɪərɪə(r)/ (n) *mặt ngoài, bên ngoài*
4. stark /stɑ:k/ (adj) *giản dị và không tô điểm*
5. ventilation /ventrɪ'leɪʃn/ (n) *sự thoáng khí, sự thông gió*
6. mahogany /mə'hɒɡəni/ (n) *gỗ gụ* - (adj) *có màu nâu phớt đỏ của gỗ gụ, màu bánh mật*
7. parquet /'pɑ:keɪ/ (n) *sàn gỗ*
8. archway /'ɑ:tʃweɪ/ (n) *lối đi có mái vòm, cổng tò vò*
9. velvet /'velvɪt/ (n) *nhung*
10. frill /frɪl/ (n) *diềm xếp nếp*
11. tassel /'tæsəl/ (n) *quả tua, núm tua*
12. supremacy /su:'preməsɪ/ (n) *uy thế, quyền lực tối cao*
13. chandelier /ʃændə'liə(r)/ (n) *đèn chùm*
14. textured wallpaper /,tekstʃəd 'wɔ:lpeɪpə(r)/ (n) *giấy dán tường ráp*
15. design /dɪ'zaɪn/ (v) *thiết kế*
16. expertise /ekspɜ:'ti:z/ (n) *kiến thức hoặc kỹ năng tinh thông trong một lĩnh vực nào đó*
17. renovator /'renəveɪtə(r)/ (n) *người phục chế (một công trình xây dựng)*

### 53. A THUNDERSTORM<sup>1</sup> *MỘT CƠN MƯA GIÔNG*

In the **tropics**<sup>2</sup> we often have thunderstorms. They do not last very long, perhaps for an hour or so, but they can cause **havoc**<sup>3</sup> during that short time.

One evening, at about 6 o'clock, I was sitting in front of my house just relaxing and doing nothing in particular. There were some white clouds blocking the blue sky. There was no hint of rain. It was just a pleasant warm evening, very normal.

Then I heard a distant **rumble**<sup>4</sup> of thunder. It was so faint that I thought I might have imagined it. Gradually the rumbling became more distinct. I looked towards the sky and still could not see any hint of rain. White clouds still dominate the sky.

The rumbling grew louder and louder. Very quickly the eastern sky turned black. The speed at which the black clouds appeared **astonished**<sup>5</sup> me. In a few minutes I could feel cool wind blowing from the blackened sky. In another few minutes the whole sky was **engulfed**<sup>6</sup> by black **swirling**<sup>7</sup> clouds. The wind increased in intensity. I could see the trees bent **precariously**<sup>8</sup> to one side as though they were going to fall over or get blown away like feathers.

Suddenly I heard a very loud **roar**<sup>9</sup> above the rumbling of thunder and the howling of wind. The roar became louder and louder. It sounded like a gigantic train approaching though it certainly was not one. The sound was quite unsettling. I looked in the direction of the roar and saw a white curtain of approaching rain.

Next second it was upon us. The corrugated iron roof of my house **rattled**<sup>10</sup> shakily as the pouring rain crashed down upon it. I ran into the house. The storm was in full swing.

Flashes of lightning lit up the darkened sky followed by cracks of thunder as though in reply. Some flashes of lightning came dangerously close to our house. The following cracks of thunder were immediate and deafening. I saw my father utter a silent prayer. My kid sister had her palms against her ears while safely enclosed in my mother's arms.

The  **fury**<sup>11</sup> of the storm was incredible. I looked out the window to see a white **blur**<sup>12</sup> of rain that cut visibility to a few feet. The rain came down at a large angle driven on by the wind. The noise of rain on the roof was so loud that we could not even hear ourselves talk, much less talk to each other. All we could do was to stay in the house and wait for the storm to blow over. We also hoped that lightning would not strike us and the wind would not blow the roof away.

So for about an hour the storm **raged**<sup>13</sup> while we waited. Then as suddenly as it came the storm rained itself out. Clear blue skies appeared and soon the black clouds disappeared. The rain got less and stopped. The wind stopped blowing.

I stepped out onto the cool wet grass to breathe in the cool air. It was quite an exhilarating feeling to do this immediately after a thunderstorm. Everything felt so fresh and clean. It was as though the storm had just given the earth a thorough cleaning. Come to think of it, it just might have done that.

After checking my house and finding no serious damage, I took a walk around the neighbourhood to see what damage the storm had done to the trees and other houses. I was sure I could see plenty of this.

1. thunderstorm /'θʌndə(r)stɔ:m/ (n) *bão có sấm sét và thường mưa to*
2. tropics /'trɒpɪks/ (n) *vùng nhiệt đới (vùng nằm giữa hai vĩ tuyến 23°27' về phía Bắc và Nam đường xích đạo)*
3. havoc /'hævək/ (n) *sự tàn phá*
4. rumble /'rʌmbəl/ (n) *tiếng động âm âm, ùng ùng*
5. astonish /ə'stɒnɪʃ/ (v) *làm ngạc nhiên*
6. engulf /ɪn'gʌlf/ (v) *(về biển, lửa, mây, v.v...) vây bọc (cái gì) hoặc làm (cái gì) biến mất*
7. swirl /swɜ:l/ (v) *cuộn, xoay, cuốn đi*
8. precarious /preɪ'keəriəs/ (adj) *không vững, nghiêng ngả, chênh vênh* - precariously /-li/ (adv)
9. roar /rɔ:(r)/ (n) *tiếng gầm, tiếng rống, tiếng âm âm*
10. rattle /'rætl/ (v) *kêu lách cách*
11. fury /'fjʊəri/ (n) *cơn giận dữ điên cuồng và mãnh liệt*
12. blur /blɜ:(r)/ (n) *vật xuất hiện lơ mơ không rõ nét*
13. rage /reɪdʒ/ (v) *(về cơn bão, đám cháy, v.v...) vẫn tiếp tục hoành hành dữ dội*

## 54. WATCHING A SUNSET BY THE SEA NGẮM CẢNH HOÀNG HÔN TRÊN BIỂN

We arrived at the beach at about 6.30 in the evening. My cousin parked the car under a tree and we all got out.

The smell of the sea was unmistakable. A gentle breeze blew. I stepped out of my sandals onto the soft sand.

My cousin, two of our friends and I had come to the seaside just to watch the sun set. My cousin assured us that we would not be disappointed for he had seen it setting before and he said it was beautiful. We just had to see for ourselves.

We sat on the sand and **gazed**<sup>1</sup> at the western horizon. White and grey clouds could be seen but the sun was well hidden behind them. Nothing **spectacular**<sup>2</sup> was happening and I felt a bit of impatience rising. I waited.

Presently the white and grey clouds began to change colour. First they took on orange **hues**.<sup>3</sup> Then shades of red and yellow could be seen. In a short time the whole western sky seem to be **ablaze**<sup>4</sup> with a wild **splash**<sup>5</sup> of gold, red, orange and yellow. I gazed at the spectacle in wonder. What a **magnificent**<sup>6</sup> sight it was.

I tried to focus on a particular part of the colourful scene but found that the colours were constantly changing. They changed very slowly and subtly although the scene appeared very still. A **streak**<sup>7</sup> of gold here turned yellow and a splash of red there **dissolved**<sup>8</sup> into hues of orange. It was quite impossible to describe really this great wonder of nature in action.

Shortly the hues became darker and hints of black were visible. The sun itself was visible for a moment appearing like a huge egg **yolk**.<sup>9</sup> Then it began to disappear into the horizon. The shades of black became more obvious.

Finally I watched the sun slowly sink into the sea. However the sky remained reddish even though the sun could no longer be seen.

Suddenly, everything was dark. The sun had set and night took over. I became aware of mosquitoes attacking me. My cousin said it was time to go home.

We got into car. Indeed it had been a wonderful experience.

1. gaze (at) /geɪz/ (v) nhìn chăm chăm vào ai / cái gì

2. spectacular /spek'tækjələ(r)/ (adj) ngoạn mục, đẹp mắt

3. hue /hju:/ (n) màu, sắc thái hoặc sự chuyển màu

4. ablaze /ə'bleɪz/ (adj) đang cháy, cháy rực

5. splash /splæʃ/ (n) mảng màu sáng

6. magnificent /mæg'nɪfɪsnt/ (adj) tráng lệ, lộng lẫy

7. streak /stri:k/ (n) vạch, vết hoặc dải nhỏ, dài có màu sắc hoặc chất liệu khác với chung quanh

8. dissolve /dɪ'zɒlv/ (v) tan biến đi, phai mờ đi

9. yolk /jɒk/ (n) lòng đỏ trứng

## 55. AN EVENING ON THE BEACH MỘT BUỔI CHIỀU TRÊN BÃI BIỂN

Night was falling. The setting sun's red rays lit up the sky above the western horizon. I could see an oil tanker making its way across the sea just on the horizon.

Soon the sun disappeared below the horizon and the sky turned dark but my two friends and I sat on the beach gazing at the place where the sun went down. Sunsets are **mesmerizing**<sup>1</sup> as we discovered. Only when the mosquitoes started coming in great numbers were we brought back to reality.

We picked ourselves up and walked towards a small pile of wood that we had made earlier. In the dark we could just make out shadows. My friends Francis had a **torchlight**.<sup>2</sup> He switched it on to show the way.

The night creatures were already busy with their activities. On our left where the land was I could hear the **shrill**<sup>3</sup> cries of the **cicadas**<sup>4</sup> and other insects. On our right the waves broke gently on the shore sending up sprays of **phosphorescent**<sup>5</sup> surf.<sup>6</sup>

The sounds and sights of nature were wonderful. The noise of occasional traffic along a road nearby was the only blemish to the otherwise perfect natural surroundings. The three of us were perhaps the only other blemishes. We had the torchlight on and soon we were going to light a **bonfire**.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless I proceeded to pour some **kerosene**<sup>8</sup> onto the pile of wood and put a match to it. Slowly but steadily the fire grew. Soon we were **basking**<sup>9</sup> in the orange glow of the bonfire. Salleh, my other friend, brought out the snacks and drinks from a bag. We had come to the beach to relax and enjoy ourselves.

A bonfire can be mesmerizing too and so we spent a good two hours eating, drinking, talking and singing around it. A number of people appeared and we invited them to share in our little revelry. We did not know any of them, but it did not matter. All I knew was that we enjoyed ourselves in the warm glow of the bonfire which was a far cry from the cold stares of people on an ordinary street.

However all good things must come to an end. The fire slowly died down and darkness regained its mastery. We said goodbye to our visitors and cleaned up the fireplace.

Then we walked along the shoreline towards where Salleh had parked his car a short distance away. Crabs both large and small scurried away at our approach. A gentle breeze rustled among the coconut palms. The black sky was full of **glistening**<sup>10</sup> stars. It felt good to be alive.

Finally we reached the car. We dumped our things in the boot and got into the car ourselves. Salleh started the car and soon we were headed home after spending a wonderful evening on the beach.

1. mesmerize /'mezməraɪz/ (v) thu hút sự chú ý (của ai) hoàn toàn
2. torchlight /'tɔ:tʃlaɪt/ (n) đèn pin, đèn bấm
3. shrill /ʃrɪl/ (adj) (về âm thanh, giọng nói, v.v...) the thé, inh ỏi, chói tai
4. cicada /sɪ'kɑ:də/ (n) con ve sầu
5. phosphorescent /fɒsfə'resnt/ (adj) phát ra ánh sáng – lân quang
6. surf /sɜ:f/ (n) bọt trắng trên sóng đánh vào bờ

7. bonfire /'bɒnfʌɪə(r)/ (n) ngọn lửa to ở ngoài trời để đốt rác hoặc đốt trong các dịp lễ hội
8. kerosene /'kerəsi:n/ (n) dầu hỏa
9. bask /bæsk/ (v) sưởi (lửa), phơi (nắng)
10. glisten /'glɪstn/ (v) long lanh, lấp lánh

## 56. THE SCENE IN MY TOWN EARLY IN THE MORNING

### CẢNH THỊ TRẤN VÀO BUỔI BAN MAI

Six o'clock in the morning and the town is already **astir**.<sup>1</sup> Newspaper vendors with loads of paper on their motorcycles make their rounds. Sometimes they can hardly be seen because the newspapers cover their headlights. They take some risks riding around like this, but I suppose they are used to it.

I am **accompanying**<sup>2</sup> my mother to the Lake Gardens. She goes there every morning to practise Tai Chi with a group of friends. It is a good idea because the air is so fresh and cool in the morning. However it is still dark so I escort her there.

We walk under the street lights towards our destination. On the way we see people already on their way to work. Some are in their cars. Some ride motorcycles and some wait for their buses by the road. I can see some school children too. Some of them are waiting near the yet unopened gate of their school. They are so early. I too have to go to school but I do not have to go that early.

We pass a tea stall that have opened for business. I can see some dark figures huddled under the stall. I guess these people are having their breakfast. I can see the stall owner "pulling" a mug of tea. The stall is situated under the street lamp, so it is not completely dark. It is clever of the owner to position his stall thus. He saves on having to light up his stall.

Our destination nears as we leave the road and enter a small footpath. This is a **shortcut**<sup>3</sup> to where my mother practises Tai Chi behind a government building. After walking a short distance past some tall trees we reach our destination.

A group of about fifteen to twenty people are already there. I can see them **limbering**<sup>4</sup> up in the light of the street lamps. They are mostly older men and women in their fifties and above. They greet my mother. She begins to limber up too. As she is with her friends I tell her that I am going home to get ready for school.

I **retrace**<sup>5</sup> my steps past the trees and come onto the road again. At the tea stall I stop to have a glass on **ginger**<sup>6</sup> tea before going home. The eastern sky is beginning to light up. I can see the first crack of dawn against the dark sky. Soon the sun will rise and the day will begin.

From somewhere among the trees I can hear a **magpie-robin**<sup>7</sup> sing its sweet song. It is so pleasant to hear it. Other birds start up too. Soon there is a **chorus**<sup>8</sup> of **twittering**<sup>9</sup> and **chattering**<sup>10</sup> all around me.

However I have to leave these beautiful sounds behind. I finish my drink and pay for it. I walk toward my house to get ready for school.

1. astir /ə'stɜ:(r)/ (adj) ra khỏi giường, trở dậy

2. accompany /ə'kʌmpəni/ (v) tháp tùng, hộ tống

3. shortcut /'ʃɔ:tkʌt/ (n) đường tắt

4. limber (up) /'lɪmbə(r)/ (v) làm những động tác khởi động trước khi chơi thể thao, v.v...

5. retrace /ri:'treɪs/ (v) trở lại hoặc lặp lại y hệt (một hành trình, v.v...)

6. ginger /'dʒɪndʒə(r)/ (n) cây gừng, củ gừng

7. magpie-robin /,mæɡpaɪ 'rɒbɪn/ (n) loài chim ác là giống chim cổ đỏ

8. chorus /'kɔ:rəs/ (n) dàn hợp xướng

9. twitter /'twɪtə(r)/ (v) (về chim chóc) kêu lú lú

10. chatter /'tʃætə(r)/ (v) (về chim, khỉ, v.v...) hót lú lo, kêu chí chóc

## 57. THE SOUNDS OF NATURE HEARD IN MY AREA

### ÂM THANH CỦA THIÊN NHIÊN NƠI TÔI Ở

The best time to hear the sounds of nature is late in the night when most human activities have stopped and nature is intimately present.

I have, on many occasions, stepped outside my house late at night. The very first thing that **strikes**<sup>2</sup> me is the **immense**<sup>2</sup> **stillness**<sup>3</sup> of nature. Stillness is not silence. Rather it is a beauty that makes the environment seem so peaceful and perfect. Within the stillness many sounds can be heard, but the stillness is not **disturbed**.<sup>4</sup>

The shrill cries of the cicadas are very evident. These sharp **high-pitched**<sup>5</sup> sounds **pierce**<sup>6</sup> through the night, but as I said earlier, they do not disturb the peace. In fact they are part of the peace.

On a distant tree, a night-jar makes its "tok, tok" sound. Somewhere else the bark of a dog can be heard. Over by the stream, frogs sing out a **croaking**<sup>7</sup> **symphony**.<sup>8</sup> A breeze springs up and **whistles**<sup>9</sup> through the stately coconut palms. The leaves of the huge angasana trees rustle in unison. All is peaceful, in perfect balance with one another. I take in the wonder of nature. Even the **buzzing**<sup>10</sup> of mosquitoes around my head seems part of it all.

Suddenly a youth on a motorcycle whizzes by, **shattering**<sup>11</sup> the stillness. My senses are **jolted**<sup>12</sup> for a moment. This unnatural sound is certainly out of balance with nature. But as the sound of the motorcycle recedes into the distance, stillness reigns again. Everything regains the balance.

I return to my house. Something inside me has been touched by the beauty of nature. I feel good. I go to sleep with the beautiful feeling.

In the daytime it is not so easy to hear the sounds of nature, but they can be heard if I am observant. Early in the morning just after the sun rises, the birds start to sing. Magpie-robins, mynahs, spotted doves, sparrows and bulbubs all sing out their songs. It is a bit strange but the other members of my family do not seem to hear them. Perhaps their ears have been conditioned to hear only man-made sounds to the point the unobtrusive sounds of nature cannot be heard any more. But I do hear them. The sounds of nature are sweet and gentle, quite the opposite of man-made sounds.

To hear the sounds of nature in the midst of man-made sounds, all I have to do is to listen without trying. Man-made sounds force their presence onto our ears. The sounds of nature do not force, so we have to be attentive. They can be heard. The **clicking**<sup>13</sup> of a gecko lizard, the **patter**<sup>14</sup> of rain on the roof, the roar of thunder, the howl of the wind, the **rustling**<sup>15</sup> of leaves - all are as alive as the ears that can hear them. I have ears that can hear the sweet sounds of nature and I am glad for it.

1. strike /straɪk/ (v) có tác động đến (ai), gây ấn tượng (với ai)
2. immensely /ɪ'mensli/ (adv) ở mức độ lớn, hết sức
3. stillness /'stɪlnɪs/ (n) trạng thái tĩnh lặng
4. disturb /'dɪstɜ:b/ (v) làm náo động, khuấy rối
5. high-pitched /haɪ pɪtʃt/ (adj) (về âm thanh) ở biên độ cao
6. pierce /'pɪəs/ (v) xuyên qua, chọc thủng

7. croak /krəʊk/ (v) (về ếch, nhái, v.v...) kêu ồm ộp
8. symphony /ˈsɪmfəni/ (n) bản nhạc giao hưởng
9. whistle /ˈwɪsl/ (v) chuyển động nhanh với tiếng kêu như tiếng huýt gió – réo qua
10. buzzing /ˈbʌzɪŋ/ (n) tiếng kêu vo ve
11. shatter /ˈʃætə(r)/ (v) phá vỡ, làm tiêu tan
12. jolt /dʒɒlt/ (v) làm xóc lên
13. clicking /ˈklɪkɪŋ/ (n) tiếng tặc lưỡi
14. patter /ˈpætə(r)/ (n) tiếng lộp độp (của mưa, v.v...)
15. rustle /ˈrʌsl/ (v) kêu xào xạt, kêu sột soạt

## 58. THE SIGHTS, SOUNDS AND SMELLS ALONG A BUSY STREET *CẢNH VẬT, ÂM THANH VÀ MÙI HƯƠNG DẠC THEO MỘT ĐƯỜNG PHỐ ĐÔNG NGƯỜI*

I walk out of the well-lit, peaceful, cool air-conditioned comfort of the book shop. Immediately I was hit by a blast of hot air from the street. Wow, the difference is so great. Out on the five-foot way I break into a **sweat**.<sup>1</sup>

I walk down the five-foot way.

Next to the book shop are two **sundry**<sup>2</sup> shops. The smell **emanating**<sup>3</sup> from these shops **tingles**<sup>4</sup> my nose. The mixture of onion, garlic, dried fish, pepper and spices make a potent combination. I hold my breath for a moment as I walk quickly past the sundry shops. I always wonder how the people working inside the shops can stand the smell. Perhaps they are used to it.

There are many people walking along the five-foot ways on both sides of the street. It is about one o'clock in the afternoon and many office-workers are out for their lunch break. So I see these smartly dressed men and women hurrying towards the eating places further down the street.

The street has been made one-way some time ago to **cater**<sup>5</sup> for the ever increasing traffic volume. Lunch hour finds the street uncrossable. I want to cross to the other side. I look at the traffic. One look tells me that it is too dangerous to do so. The cars and motorcycles are moving at considerable speeds and they do not seem to be in the mood to make way for any **pedestrian**.<sup>6</sup> I decide to cross the street via the lights-controlled crossing down the street.

On my way towards the crossing I pass many other shops. They were mainly shops selling clothes, shoes and watches. Near the crossing is a supermarket. Throngs of people can be seen at the entrance. A beggar sits on the steps, arms outstretched, eyes leading for **alms**.<sup>7</sup> I drop 20 sen into his unwashed palm. He also **stinks**<sup>8</sup> of cheap liquor. I reach the crossing. The lights are red so I wait with a group of people. Cars speed by sending their **obnoxious**<sup>9</sup> fumes into the waiting people. However no one **flinches**.<sup>10</sup> A bit of smoke is not going to prevent anyone from crossing the street.

Presently the cars screech to a halt behind the white lines across the road except for one that makes a dash past even though the lights have changed to red for him. Some pedestrians shake their fists, but no one is hit. The pedestrians are too seasoned to trust the traffic lights completely.

I cross briskly with my group to the other side. The group from the other side cross over to our previous side.

Once across I make a bee-line for the bus-stand. There are too many people trying to crowd under the shade of the stand. There is no place for me. I stand under the sun.

The smell of food wafts over to the bus stand from the food stalls nearby. My stomach growls in response. My bus comes. I board it with several other people. There are no more seats available. So I stand on the aisle. Soon the bus picks up speed and leaves the busy street towards home where my lunch awaits.

1. sweat /swet/ (n) mồ hôi

2. sundry /'sʌndri/ (adj) tạp nham, đủ thứ

3. emanate /'eməneɪt/ (v) tỏa ra, bắt nguồn từ (cái gì)
4. tingle /'tɪŋɡl/ (v) có cảm giác ngứa ran như kiến bò
5. cater /'keɪtə(r)/ (v) phục vụ, cung cấp, đáp ứng
6. pedestrian /pɪ'destrɪən/ (n) khách bộ hành
7. alms /ɑ:mz/ (n) của bố thí
8. stink /stɪŋk/ (v) bốc mùi nồng nặc và khó chịu
9. obnoxious /əb'noʊkjəs/ (adj) rất khó chịu, kinh tởm, đáng ghét
10. flinch /flɪntʃ/ (v) nao núng, chùn bước, ngần ngại

## 59. THE SIGHTS, SOUNDS AND SMELLS ALONG A DESERTED COUNTRY LANE<sup>1</sup> *CẢNH VẬT, ÂM THANH VÀ MÙI HƯƠNG DỌC THEO CON ĐƯỜNG QUÊ VẮNG NGƯỜI*

A cool breeze blows into my face. The air is fresh and clear. I hold my fishing gear in my hand as I **trudge**<sup>2</sup> down the country lane towards my favourite fishing hole.

The lane is a narrow one seldom used by four-wheeled vehicles. It is more like a well-used foot-path but I can see motorcycle tyre marks on the exposed earth. Anyhow at the moment it is all very still except for the sounds of birds singing, insects screeching and mosquitoes buzzing.

The mosquitoes are a real nuisance. I keep having to hit them as they alight on my body to have a feed. There must be hundreds of them. Despite applying insect **repellent**<sup>3</sup> on my clothes, these tiny **horde**<sup>4</sup> of winged blood-suckers<sup>5</sup> still come.

Both sides of the lane are covered with thick **undergrowth**.<sup>6</sup> Behind the undergrowth is a rubber **estate**.<sup>7</sup> Further back is the beginning of a **virgin**<sup>8</sup> jungle. I can hear the distinct sounds of this jungle even from a distance.

A bird takes flight from the bushes as I walk past it. It **squawks**<sup>9</sup> noisily. I pause a moment to watch it fly up and alight on the branch of a tree. It is a black bird with two long tail feathers trailing along prominently as it flies.

Behind me a hidden magpie-robin breaks into its sweet melodious song. It is always a pleasure to hear a magpie-robin sing. Its song has a refreshing whistle-tone to it. I whistle in reply.

We have a lively whistling exchange for a minute until my lips become tired. Then I admit defeat and leave the magpie-robin to sing on his own.

The smell of country air is very different from city air. There are no vehicle fumes here. The only smell that can be considered a bit unpleasant is the smell of cow-dung. I **spy**<sup>10</sup> some tell-tale greenish **blobs**<sup>11</sup> along the lane. I **tread**<sup>12</sup> carefully past them. Some cows have gone by this lane just a bit before me. The dung is still wet. In fact I can smell those fellows as well close by.

As if in direct response two bleary-eyed individuals appear before me. They look at me waving their tails to chase the flies away. I look at them. They seem harmless so I walk by. They watch me go as they chew on the grass in their mouths.

Finally I reach my fishing hole. It is about ten metres from the lane. I leave the lane and head towards the pond. Gleefully I put down my fishing gear and prepare to have a pleasant evening there.

1. lane /leɪn/ (n) *đường hẹp ở nông thôn, giữa các bờ gò hoặc bờ đất – đường làng*

2. trudge /trʌdʒ/ (v) *lê bước*

3. repellent /rɪ'pelənt/ (n) *chất thuốc để chống côn trùng*

4. horde /hɔːd/ (n) *bầy, lũ, đám*

5. blood-sucker /blʌd 'sʌkə(r)/ (n) *động vật hút máu*

6. undergrowth /'ʌndəgrəʊθ/ (n) *tầng cây thấp, bụi cây*

7. estate /ɪ'steɪt/ (n) *khu đất rộng mở mang nhằm một mục đích cụ thể – đồn điền*

8. virgin /'vɜːdʒɪn/ (adj) *nguyên sinh, nguyên sơ, nguyên si*

9. squawk /skwɔːk/ (v) *(về chim) kêu quang quác*

10. spy /spaɪ/ (v) *quan sát, nhìn, chú ý đến*
11. blob /blɒb/ (n) *khối nhỏ tròn hoặc đốm máu*
12. tread /tred/ (v) *giẫm, đạp*

## 60. THE SCENE AT A CROWDED FOOD CENTRE

### QUANG CẢNH MỘT TRUNG TÂM BÁN THỨC ĂN ĐÔNG NGƯỜI

My favourite food centre comes alive only at night, every night. During the day it is a **municipal**<sup>1</sup> council car park. At night food **vendors**<sup>2</sup> are allowed to make use of the place to sell their food. They have to pay a small fee to use the place, but I am sure they can afford it.

With a couple of friends, I reach the food centre at about seven in the evening. The sky is already darkening and the vendors have their portable **fluorescent**<sup>3</sup> lights switched on. I walk between two rows of food stalls.

The very first thing that strikes me is the mouth-watering smell coming from the satay stall. Ah, I can see the satay seller half hidden in the clouds of smoke from his **charcoal**<sup>4</sup> fire. There are many people seated around the tables behind him obviously enjoying the very delicious satay. We are in luck. A group of people at a table is just leaving. So my friends and I quickly occupy the table before some other people do.

The satay seller knows me for I often come to have some satay to eat. He nods his head to acknowledge my presence. I wave in return. In a minute or two, a steaming plate of satay is placed on our table, followed by some pieces of cucumber and onion. Our **gravy**<sup>5</sup> then arrives and we proceed to put the lovely pieces of meat into our mouths.

For five minutes or so I am oblivious of my surroundings. All I do is to eat and eat until nothing is left on the plates. When all the food is finished we order glasses of sweet **sugar cane juice**<sup>6</sup> to drink. I finish off two glasses. How wonderful it is to have such food and drink. We pay for the food and drinks and leave the satay stall. We decide to walk among the stalls to have a look.

It is about seven thirty and the tables around the stalls are nearly filled with people. Young and old, fat and thin, people of all shapes and sizes come here to enjoy in the many varieties of food available. I see the mee seller feverishly at work trying to cope with the orders for his mee. Some of his customers are already eating. Chopsticks and spoons dig into the bowls of mee. Other customers wait patiently for their food.

Next to the mee stall is the tea stall. The fat man selling tea there is busy making teh tarik. He pours the tea from one cup to another with practised ease. Not a drop is spilled. Some passers-by stop just to watch him pouring the tea. He pours the tea from even higher. A small boy claps. The fat man is obviously very pleased. He grins happily.

I look around me. There are stalls selling rojak and mee goreng, sup kambing, sup ayam, koay teow, popiah, chicken rice, fried rice, rice with fish, fruits, drinks etc.. The variety is staggering. No wonder the place is so popular. The food is cheap and good. It is great to be able to eat them. It is great that we have food centres like this in our country.

1. municipal /mju:'nɪsɪpl/ (adj) thuộc thành phố hay thị xã có chính quyền địa phương riêng

2. vendor /'vendə(r)/ (n) người bán

3. fluorescent /flɔ:'resnt/ (adj) (đèn) huỳnh quang, (đèn) nêon

4. charcoal /'tʃɑ:kəʊl/ (n) than củi

5. gravy /'greɪvɪ/ (n) nước sauce làm bằng nước thịt tiết ra khi xào nấu

6. sugar cane juice /,su:gə(r) keɪn 'dʒu:s/ (n) nước mía ép

7. satay, mee, rojak, sup kambing, v.v. tên các món ăn của người Thái

## 61. THE SCENE IN A SHOPPING COMPLEX

### *QUAN CẢNH MỘT TRUNG TÂM BUÔN BÁN*

In every large town now there are dozens of shopping complexes to cater for the ever increasing population. These complexes contain a variety of shops. They sell shoes, sports goods, clothes, computers, video and audio equipment, furniture, musical instruments, cameras and films, food, drinks and many other things.

There is one shopping complex in my town that is frequented by many people. I would say that it is the most popular one in town.

The moment I enter the shopping complex via its large entrance I virtually step into a different world from the street outside. The air in the complex is distinctly cooler. The air-conditioning is very effective. No wonder I see many youngster just **loitering**<sup>1</sup> about the place. It gets pretty uncomfortable outside under the scorching sun.

There are armed guards in uniform stationed near a couple of **goldsmith shops**.<sup>2</sup> Two of these guards look old and **feeble**.<sup>3</sup> They must be retired army or police personnel. In the event of a robbery I doubt they would be of any use. Judging by the bored look on their faces, the shops might just as well have no guards at all.

On this ground floor of the complex there are many other shops. From where I stand near the goldsmith shops I can see people crowding near a computer shop. An audio tape shop blasts out the latest hits through two giant **loudspeakers**.<sup>4</sup> A few metres away, behind the **receptionist's counter**,<sup>5</sup> a pretty girl seems to be speaking into a microphone. I can hardly hear what she is saying. The music from the loudspeakers is too loud.

There is also a supermarket on the ground floor. From **afar**<sup>6</sup> I can see that it is just like any supermarket. Shelves after shelves are stocked with cans, packets, bottles and tins of common items like milk, beverages, sweets etc. The **salesgirls**<sup>7</sup> seem very busy stacking the goods onto the shelves. Shoppers seem very busy removing them from the shelves.

I walk towards the elevator that is going up. I pause to let two persons before me get on and then I get on too.

The first floor look similar to the ground floor except it has no supermarket. Instead there are many video **arcades**.<sup>8</sup> I can see figures of youngsters inside **hunched**<sup>9</sup> over the consoles feverishly working their fingers trying to beat the electronic machines. I used to be just as crazy as they but I have got over the madness. The machines are addictive and the addicts spend large amounts of money feeding them.

I proceed to the second floor via the elevator.

Again the air is filled with the sound of video games in progress. I walk past many arcades and other shops. Here on the second floor there are less people. Most of the shoppers are concentrated on the ground floor. That is where the bulk of the complex's business is done. Up here there is more room for walking and browsing. The shopkeepers also are friendlier. I walk leisurely around the whole floor.

I stop by at a music shop to have a look at the guitars on sale. They are too expensive for me. I leave.

Next I wander into my friend's sports shop. I chat with him about the coming Thomas Cup battle. He **laments**<sup>10</sup> about the weaknesses of our team. He also laments about the

lack of customers in his shop up here on the second floor. He says he will move down if he can find a place.

Finally I leave my friend's shop and descend straight down to the ground floor. I notice the great difference in the number of shoppers compared to the higher floors. Perhaps my friend does have a point.

Anyway I had come to the shopping complex to cool down a bit. I feel very much better now, good enough to go out under the scorching sun again.

1. loiter /'lɔɪtə(r)/ (v) *lạ cà, lảng vảng*
2. goldsmith shop /'gəʊldsmɪθ ʃɒp/ (v) *tiệm vàng*
3. feeble /'fi:bl/ (adj) *yếu ớt*
4. loudspeaker /'laʊdspɪ:kə(r)/ (n) *cái loa*
5. receptionist's counter /rɪˌsepʃənɪsts 'kaʊntə(r)/ (n) *quầy tiếp tân*
6. afar /ə'fɑ:(r)/ (adv) *xa, cách xa* - from afar (idm) *từ một khoảng cách xa*
7. salesgirl /'seɪlzɡɜ:l/ (n) *nữ nhân viên bán hàng*
8. arcade /ɑ:'keɪd/ (n) *khu vực có mái vòm*
9. hunch /hʌntʃ/ (v) *cúi xuống, khom xuống*
10. lament /lə'ment/ (v) *than vãn (về cái gì)*

## 62. THE SCHOOL MID-MORNING BREAK GIỜ RA CHƠI TRONG BUỔI HỌC SÁNG

The lunch-bell **peals**.<sup>1</sup> Pens and pencils are hurriedly pushed into their cases. Files click shut, **satchels**<sup>2</sup> snap and chairs desks get dragged aside. **Scuffling**<sup>3</sup> feet race towards the canteen.

The early birds are already seated on the benches, seriously eating away. An appetising blend of aroma floats about the canteen, but it is the strong smell of hot mee soup that pulls a large crowd to queue in front of its stall. The others discouraged by the long queue head to other stalls after casting wishful glances at the huge steaming pot of hot soup.

On the other side of the stall, helpers work feverishly to serve these hungry mouths. Steaming bowls of soup, fried rice, fried chicken and sandwiches are passed in exchange for coins that are tossed into **tinkling**<sup>4</sup> money baskets. The change from notes are thrust into ready palms that quickly pocket the **jingling**<sup>5</sup> coins.

The canteen grows crowded. Orders are shouted above the constant drone of busy hungry people. Someone starts **banging**<sup>6</sup> the automatic drink dispenset. Finally, something clicks, and his frustrated bangs are rewarded with a glass of thirst **quenching**<sup>7</sup> drink.

People keep **weaving**<sup>8</sup> their way through the crowd, cautiously carrying bowls of soup or plates of hot curry. Some push through the crowd and get yelled at. The benches are crowded and there is not a vacant seat left, so some people wait for others to finish their food. The benches are filled with all kinds of people. Some literally plough through their food, **slurping**<sup>9</sup> away. Others eat slowly, licking every mouthful. Yet others sit very **complacently**<sup>10</sup> with their home cooked packets of "nasi bungkus" or home-made sandwich loaves. Then there are the perpetual bookworms with a fork in their right hands and a book **propped up**<sup>11</sup> in the left. The weight watchers determinedly sit in a corner **nibbling**<sup>12</sup> at their crackers, **sipping**<sup>13</sup> calorie free drinks and chatter and **gossip**<sup>14</sup> to pass the time. Some of them group together and sing the latest hit tune with the throbbing beats blaring out of mini cassette players. Occasionally a small group gathers in a corner to try to recapture childhood thrills in a game of "chapteh" or marbles. These games, however, do not last long as they are promptly **booed**<sup>15</sup> at by the onlookers who assume they are a "mature" lot. At the other corner hot debates on classroom projects and homework assignments take place as usual.

The bell peals again to signal that the lunch break is over. Stomachs **belch**,<sup>16</sup> dieters sigh with relief, the bookworm who was so **engrossed**<sup>17</sup> in his notes suddenly rushes to get himself a quick drink. The crowd **disperses**<sup>18</sup> immediately back to the classrooms. A cat and a few birds appear quickly to **scavenge**<sup>19</sup> the chicken and fish bones and **crumbs**<sup>20</sup> felt behind on the table after yet another regular lunchbreak at school.

1. peal /pi:l/ (v) *đánh (chuông) từng hồi; vang/ngân/rung từng hồi*
2. satchel /'sætʃəl/ (n) *túi đeo vai của học sinh*
3. scuffle /'skʌfl/ (v) *ẩu đả, tranh giành*
4. tinkle /'tɪŋkl/ (v) *kêu leng keng*

5. jingle /'dʒɪŋɡl/ (v) *kêu leng keng, kêu xúng xoéng*
6. bang /bæŋɡ/ (v) *đấm, đánh, nện, đập (râm râm)*
7. quenching /'kwentʃɪŋ/ (v) *(làm) hết khát, đã khát*
8. weave /wi:v/ (v) *len lỏi, luồn lách*
9. slurp /slɜ:p/ (v) *(nhai) nhóp nhép, (húp) sù sụp*
10. complacent /kəm'pleɪsnt/ (adj) *tự mãn, thỏa mãn* - complacently /-li/ (adv)
11. prop (up) /prɒp/ (v) *dựa, tựa, chống, đỡ*
12. nibble /'nɪbl/ (v) *cắn từng miếng nhỏ: gặm, nhấm*
13. sip /sɪp/ (v) *nhấp nháp, uống từng hớp*
14. gossip /'ɡɒsɪp/ (v) *tán gẫu, nói chuyện phiếm*
15. boo /bu:/ (v) *biểu thị sự phản đối hoặc chế giễu (ai / cái gì) bằng cách la ó*
16. belch /beltʃ/ (v) *ợ (hơi)*
17. engrossed /ɪn'grəʊst/ (adj) *mát mẻ, bị cuốn hút*
18. disperse /dɪ'spɜ:s/ (v) *giải tán*
19. scavenge /'skævɪndʒ/ (v) *(về thú vật hoặc chim) đào bới thức ăn đã bỏ đi để ăn*
20. crumb /krʌm/ (n) *mảnh vụn (bánh mì hoặc bánh qui)*

### 63. THE SCENE IN MY SCHOOL AFTER THE BELL RINGS FOR DISMISSAL<sup>1</sup> *QUANG CẢNH TRƯỜNG TÔI KHI CHUÔNG REO TAN HỌC*

The bell **punctures**<sup>2</sup> the silence in the school like a pin punctures a fully blown balloon. The whole school **explodes**<sup>3</sup> with loud cries of joy.

I quickly stuff my books into my bag and head out of the classroom. The teacher has already left. He is one of the first to leave. I am one of the last. We **jostle**<sup>4</sup> and push to get through the narrow door. Outside the classroom, the whole school is alive with activity. Everyone has a smile on his or her face, and why not? We are all going home after six hours of **slogging**<sup>5</sup> in school.

The younger children run towards their waiting buses or cars. The older ones walk briskly. There is laughter in the air as we merrily make our way out of school. Some of us have transport waiting for us. Some walk home. I am one of those who head towards the bicycle shed to get our bicycles.

I wait for others to get their bicycles before I get mine. Then I mount up and slowly make my way between other riders and pedestrians. The horde of children heading towards the school's main gate is quite **daunting**.<sup>6</sup> I have to be careful so that I do not knock into someone. I have missed a couple of times. Otherwise I manage to keep going although not as quick as I like.

I look around me. Like ants the children **stream out**<sup>7</sup> of the classrooms towards the gate. It is quite a sight watching this uniformed brigade. Someone shouts behind me. He asks me to go faster or get out of his way. I indicate to him that I cannot possibly move faster. He sighs. I move forward a bit.

There are some richer kids on motorcycles. They make a lot of noise on their machines. Obviously they have modified their exhaust pipes to make as much noise as possible. They press their horns incessantly adding to the discomfort of breathing in their bluish exhaust smoke. A few heated words are exchanged.

Gradually, the stream of children **peters**<sup>8</sup> out and movement becomes easier. The motorcycles disappear out of the main gate first, raising tempers and clouds of smoke. I pedal carefully in between those on foot. I stop to say something to a friend near the gate. The rest of the traffic stream past me.

When we finish talking, I look around. The school is **virtually**<sup>9</sup> empty. Almost everyone has gone. Only a few children wait for their cars under the shade of the angsana tree.

Then the teachers begin to leave the school. Most of them have cars. I watch them come out of the staff room and enter their cars. One by one they make their way out of the school. Some of them smile or wave at me. I smile or wave back.

Finally everything is quiet around me. I say goodbye to my friend, give the bicycle a push and soon I am on the road home.

1. dismissal /dɪs'mɪsəl/ (n) sự giải tán

2. puncture /'pʌŋktʃə(r)/ (v) đâm, chọc thủng

3. explode /ɪk'spləʊd/ (v) nổ tung, bùng nổ (đột ngột)

4. jostle /'dʒɒsl/ (v) chen lấn, xô đẩy

5. slog /slɒg/ (v) miệt mài, cặm cuội

6. daunting /'dɔːntɪŋ/ (*adj*) làm nản lòng, làm sợ hãi
7. stream (out) /striːm/ (*v*) đổ ra thành dòng
8. peter (out) /'piːtə(r)/ (*v*) biến mất dần
9. virtually /'vɜːtʃʊəlɪ/ (*adv*) hầu như, gần như

## 64. EVENINGS AT HOME *BUỔI TỐI TRONG GIA ĐÌNH*

On weekdays, evenings at home are pretty tame affairs. When the sun sets and it gets dark there is nothing very much I can do outside. So I usually remain indoors.

Usually I complete whatever homework that has to be done. Sometimes there is no homework so I **fool around**<sup>1</sup> with my baby sister. She is a load of fun and energy and there are a dozen things we can do together. She especially likes to read picture books and play with coloured pencils as any two-year-old would. So we go through her collection of pictures and colouring books. By eight in the evening, my mother would come and get her ready for bed.

After the baby has gone to sleep, my mother, my father, my elder brother, elder sister, younger sister and I would sit together in the dining room to have our dinner. My mother is a great cook and we enjoy our food tremendously. My elder sister is already a good cook. So she helps my mother with her cooking. I sometimes help out too, but I am not such a good one.

After dinner I wash up if it is my turn. The others **adjourn**<sup>2</sup> to the living room. My father usually watches television. My mother usually has unfinished household chores like ironing clothes to do. So she does them. We, the children, sometimes watch television or listen to the radio. At other times, when we feel like it, we sit down and play some board games like Monopoly and Ludo.

At nine o'clock my elder brother locks up the main gate and other doors. He has the task of making sure all the doors and windows are secure before we retire for the night. At about nine thirty, we usually go to bed to have a good night's sleep. If we go to bed too late, then it will be really difficult to get up on time for school next morning. I always make sure I have enough sleep every night. If there is something really worth watching on television then we may stay up a bit later. However my father insists that we all get to bed by ten thirty at the latest. We are all in bed by the time regardless of anything good on the television.

On weekends, evenings at home are a bit different from the usual. My elder brother, who is already in Form Six, gets to go out with his friends for an evening in town. We, the younger ones, are not allowed to go out unless we have good reasons to. Usually then we stay at home.

Since the next day is a holiday, we do not **bother**<sup>3</sup> to do any homework. We watch television as there are better shows during the weekend. Also our father allows us to stay up as late as we like as we do not have to get up early. At times we sit around our father while he tells us stories. He has many stories to tell about his younger days. We learn many things from what he tells us.

By midnight my elder brother will have to return from town as he is not allowed to come home later than that. Sometimes he buys back some **supper**<sup>4</sup> which we all share in before going to bed. Finally, when the clock has gone past twelve we all go to bed.

1. fool around /fu:l ə'raʊnd/ (v) *chòng ghẹo, nô đùa*

2. adjourn /ə'dʒɜ:n/ (v) *dời sang (nơi khác)*

3. bother /'bʊðə(r)/ (v) *dành thời gian hoặc chịu khó làm gì*

4. supper /'sʌpə(r)/ (n) *đồ ăn tối, bữa ăn tối*

## 65. THE BEAUTY OF NATURE VẺ ĐẸP CỦA THIÊN NHIÊN

In the evening I sit in front of my house and feel the soft gentle breeze caress my face and cool my body. The breeze is simply beautiful and nature gives it free to me. Actually nature gives this free to everyone, but it seems that not everyone is aware of this.

Sometimes the sky is immensely blue. White silvery clouds **glide**<sup>1</sup> almost **imperceptibly**<sup>2</sup> against it. The clouds are never the same as they change their shapes continuously. These things are more beauty that I perceive around me.

Some days when the sky turns black with thick heavy clouds, a distance curtain of falling rain can be seen. It appears as though some unseen hand is pouring water onto the land to **nourish**<sup>3</sup> it. The sight is beautiful and it makes me feel closer to the beauty of the Earth.

After a thunderstorm, the air is **crisp**<sup>4</sup> and cool. Birds come out and sing out their joy to life. I sing too as I **frolie**<sup>5</sup> on barefoot on the cool wet grass beside my house. The drogs croak joyfully. Even the insects seem to buzz and **shriek**<sup>6</sup> louder. I am sure they are all singing about how beautiful life is. Indeed it is.

In the night the stars make their appearane. Millions of these **twinkling**<sup>7</sup> jewels can be seen in the black sky. How **wondrous**<sup>8</sup> it is to gaze at the glory of the universe. No doubt I am just a tiny part of it, but to be able to take it in through my senses makes it even more wondrous.

At night the moon often makes its appearance. Sometimes it is round. Other times it is **crescent-shaped**<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless its presence adds to the beauty of the backdrop of stars in the far reaches of space. It is amazing that there are such things.

The little garden beside my house is filled with the things of nature. Little bees, butterflies and other insects fly among the flowers in search of food. The flowers themselves are brightly coloured with every possible combination of colours and hues. I feast my eyes on the scene of immense activity and again witness the beauty of nature's innumerable wonders.

1. glide /glaid/ (v) (về mây) trôi bông bênh

2. imperceptible /impə'septəbl/ (adj) không thể nhận thấy được bằng các giác quan - không rõ rệt - imperceptibly /-bli/ (adv)

3. nourish /'nʌrɪʃ/ (v) nuôi dưỡng

4. crisp /krɪsp/ (adj) (về không khí) khô lạnh

5. frolic /'frɒlɪk/ (v) nô đùa vui vẻ

6. shriek /ʃri:k/ (v) la hét

7. twinkle /'twɪŋkl/ (v) nhấp nháy, lấp lánh

8. wondrous /'wʌndrəs/ (adj) kỳ lạ

9. crescent-shaped /'kresnt ʃæpt/ (adj) có hình lưỡi liềm

## VĂN TƯỜNG THUẬT

Tường thuật là kể lại những sự việc có thật vừa mới xảy ra mà người viết trực tiếp chứng kiến, nhằm giúp người đọc hình dung được diễn biến cụ thể của những sự việc đó, đồng thời truyền đến người đọc những ý nghĩ, cảm xúc của mình trong khi chứng kiến sự việc.

### *Những yêu cầu chính*

- Phải hoàn toàn tôn trọng sự thật (không được hư cấu)
- Nêu được diễn biến của sự việc (theo trình tự thời gian hoặc không gian)
- Chọn lọc sự việc, làm rõ những sự việc chính, những chi tiết quan trọng, lướt qua những sự việc phụ, lược bỏ những chi tiết ngẫu nhiên, giúp người đọc vừa thấy cả toàn cục, vừa thấy được chi tiết.
- Biết kết hợp kỹ năng kể với miêu tả (tả cảnh, tả người...), giúp người đọc thấy được sự việc cụ thể, sống động, như đang xảy ra trước mắt.
- Trực tiếp hoặc gián tiếp nói lên ý nghĩ, thái độ, cảm xúc của người tường thuật.

## 66. A BURGLARY<sup>1</sup>

### MỘT VỤ TRỘM

It was a peaceful afternoon. I was doing my homework in my room when I heard a strange **grinding**<sup>2</sup> noise coming from next door.

Out of **curiosity**,<sup>3</sup> I looked out of my window. I was shocked to see my neighbour's metal gate lying on the ground and the door **ajar**.<sup>4</sup> As no one else was at home, I called up my father at his office. He told me to stay at home and wait for him to come back. I went back to the window and **peeped out**.<sup>5</sup> After a while, a **burly**<sup>6</sup> man came out of my neighbour's house with a big bag and quickly ran away.

Just then, my father came back with four policemen. I told them what I had seen. Immediately, two of the policemen went after the burglar. The rest of us went into my neighbour's house. The whole place had been **ransacked**.<sup>7</sup> Drawers were lying all over the place and the bedrooms were in a real mess. My neighbour happened to come back at that time and she was most **distressed**<sup>8</sup> to find her house **broken into**.<sup>9</sup>

The next morning, I saw the following headline in the newspaper : "Boy helps police catch burglar". I felt really proud of myself.

1. burglary /'bɜ:gləri/ (n) vụ trộm
2. grinding /'grɪndɪŋ/ (adj) tạo ra tiếng ken két (nhut thễ) do cọ xát
3. curiosity /kjʊrɪ'ʊsətɪ/ (n) tính tò mò
4. ajar /ə'dʒɑ:(r)/ (adj) (về cửa) hé mở
5. peep (out) /pi:p/ (v) ló, nhú lên từ từ hoặc một phần
6. burly /'bɜ:lɪ/ (adj) khỏe mạnh, lực lưỡng
7. ransack /'rænsæk/ (v) cướp bóc, cướp phá; lục soát
8. distressed /'dɪstrest/ (adj) phiền não, đau đớn
9. break into /breɪk ɪntə/ (v) đột nhập

## 67. A PICKPOCKET MỘT KẺ MÓC TÚI

I hate to travel on the MRT train in the evening because it is very crowded. I have to compete with other students and adults going home from work for seats.

This evening, I just managed to **squeeze**<sup>1</sup> into the train. There were no seats **available**,<sup>2</sup> so I stood by the door and looked at the people around me, trying to forget my discomfort. I looked at some of the passengers. One was sleeping, one was staring blankly into space and another kept putting his right hand in and out of his pocket. This last person has small **shifty**<sup>3</sup> eyes and he kept looking around. I turned away immediately when he caught me staring at him.

Out of curiosity, I looked at him again some minutes later. At that instant, I saw him **withdrawing**<sup>4</sup> his hand from a lady's handbag. In his hand was a purse ! Straight away, I pointed at him and shouted, "Pickpocket! Pickpocket!" Everyone was alerted, including the pickpocket.

As the pickpocket tried to get away, a few men quickly grabbed hold of him. He was caught and sent to the police-station. I was praised for my quick action and was glad that I had helped the lady get back her purse.

1. squeeze (into) /skwi:z/ (v) *dấn, đẩy mình vào, chen lách, v.v... qua một khe hẹp hoặc một khoảng hẹp*

2. available /ə'veɪləbl/ (adj) *có sẵn*

3. shifty /'ʃɪftɪ/ (adj) *gian xảo, có vẻ không lương thiện*

4. withdraw /wɪð'drɔ:/ (v) *rút (cái gì) trở về hoặc ra xa*

## 68. A ROBBERY

### MỘT VỤ CƯỚP

It happened on one Saturday evening. My mother and I went shopping to buy a gift for my father. After much thought my mother decided to buy a gold ring.

We went to a goldsmith's shop. The Sales Assistant showed us a lot of gold rings in various **designs**.<sup>1</sup> My mother was **enchanted**<sup>2</sup> by a ring with a **sparkling**<sup>3</sup> diamond on it. As we were admiring the ring, four men wearing **ski-mask**<sup>4</sup> **rushed**<sup>5</sup> into the shop. They ordered all the people to stand up against the wall with their hands raised above their heads. The four robbers were armed with guns. They were dressed in black and wore gloves on both hands. One of the men placed a brief case on the counter and ordered one of the Sales Assistants to empty the trays of jewelleries into the briefcase. The Sales Assistant was shaking with fear, and quickly started to do what he was ordered to do.

I notice that the burglar alarm was not far from where I was standing. I slowly moved towards the alarm, and tried to reach it without being noticed. After much difficulty I managed to get close to the alarm. I cautiously lifted my right leg and pressed the button. The alarm started to ring loudly. The robbers **panicked**,<sup>6</sup> they **grabbed**<sup>7</sup> the briefcase and rushed to a waiting car and drove away. I rushed out of the shop to see the number of the car. I quickly memorised the number of the **getaway car**.<sup>8</sup>

A few minutes later the police arrived. I told them the number of the robbers' car. They immediately informed headquarters to put up road blocks. They questioned us before letting us go. Photographers took photos of the scene of the robbery.

Next day my father read in the papers that the robbers were caught and the stolen goods recovered.

1. design /di'zain/ (n) mẫu mã, kiểu mẫu

2. enchanted /ɪn'tʃɑ:ntɪd/ (adj) bị mê hoặc

3. sparkling /'spɑ:kliŋ/ (adj) lấp lánh, long lanh

4. ski-mask /ski: mɑ:sk/ (n) mặt nạ trượt tuyết

5. rush /rʌʃ/ (v) xông tới, lao vào

6. panic /'pænik/ (v) (panicked) làm hoảng sợ, làm hốt hoảng

7. grab /græb/ (v) tóm lấy, giật lấy

8. getaway /getə'wei/ (n) sự chạy trốn, nhất là sau khi phạm tội - getaway car : chiếc ô tô (dùng để) chạy trốn

## 69. ROBBERY AT A LATE COLD NIGHT

### VỤ CƯỚP GIỮA ĐÊM KHUYA

One late cold winter night, we heard the **moan**<sup>1</sup> of an old lady from the nearby house. The old lady was living alone with her **ailing**<sup>2</sup> husband who is also **bedridden**.<sup>3</sup> Her sons were living in Australia. The old couple refused to leave their homeland and therefore live alone. We left sorry for them and as neighbours we often help them in any way possible. It seems on that cold winter night some burglars had entered their house through the kitchen window which was not properly **grilled**<sup>4</sup> and locked.

The burglars had **overpowered**<sup>5</sup> the old people, tied them to the chair and cot respectively, took away six hundred dollars and their jewels. The old lady managed to free herself from the **bonds**<sup>6</sup> and **crawled**<sup>7</sup> to the corridor with a moan which we all heard. Several people rushed over immediately and the men tried to untie the old man and then to inform the police. The women were helping the old lady by applying cold water to the **bruises**<sup>8</sup> and rearranging the furniture. The rope was very tight and the old man suffered bruises on his skin.

Two of us ran out to see if the **culprits**<sup>9</sup> were still around. Soon we heard police **sirens**,<sup>10</sup> two **patrol**<sup>11</sup> cars screeched to a halt in front our house and we saw policemen running up the stairs. The policemen made a thorough search and got statements from the old people. The old people's monthly pension money and some of the jewels which they valued were gone.

Messages were sent to their sons abroad. One week later one of their son returned to Singapore and brought the old people to Australia. Despite the robbery the old couple were reluctant to leave Singapore. Finally, they were **persuaded**<sup>12</sup> by us to accept their son's offer.

On the date of their departure, the old couple thanked all those who came to help them in their hour of need.

1. moan /məʊn/ (n) tiếng rên rỉ, tiếng than van
2. ailing /'eɪlɪŋ/ (adj) ốm đau, bệnh tật
3. bedridden /'bedrɪdən/ (adj) nằm liệt giường
4. grilled /grɪld/ (adj) có lưới bảo vệ
5. overpower /əʊvə'paʊə(r)/ (v) áp đảo, chế ngự
6. bonds /bʌndz/ (n) dây hoặc xích trói tù nhân
7. crawl /krɔ:l/ (v) bò, lết, trườn
8. bruise /bru:z/ (n) vết thâm tím, vết bầm dập
9. culprit /'kʌlprɪt/ (n) kẻ phạm tội
10. siren /'saɪərən/ (n) còi
11. patrol /pə'trəʊl/ (n) hành động tuần tra
12. persuade /pə'sweɪd/ (v) thuyết phục

## 70. A DARING ROBBERY MỘT VỤ CƯỚP TÁO BẠO

The **pilgrims**<sup>1</sup> never dreamt that it would happen. They were hopefully thinking of reaching the place of **worship**<sup>2</sup> before the day **dawned**.<sup>3</sup> As the place of worship was about 75 kilometres from their homes, they had left at 2.00 a.m. in the night. They were about a dozen of them including men and women. Since they were going in their own **van**<sup>4</sup> they had many **trunks**<sup>5</sup> and suitcases **stuffed**<sup>6</sup> with valuables like costly clothing, jewels and ornaments. They belonged to the rich, and were a bit **showy**.<sup>7</sup>

The road lay through a **barren**<sup>8</sup> country covered here and there with **hillocks**.<sup>9</sup> It was a road that did not have any heavy traffic and that too in the early hours it was practically deserted. The area was **notorious for**<sup>10</sup> daring robberies as the hillocks gave the robbers a good cover. The robbers heard the van on the road and they expected a good **booty**<sup>11</sup> from it. The moon was not bright as the clouds were sweeping over its face and was ideal for the gang to operate. The gang was made up of unemployed educated young men who had grown desperate. It was master-minded by an old hand who had been **convicted**<sup>12</sup> several times.

The gang had placed big **boulders**<sup>13</sup> as road blocks and were hiding nearby. As soon as the van came near, the driver saw the block. He could not **negotiate**<sup>14</sup> the road this way or that as it was completely blocked and so came to a screeching halt. When the male occupants of the van got down to see what had happened, the gang **pounced**<sup>15</sup> upon them. They were told to keep their mouth shut. When the driver wanted to strike, he was given a **stunning**<sup>16</sup> blow by one of the robbers. The male occupants were then marched to the foot of a hillock and were commanded to stand still or face severe consequences to their person. While two or three of the robbers stood guard, others ransacked the van, took out the trunks and suit cases, broken them open and poured out the contents onto blankets and tied them up. The women were so stunned that they could not even cry out. Their throats felt **parched**<sup>17</sup> suddenly because of the shock they were in. With a flourish the robbers left the place with their booty and disappeared into the night.

It was some time before the pilgrims **recovered from the shock**.<sup>18</sup> The womenfold began to **wail**.<sup>19</sup> As it happened in such cases each one started complaining that the others was to blame. The van driver lost no time in driving them to the nearest town where they **lodged**<sup>20</sup> a complaint with the police.

This was not the first time the police were getting reports about robberies in that part of the country. The higher authorities swung into action immediately when they got a clue from a tea shop in a neighbouring village. The net was spread and soon a few of the gang were **apprehended**.<sup>21</sup> Since they were habitual offenders, it was easy to bring them to book. The press and the public appreciated the **prompt**<sup>22</sup> action taken by the police.

1. pilgrim /'pɪlgrɪm/ (n) người hành hương
2. worship /'wɜːʃɪp/ (n) hành động hoặc nghi lễ thờ cúng
3. dawn /dɔːn/ (v) bắt đầu sáng, rạng sáng
4. van /væn/ (n) xe tải

5. trunk /trʌŋk/ (n) rương, hòm
6. stuff /stʌf/ (v) lèn, nhồi nhét chặt (cái gì vào cái gì)
7. showy /'ʃəʊ/ (adj) khoe khoang
8. barren /'bærən/ (adj) (về đất đai) cằn cỗi
9. hillock /'hɪlək/ (n) đồi nhỏ, mô đất
10. notorious (for) /nəʊ'tɔːrɪəs/ (adj) khét tiếng
11. booty /'buːti/ (n) chiến lợi phẩm
12. convict /kən'vɪkt/ (v) kết tội, kết án
13. boulder /'bəʊldə(r)/ (n) đá cuội
14. negotiate /nɪ'ɡəʊʃieɪt/ (v) băng qua hoặc vượt qua thắng lợi (một chướng ngại, v.v...)
15. pounce /paʊns/ (v) tấn công bất ngờ bằng đột kích hoặc nhảy xuống
16. stunning /'stʌnɪŋ/ (adj) gây choáng váng, điếng người
17. parched /pɑːtʃt/ (adj) bị khát khô
18. recover (from the shock) /rɪ'kʌvə(r)/ (idm) hoàn hồn
19. wail /weɪl/ (v) kêu gào, than khóc
20. lodge (sth with sb) /lɒdʒ/ (v) trình bày với nhà chức trách để được chú ý giải quyết
21. apprehend /æprɪ'hend/ (v) tóm lấy, bắt giữ
22. prompt /prɒmpt/ (adj) nhanh chóng, ngay lập tức

## 71. KIDNAPPED !<sup>1</sup>

### BỊ BẮT CÓC!

My chauffeur was sick and I was told to take a **cab**<sup>2</sup> home. I decided to walk instead and took the shortcut through a rubber plantation.

As I was walking, I noticed four men in dark glasses following me. I became frightened. I started running and was horrified to hear footsteps close behind me. Suddenly, I felt myself **jerked**<sup>3</sup> back roughly. The next thing I knew, I was **blindfolded**<sup>4</sup> and **gagged**.<sup>5</sup> I struggled wildly to free myself but **to no avail**.<sup>6</sup> I was **dumped**<sup>7</sup> onto some rough sacks. Then I heard an engine start. The kidnappers must be driving me to their hideout !

In their hideout, the kidnappers called my father and demanded a **ransom**<sup>8</sup> of one hundred thousand dollars for my release. They warned him that my life would be in danger if the police were notified. They also arranged to meet my father at a **jetty**<sup>9</sup> at three o'clock in the morning.

At the appointed time, the men brought me to the jetty. My father was there, waiting anxiously. After collecting the money, the four men **released**<sup>10</sup> me.

As the kidnappers were about to leave in a boat, the policemen, who were lying in **ambush**,<sup>11</sup> ran out to arrest them. After a short struggle, the four kidnappers were caught. My family was thankful that I was **safe and sound**.<sup>12</sup> I was glad that my father had notified the police.

1. kidnap /'kɪdnæp/ (v) bắt cóc

2. cab /kæb/ (n) xe taxi

3. jerk /dʒɜ:k/ (v) giật, đẩy, kéo, v.v... đột ngột

4. blindfold /'blaɪndfəʊld/ (v) bịt mắt (ai) bằng băng vải v.v...

5. gag /gæɡ/ (v) bịt miệng

6. to no avail /ə'veɪl/ (idm) vô ích, vô hiệu

7. dump /dʌmp/ (v) ném phịch xuống, quăng xuống

8. ransom /'rænsəm/ (n) tiền chuộc

9. jetty /'dʒeti/ (n) đê chắn sóng, cầu tàu

10. release /rɪ'li:z/ (v) giải thoát, phóng thích

11. ambush /'æmbʊʃ/ (n) cuộc mai phục, cuộc phục kích

12. safe and sound (idm) bình yên vô sự

## 72. A KIDNAP MỘT VỤ BẮT CÓC

One evening, I was alone at home, when a smartly dressed couple knocked on my door. The woman smiled and asked me if she could see my parents. I told her that they had gone out but would be back soon. I invited them into the house.

I was surprised when they suddenly grabbed me. They tied up my hands, gagged my mouth and blindfolded me. I was **huddled**<sup>1</sup> into a car and driven off to an unknown destination. I was too frightened to do anything. After driving for about two hours the car came to a stop. They dragged me out of the car and pushed me into a corner. When my blindfold was removed, I found myself in a dark **hut**.<sup>2</sup> I slowly moved towards the locked door and I heard them saying that they were going to ask a ransom of \$20,000 from my father in exchange for my return. When I heard this I was very frightened.

Finally I decided that I had to escape from these kidnappers. I looked around the dark room. There was no means of escape except for a small window, which was locked. I waited till the kidnappers had fallen asleep before I tried to open the window. I managed to **prise**<sup>3</sup> open the window with my **penknife**,<sup>4</sup> which I carried in my pocket. Quietly I slipped out of the house and ran as fast as my legs could carry me. Since it was very dark I **stumbled**<sup>5</sup> and fell a couple of times. Finally I reached the main road. I saw a car approaching. I waved and stopped the car. I told the driver what had happened. He took me to the nearest police station, and made a report. Then I led the police to the place where I was held captive earlier. The kidnappers were arrested.

My parents were happy to see me safe and sound. The police officer praised me for my courageous deed.

1. huddle /'hʌdl/ (v) nhét vào một cách lộn xộn

2. hut /hʌt/ (n) túp lều, căn nhà tạm bợ

3. prise /praɪz/ (v) nạy, bẩy lên

4. penknife /'pennaɪf/ (n) dao díp

5. stumble /'stʌmbəl/ (v) sẩy, trượt chân

### 73. A FIRE IN THE HOSPITAL HỎA HOẠN TRONG BỆNH VIỆN

I was visiting my friend Sally in the hospital. She had a bad fall a few days ago, and she was being treated for shock and bruises. I was chatting with her when suddenly a **shrill**<sup>1</sup> alarm **went off**<sup>2</sup>.

We saw the doctors and the nurses huddled together. Then a nurse or a doctor went to speak to each patient. A doctor approached Sally's bed and told us that a fire had started on the seventh floor of the hospital and the fire brigade had been **summoned**.<sup>3</sup> He told us to remain calm and we would get out of the building quickly.

However some of the patients started to panic and we heard some of them crying. We also heard the siren of the fire engines. The head nurse announced that the stronger patient would have to use the emergency stair exit, while the **firefighters**<sup>4</sup> would use special equipment to lift the injured patients through the windows.

A nurse helped to guide Sally down the staircase. The nurse asked me to help another patient. I went to the next bed and helped guide a woman with a **bandaged**<sup>5</sup> arm towards the **staircase**.<sup>6</sup> She was **sobbing**<sup>7</sup> quietly. I assured her that since we were on the fourth floor, we would escape without any danger.

When we reached the second floor, a group of policemen and firefighters rushed to meet us. They led us to the ground floor and out of the building.

The patients drew together, as though happy to see each other again. A nurse told us that the fire was under control. All the patient had been saved ; and only a few suffered minor injuries. The patients clapped for they were thankful for the courage and the skill of the hospital staff, the firefighters and the policemen.

1. shrill /ʃrɪl/ (adj) (về âm thanh, giọng nói, v.v...) rít lên, nhức óc, chói tai

2. go off /gəʊ ɒf/ (v) vang lên

3. summon /'sʌmən/ (v) gọi đến, triệu tập

4. firefighter /'faɪəfaɪtə(r)/ (n) (cũng fireman) lính cứu hỏa

5. bandage /'bændɪdʒ/ (v) quấn băng

6. staircase /'steɪkɛɪs/ (n) cầu thang gác

7. sob /sɒb/ (v) khóc nước mắt, thổn thức

## 74. A FIRE ACCIDENT I HAVE WITNESSED

### MỘT VỤ HỎA HOẠN TÔI ĐÃ CHỨNG KIẾN

Fires are mainly caused by carelessness on the part of the **occupants**<sup>1</sup> of a house, factory, office or a shop. Sometimes, fire can be caused by electrical **short circuit**<sup>2</sup> or lightning.

Last week, I visited my friend in Jurong. There I had the opportunity to witness a terrible fire which **guttet**<sup>3</sup> almost the entire row of small factories. It was around 8 pm, my friend and I were practising our guitars for the forthcoming music competition. Suddenly, we were attracted by shouts and sirens. There were also cries of distress. We rushed out of the house and saw a huge fire engulfing the factory situated some four hundred metres from our block.

With horror filled eyes, my friend and I ran towards the place. We saw a plastic factory on fire and the workers were helpless. By then, a big crowd had gathered and nobody could do anything but to express sorrow. Within minutes of our arrival at the scene, several fire engines arrived. It was a **tragic**<sup>4</sup> event which I cannot easily forget. I saw fear and panic everywhere.

The firemen were **engaged**<sup>5</sup> in a heroic battle with **raging**<sup>6</sup> fire. They seemed helpless as the jets of water from the hoses were not able to control the fire. The firemen struggled for nearly six hours before the fire was **subdued**.<sup>7</sup> By then nearly four factories were completely gutted.

I will never forget this fire incident.

1. occupant /'ɒkjʊpənt/ (n) người ở một ngôi nhà, hoặc sở hữu và cư ngụ trên một thửa đất
2. short circuit /'sɜ:kɪt/ (n) đoản mạch
3. gut /gʌt/ (v) phá hủy bên trong hoặc đổ đạc của (nhà cửa, xí nghiệp, v.v...)
4. tragic /'trædʒɪk/ (adj) bi thảm
5. engage (in) /ɪn'geɪdʒ/ (v) (làm cho một người) tham gia vào một việc
6. raging /'reɪdʒɪŋ/ (adj) dữ dội
7. subdue /səb'dju:/ (v) khuất phục, chinh phục

## 75. A EMBARRASSING<sup>1</sup> MOMENT

### GIẤY PHÚT BỐI RỐI

I could recall an event which happened four years ago. My father gave me a hundred dollars, for the good grades I scored in my P.S.L.E.. To enjoy it, I invited some of my closest friends to a restaurant for a meal.

At the restaurant, I asked my friends to **order**<sup>2</sup> as much as they liked. The food was delicious, the service was efficient and the food was served fast. All of us began to eat. We ate, talked and laughed at the jokes we made in school.

After we had finished our food, the waiter brought us the bill. I opened my purse to take out the money. To my surprise I found my money missing. Only then I realised that I had left the money at home. I was in such a hurry that I had forgotten to put the money in my purse. I wanted to borrow the money from my friends, but none of them could help me. They had brought only enough money for bus **fare**.<sup>3</sup> I told the waiter that I had forgotten to bring my money. The waiter was very angry and told me to see the manager. The manager was a kind gentleman. He allowed me to go home and get the money, but I had to leave my **identity card**<sup>4</sup> with him. I immediately telephoned my sister and told her to bring the money to the restaurant. Ever since that day I have stopped **patronising**<sup>5</sup> the restaurant. I am afraid that some of the waiters might remember my face. I was the most embarrassing moment in my life.

1. embarrassing /ɪm'bærəsɪŋ/ (*adj*) *gây lúng túng, gây bối rối*
2. order /'ɔ:də(r)/ (*v*) *gọi món ăn*
3. fare /feə(r)/ (*n*) *tiền xe, tiền đò, tiền vé*
4. identify card /aɪ'dentətɪ kɑ:d/ (*n*) *thẻ căn cước, giấy chứng minh nhân dân*
5. patronise /'pætrənəɪz/ (*v*) *lui tới thường xuyên*

## 76. A FRIGHTENING EXPERIENCE

### MỘT KINH NGHIỆM ĐÁNG SỢ

It was almost midnight. I was going home on a bus. There was only one other passenger - a middle-aged man.

I **leaned**<sup>1</sup> back on my seat and closed my eyes, enjoying the cool night breeze. Suddenly, I felt a **tap**<sup>2</sup> on my shoulder. I turned around and found the other passenger **grinning**<sup>3</sup> at me. The man looked rosy in the cheeks and **reeked**<sup>4</sup> of liquor. He was drunk !

Before I knew it, he started running his fingers through my hair. I was terrified. The next moment, he sat himself beside me. The bus-driver seemed too **preoccupied**<sup>5</sup> with driving to notice what was happening.

The man looked angry suddenly and began to talk loudly. I was **at my wits' end**<sup>6</sup> and wished that I had not stayed out so late. Finally, I **plucked up courage**<sup>7</sup> and rushed to a seat near the driver so that he could help me should anything happen. Luckily the man did not follow me.

After some time, the bus reached my housing estate. Before I alighted from the bus, I stole a glance at the drunk man. He was fast asleep. I was thankful that I was not harmed. However, I was badly frightened and made up my mind never to travel at late hours without company again.

1. lean /li:n/ (v) ở trong tư thế nghiêng, cúi
2. tap /tæp/ (n) cái vỗ nhẹ, cái đập nhẹ
3. grin /grɪn/ (v) cười nhe răng, cười toe toét
4. reek /ri:k/ (v) có mùi nồng nặc
5. preoccupy /pri:'bɔkjəpaɪ/ (v) thu hút tâm trí ai
6. be at one's wits'end (idm) không biết phải làm gì
7. pluck up courage /plʌk ʌp 'kʌrɪdʒ/ (idm) lấy hết can đảm

## 77. LOST IN A STRANGE PLACE

### *BỊ LẠC Ở MỘT NƠI XA LẠ*

During my school holidays, I went to stay with my cousin's family in Penang for a week. They live in a hut in a **kampong**.<sup>1</sup>

One fine morning, my cousin, Andy, and I went to fish in a stream near the **outskirts**<sup>2</sup> of the kampong. Andy caught a lot of fishes. I was not as lucky and decided to move further upstream to try another fishing spot. I managed to catch many small fishes there. When I went back to look for Andy, he was nowhere to be found. Thinking that he might have moved **downstream**,<sup>3</sup> I followed the stream to look for him.

After some time, I realized that I had lost my way. I began to panic when I could not even find a public telephone to make a call. At that moment, I saw a signpost with a Malay word "Polis".

"Perhaps it means 'Police'," I thought and ran quickly in that direction.

I was right. Ahead was a police-post. I told the policemen what had happened. They listened patiently to my description of my cousin's kampong. Then one of the policemen brought me back to my cousin's hut. How glad I was to find myself safe with my relatives again. It was certainly horrifying to have lost my way in a strange place.

1. kampong /'kæmpʊŋ/ (n) *ngôi làng*

2. outskirts /'aʊtskɜ:ts/ (n) *ngoại ô*

3. downstream /daʊns'tri:m/ (adv) *xuôi dòng* ≠ upstream /ʌp'stri:m/ (adv) *ngược dòng*

## 78. AN UNLUCKY INCIDENT

### MỘT SỰ CỐ RỦI RO

I am a healthy person and do not normally fall ill. My baby sister is often ill. My parents and grandparents are all deeply **concerned**<sup>1</sup> about her health and take great care of her. She goes to bed early. We have to turn down the television and lower our voices so that she gets a good night's sleep.

My uncle, my aunt and my two cousins came from Malaysia as our guests during the school holidays. We had planned to have a small party followed by a movie by my favourite actor, Sylvester Stallone. We were playing till 10 pm and my mother asked me to take my cousins to my bed room.

Next day when my mother woke me up, I did not feel like getting up. I had a slight headache. Mother felt my forehead and found that I was having a fever. How sad I was ! All our plans were **upset**.<sup>2</sup> I did not like the pitiable stares of others, in particular, from my cousins. My mother brought me milk and **porridge**.<sup>3</sup> She asked my brother and my cousins to leave me alone. She asked my cousins not to play the hi-fi stereo as I needed complete rest.

It was indeed a boring time lying in bed. Little did I know that the day would be so long. Soon my temperature started to rise and I felt hot and restless. My head started to get heavy. It was really troublesome. To make matters worse my brother and my cousins were preparing to go to the movie. The worst part was not being able to enjoy the feast my mother was preparing for the guests. I was ordered to live on a liquid diet and pills and tablets. In frustration I spent the whole day in bed.

Luckily, the temperature was back to normal. I promised myself that I shall not allow myself to fall ill again.

1. concerned (about) /kən'sɜ:nd/ (*adj*) lo âu, băn khoăn

2. upset /ʌp'set/ (*v*) đảo lộn, xáo trộn

3. porridge /'pɒrɪdʒ/ (*n*) cháo đặc

## 79. INCIDENT IN A SLEEPLESS NIGHT VIỆC XẢY RA TRONG MỘT ĐÊM KHÔNG NGỦ

It was a hot night and I could not sleep, I got up and looked out of the window. The sky was very beautiful to look at. There was half-moon in the west and many stars were burning bright in the **firmament**.<sup>1</sup>

While being **absorbed**<sup>2</sup> in this lovely night scene, I became aware of a moaning sound from the next flat. I listened for a while. I thought at first that somebody there was snoring or crying in his dream. But no, it was **distinctly**<sup>3</sup> a moaning sound. It was soon followed by other sounds. They were of people talking loudly. I could not **make out**<sup>4</sup> as to what they were talking.

The quarreling noise increased. Now and then, I could identify a voice that appeared to be begging. Very soon, I heard the noise of blows and a shrill cry of a woman. Still I hesitated to move out of my **cozy**<sup>5</sup> bed to see what the matter was. The neighbour was only an acquaintance of mine and at that hour of the night I was reluctant to go and interfere.

While my thoughts were running along that **strain**,<sup>6</sup> I heard a sudden crash, as though something heavy had fallen. This was followed by a fearful shriek, and then silence followed. I feared something horrible had happened. So, I went to the neighbour's door and knocked at it. It was opened by my neighbour, who appeared a picture of **dismay**<sup>7</sup> and **bewilderment**.<sup>8</sup> After some excuses I enquired of him what the matter was.

He took me in and showed me a scene. There lay his wife **curled up**<sup>9</sup> on her bed. One or two chairs had been turned upside down. Things were in a **disarray**.<sup>10</sup> The neighbour showed me the chairs. After seating himself, he told me that his wife had been a **hysterical**<sup>11</sup> patient and would now and then create scenes in the night. The voices had been theirs when he had tried to quieten her. She had pushed the chairs which had caused the crash. And after shrieking, she lay down in a **swoon**.<sup>12</sup> It was a frequent occurrence. While I sought his excuse for disturbing him, he begged my pardon for having disturbed my peace at night. I bade him goodnight and returned to my room.

1. firmament /'fɜ:məmənt/ (n) bầu trời

2. absorbed /əb'sɔ:bd/ (adj) thu hút sự chú ý hoàn toàn, mê mải

3. distinct /dɪ'stɪŋkt/ (adj) riêng biệt, rõ ràng - distinctly /-li/ (adv)

4. make out /'meɪkaʊt/ (v) hiểu, nhận ra

5. cozy /'kəʊzi/ (adj) ấm áp và thoải mái

6. strain /streɪn/ (n) tình trạng căng thẳng

7. dismay /dɪ'smeɪ/ (n) cảm giác choáng váng và mất tinh thần

8. bewilderment /bɪ'wɪldəmənt/ (n) trạng thái bối rối, lúng túng

9. curl up /kɜ:l ʌp/ (v) cuộn tròn

10. disarray /dɪsə'reɪ/ (n) trạng thái lộn xộn, mất trật tự

11. hysterical /hɪs'terɪkl/ (adj) ở vào trạng thái cuồng loạn gây ra bởi chứng icteri

12. swoon /swu:n/ (n) tình trạng ngất đi

## 80. AN AIR ACCIDENT

### MỘT TAI NẠN MÁY BAY

The air hostess announced that all passengers should **fasten**<sup>1</sup> their seat belts and hold on firmly to their chairs. She tried her best to assure us that everything would be all right. However, her efforts at calming the **panic-stricken**<sup>2</sup> passengers were in vain.

The passengers had themselves seen the sudden appearance of dark clouds and heard the sound of heavy rain **pattering**<sup>3</sup> **ferociously**<sup>4</sup> on the aircraft so much so that children and women were harshly thrown from side to side.

The aircraft was then zooming down almost **perpendicular**<sup>5</sup> to the ground. **Eerie**,<sup>6</sup> hysterical cries could be heard from almost every corner of the aircraft. The lights suddenly went off and the aircraft **spinned**<sup>7</sup> rapidly. Then, there was a tremendous explosion that put a sudden end to the cries of **woe**.<sup>8</sup> The aircraft had **crashed**<sup>9</sup> in a deep valley between two block mountains.

I woke up near a tree and was rudely reminded of the tragic happening by the terrible sight of blood and badly disfigured, hardly recognizable bodies. There was not even the slightest sign of life. The **wreckage**<sup>10</sup> extended over a large area, the sight of which made me feel sick. I was tortured by hunger, thirst and fear of death. I managed to carry myself up and walk laboriously with my sore feet. The walk seemed to be endless and I was then **dizzy**<sup>11</sup> with exhaustion.

The sight of a small village on the **hillslope**<sup>12</sup> made me rub my eyes in disbelief. I saw a woman fetching water from the well and I quickened my steps towards her. Before I even reached her, I fell down unconscious. When I woke up, I found myself lying here, on this very bed.

1. fasten /'fæsn/ (v) *buộc chặt*

2. panic-stricken /,pænik 'strikn/ (adj) *trong trạng thái hoảng sợ, kinh hãi*

3. patter /'pætə(r)/ (v) *kêu lộp cộp, rơi lộp độp*

4. ferocious /fə'rəʃəs/ (adj) *dữ dội* - ferociously /-li/ (adv)

5. perpendicular /pɜ:pən'dikjələ(r)/ (adj) *vuông góc, thẳng đứng*

6. eerie /'iəri/ (adj) *sợ hãi*

7. spin /spɪn/ (v) *quay tròn, lộn vòng*

8. woe /wəʊ/ (n) *nỗi thống khổ lớn* - a cry of woe : *tiếng kêu khóc thảm thiết*

9. crash /kræʃ/ (v) *va, đụng, đâm vào*

10. wreckage /'rekɪdʒ/ (n) *mảnh vụn, vật đổ nát*

11. dizzy /'dɪzi/ (adj) *chóng mặt, choáng váng*

12. hillslope /'hɪlsləʊp/ (n) *sườn đồi*

## 81. A FREAK<sup>1</sup> ACCIDENT

### MỘT TAI NẠN KỶ DỊ

I sat on the back seat of the bus with a couple of friends. We were on our way to school. It was early morning and the cool air hitting against my face was very refreshing.

Slowly the old amber-coloured bus made its way towards the main road that led to our school. The driver stopped the bus at the **junction**<sup>2</sup> as the lights were red. We waited for the lights to change.

Suddenly the bus **lurched**<sup>3</sup> to one side ! I literally saw school-children in front of me float up in the air for a split-second. The next moment we were all either on the floor of the bus or desperately **clinging**<sup>4</sup> to our seats. I was one of the former. What happened ?

For a few seconds, there was **pandemonium**<sup>5</sup> in the bus. I could hear screaming and yelling. I tried to stand up but I found it difficult. Then I realized that the bus was **aslant**<sup>6</sup> at such an angle that we were almost **stacked**<sup>7</sup> against the right side of the bus.

Then we heard the bus driver shouting at us to get out. We scrambled out through all available exits including the windows. Schoolchildren are pretty **agile**.<sup>8</sup> So, soon all of us were out of the bus.

We stood on the road and **gaped**<sup>9</sup> at the sight before us. The bus had fallen into a huge hole ! Well, most of the right front end of the bus anyway, for there right in front of us was a huge hole of about 2 metres diameter and a metre deep !

The right front wheel of the bus was right smack in the hole while the rest of the bus hung precariously at the edge.

**Miraculously**,<sup>10</sup> except for a few bruises, none of us was badly hurt. The driver was worst off. He lost a tooth when he hit his face against the steering wheel.

How did the bus fall into a hole while standing still ? The only answer must be that the road underneath the bus must have given way.

Closer examination of the hole showed that it was actually part of an underground drain. The collapsed part must have been weakened through prolonged use and it was just our luck that it gave way when we were on top of it. What a freak accident it was!

Anyway, we waited patiently while a passerby called for a towtruck via his mobile telephone. After half an hour it arrived and soon the bus was standing on firm ground again.

We climbed in and in a while we arrived at our school. We were late, but we had a good reason to tell our teachers. As for the driver, he had to pay a visit to his dentist.

1. freak /fri:k/ (n) hành động hay sự kiện rất khác thường

2. junction /'dʒʌŋkʃn/ (n) giao lộ

3. lurch /lɜ:tʃ/ (v) nghiêng hoặc lảo đảo đột ngột

4. cling /kliŋ/ (v) bám chặt vào (ai / cái gì)

5. pandemonium /pændɪ'məʊniəm/ (n) sự hỗn loạn và huyền ảo

6. aslant /ə'sla:nt/ (adv) theo một hướng xiên hoặc chéo qua

7. stack /stæk/ (v) xếp thành cụm, chồng lên nhau

8. agile /'ædʒaɪl/ (adj) nhanh nhẹn, lanh lợi

9. gape /geɪp/ (v) há hốc mồm nhìn chăm chăm

10. miraculous /mɪ'rækjələs/ (adj) kỳ lạ, như có phép thần - miraculously /-li/ (adv)

## 82. ACCIDENT IN THE LABORATORY

### TAI NẠN TRONG PHÒNG THÍ NGHIỆM

After classes on Monday, we are passing near the chemistry laboratory when we saw a strange **figure**<sup>1</sup> running out of the chemistry lab. The stranger was tall with **stooping**<sup>2</sup> shoulders. His hair was below his dirty shirt collar. The left leg of his dark blue jeans was rolled up to his knees.

At first we thought that he was Mr. Tan, the laboratory assistant, but he was too shabbily dressed to be Mr. Tan. While we were deciding who he was, we suddenly heard an explosion in the lab. Without second thoughts, we rushed into the lab to **investigate**.<sup>3</sup> We were greeted by thick black smoke when we opened the door of the lab. We covered our mouths and noses with our handkerchiefs and with much difficulty, found the source of the fire.

The three litre can of kerosene was undoubtedly the fire **initiator**.<sup>4</sup> We took the little **pails**<sup>5</sup> at the corner of the lab to **put out**<sup>6</sup> the fire. While we were struggling with this little fire-fighting, we were rudely interrupted by a series of loud explosions behind us. We turned around and to our horror we saw flames near the front door and also the small fire exit by the left side of the lab.

We were trapped and the only way of escaping was through the narrow windows which were **barred**<sup>7</sup> with thick wire. We realized the hopelessness of the situation as we were completely engulfed in thick fumes and smoke. The acid **compartment**<sup>8</sup> of the cabinet exploded and also caught fire. The smell was unbearable.

In between desperate **gasps**<sup>9</sup> of breath, we shouted for help. In a few minutes we heard the windows being broken. Then excited voices were heard outside. We could not see even our own hands which were held in front of your eyes, let alone the crowd which must have already gathered outside.

Our hearts beat vigorously as we waited patiently to be rescued. We controlled our breaths and tried not to inhale much of the possibly poisonous fumes. Then, before we realized it, we were pulled out of the lab, through the windows by fire-fighters.

Now that I'm feeling better, I can recall that my friends and I have seen the man, possibly the culprit, loitering in the canteen outside during the break. We really hope that the man can be **traced**<sup>10</sup> and proper action be taken against him.

1. figure /'fɪgə(r)/ (n) hình dáng con người

2. stoop /stu:p/ (v) khòm xuống, gập xuống về phía trước

3. investigate /ɪn'vestɪgeɪt/ (v) khám phá và kiểm tra (tất cả sự kiện về cái gì) để tìm ra sự thật

4. initiator /ɪ'nɪʃieɪtə(r)/ (n) người (vật) khởi xướng, khởi đầu

5. pail /peɪl/ (n) cái xô

6. put out /pʊt aʊt/ (v) dập tắt (ngọn lửa, v.v...)

7. bar /bɑ:/ (v) cái then (cửa, cổng)

8. compartment /kəm'pɑ:tmənt/ (n) buồng, ngăn, gian

9. gasp /gæsp/ (n) sự hít hơi dài và nhanh

10. trace /treɪs/ (v) tìm ra dấu vết, truy nguyên

## 83. CLASS DUTY

### TRỰC NHẬT

Today, I went to school earlier than usual. When I stepped into the classroom, my two classmates, Jason and Xiaoqiang, were already there. The other classmates had not come in yet and this was the best time for us to do our class duty.

We divided our workload accordingly. I was put **in charge**<sup>1</sup> of **sweeping**<sup>2</sup> the floor, so I stacked the chairs on the tables to make the job easier. After sweeping the floor. I took down the chairs and arranged the tables. Meanwhile, Jason and Xiaoqiang dusted the top of the cupboards with feather-dusters. They also used **damp**<sup>3</sup> **rags**<sup>4</sup> to wipe the windows and the blackboard. After we had completed our jobs, the classroom looked spick and span.

Besides the morning cleaning, the three of us also had to **run errands**<sup>5</sup> for our teachers that day. We took turns to carry books for them. In between classes, we also made sure that the blackboard was clean before the next teacher came in.

At the end of the day, our form teacher praised us for doing a good job. We were very proud of ourselves. We felt that it was worth the effort to wake up a little earlier to do our part for the class.

1. in charge /ɪn tʃɑːdʒ/ (*idm*) *phụ trách, chịu trách nhiệm*

2. sweep /swi:p/ (*v*) *quét (bụi, rác, v.v...)*

3. damp /dæmp/ (*adj*) *ướt, ẩm ướt*

4. rag /ræg/ (*n*) *giẻ, giẻ rách*

5. run errands /rʌn 'erəndz/ (*idm*) *chạy việc vặt*

## 84. A WEEK BEFORE EXAMINATION *MỘT TUẦN TRƯỚC KỲ THI*

Sundays are generally a fixed routine determined by the TV programmes. But the last Sunday before the examinations was completely different. Of all the subjects, English and Mathematics are the ones I fear most. I was determined not to waste the Sunday before the exam and to spend the day on **revision**.<sup>1</sup>

I set the alarm clock at 4.30 am so that I can get up early and start my revision. But the alarm did not ring and I got up very late. So I had to choose between English and Mathematics for I was not worried about English. So I started on the Mathematics problems, and I was stuck on my seventh problem. I was still trying to solve the problem when I heard **commotion**<sup>2</sup> at the front hall. My uncle has come with his family. My room door burst open and my cousins came **barging**<sup>3</sup> in. They sat in the side of the bed and they started asking questions. My mother asked me to take my cousins to the market. I went out in anger. It was almost lunchtime when I started again.

My cousins **pestered**<sup>4</sup> me to take them around. I had no choice but to be **obliged**<sup>5</sup> and completely wasted all my time until the evening. I had some spare time after dinner. I was still stuck with the seventh problem. In **desperation**,<sup>6</sup> I threw away the book. The sound must have jolted everyone and my uncle came in, sensing my inability, he patiently explained the problem. I could not continue further due to shame and anger.

Thus the whole Sunday was totally wasted. Instead I could have watched television and played with my cousins. I have lost both.

1. revision /rɪ'vɪʒn/ (n) *sự ôn lại*

2. commotion /kə'məʊʃn/ (n) *sự chấn động, sự huyên náo*

3. barge /bɑ:dʒ/ (v) *xông bừa vào, xen vào một cách thô lỗ*

4. pester /'pestə(r)/ (v) *làm phiền, quấy rầy bằng những đòi hỏi liên tục*

5. oblige /ə'blaɪdʒ/ (v) *bắt buộc, cưỡng bách*

6. desperation /despə'reɪʃn/ (n) *trạng thái tuyệt vọng*

## 85. THE DAY I WAS SICK NGÀY TÔI NGÃ BỆNH

I was completely drenched in the heavy downpour. When I reached home, I **sneezed**<sup>1</sup> continuously and **shivered**<sup>2</sup> with cold. That night, I felt weak and feverish.

The next morning, I did not go to school. My mother brought me to the doctor. He said I had the **flu**<sup>3</sup> and gave me an **injection**<sup>4</sup> to speed up recovery. He also **prescribed**<sup>5</sup> some big white tablets for me. I was advised to drink more water, take more fresh fruits and have plenty of rest.

When I reached home, I went straight to bed. I felt so weak that my mother had to carry my meals and medicine to my bed. For lunch, my mother made me a light soup to go with some bread. She also peeled an orange for me. After the simple but **nutritious**<sup>6</sup> meal, I slept the whole afternoon away.

My best friend, Sufen, called me in the evening. She sounded concerned and asked me to get better soon. She also told me some of the funny things that happened in school that day to cheer me up.

That night, I felt much better. "Perhaps I can go back to school tomorrow," I thought before falling asleep.

1. sneeze /sni:z/ (v) *hắt hơi*
2. shiver /'ʃɪvə(r)/ (v) *run (do lạnh hoặc sợ hãi)*
3. flu /flu:/ (n) (= influenza) *bệnh cúm*
4. injection /ɪn'dʒɛkʃn/ (n) *việc tiêm thuốc*
5. prescribe /prɪ'skraɪb/ (v) *kê toa (thuốc)*
6. nutritious /nju:'trɪʃəs/ (adj) *bổ, dinh dưỡng*

**86. THE DAY I WAS LATE FOR SCHOOL**  
**NGÀY TÔI TRỄ HỌC**

It was well past midnight but I was still up watching the World Cup Soccer Finals. My mother was away on a tour, so I was free to stay up as late as I liked.

The next morning, even the two alarm clocks ringing loudly did not wake me up ! I finally woke up from a nightmare in which my favourite football team was defeated. It was already eight in the morning ! I jumped out of bed and quickly washed my face. Then **slipping into**<sup>1</sup> my school uniform, I ran out of the flat.

I ran to school as fast as my legs could carry me. **In my haste**,<sup>2</sup> I **tripped**<sup>3</sup> and fell, bruising my knees. When I finally reached school, I was a sorry sight. Before I could catch my breath to greet my teacher, she asked me, "Who won the World Cup - Germany or Argentina ?" The whole class roared with laughter. Weekly, I apologized for being late and added, "Germany won."

I was not allowed to **sit for**<sup>4</sup> the class test because I was too late. I felt **ashamed**<sup>5</sup> of myself and resolved never to stay up so late again.

1. slip into /'slɪp ɪntə/ (v) *mặc vào thật nhanh, mặc vội*
2. in haste /heɪst/ (idm) *một cách nhanh chóng vội vàng*
3. trip /trɪp/ (v) *vấp chân vào cái gì và trượt hoặc ngã*
4. sit for /sɪt fə(r)/ (v) *tham dự (một kì thi)*
5. (be) ashamed (of) /ə'ʃeɪmd/ (adj) *cảm thấy hổ thẹn*

## 87. THE HAPPIEST DAY IN MY LIFE NGÀY HẠNH PHÚC NHẤT TRONG ĐỜI TÔI

It was Prize-**presentation**<sup>1</sup> Day. I was chosen to be the model student of the year on the **recommendation**<sup>2</sup> of my teachers and class-mates. I was happy that they thought so well of me.

When I went up the stage to collect the **prestigious**<sup>3</sup> medal and cash award, I was filled with pride and joy. All my teachers and friends **congratulated**<sup>4</sup> me warmly. My parents **beamed**<sup>5</sup> widely. They were very proud of me.

After the prize-giving ceremony, my parents brought me to a 'Toys-R-Us' shop. There, they bought me a **remote-controlled**<sup>6</sup> model aircraft as a reward for being such a good student. I was overjoyed because I had wanted the model for a long time.

In extremely good moods, we proceeded to MacDonalds for dinner. We had Big Macs, french fries, milk-shakes and my favourite, chicken McNuggets.

That night, I played with my model aircraft before going to bed. For once, my puppy was allowed to sleep with since it was such a special day. Even the night was filled with sweet dreams. It was probably the happiest day in my life.

1. presentation /prezn'teɪʃn/ (n) quà biếu / tặng trong buổi lễ chính thức
2. recommendation /rekəmen'deɪʃn/ (n) sự giới thiệu, sự đề cử
3. prestigious /pre'stɪdʒəs/ (adj) có uy tín, đem lại uy tín
4. congratulate /kən'grætʃəleɪt/ (v) chúc mừng
5. beam /bi:m/ (v) tươi cười rạng rỡ
6. remote-controlled /rɪ,məʊt kən'trəʊld/ (adj) được điều khiển từ xa

**88. A DAY WHEN EVERYTHING WENT WRONG**  
**NGÀY MỌI VIỆC ĐỀU HỎNG**

It was a bright and sunny day. Little did I expect it to be an unlucky one for me.

I went to school early because I was on class duty. I stepped into the classroom and was surprised to find it **spick and span**.<sup>1</sup> I was pleased that I did not have to clean the classroom and went off cheerfully for the flag-raising ceremony. When I returned to my classroom later on, my teacher **scolded**<sup>2</sup> me for not cleaning the classroom. It was then that I realized I had gone into the wrong classroom earlier on. My teacher put me on duty again the next day as punishment.

Just then, the school dental nurse walked into the classroom. To my dismay, I was called up for a dental check-up.

The dentist found a badly **decayed**<sup>3</sup> tooth and pulled it out **mercilessly**.<sup>4</sup> I was close to tears. The dentist advised me to take porridge during recess. However, I ended up **scalding**<sup>5</sup> my tongue because I ate the hot porridge in a hurry.

After school, I missed the bus and reached home later than usual. In the kitchen, I found a note from my mother saying that she had brought my brother to a funfair. They had left without me after much waiting. What hard luck ! I would not want to live through another such day !

1. spick and span /spɪk ənd spæn/ (*idm*) sạch sẽ và ngăn nắp

2. scold /skəʊld/ (*v*) rầy la, chửi mắng

3. decayed /dɪ'keɪd/ (*adj*) (về răng) bị sâu ăn

4. merciless /'mɜːsɪləs/ (*adj*) tàn nhẫn, không thương xót

5. scald /skɔːld/ (*v*) làm bỏng (bằng chất lỏng sôi hoặc hơi nước)

## 89. AN UNLUCKY DAY

### NGÀY KHÔNG MAY

I woke up with a pain in the back of my neck. I could hardly turn my head. I strained to look at the clock on the table. It showed six fifty. My goodness, I must have overslept. It looked like I would be late for school.

Quickly I ran to the bathroom only to find it occupied. I waited impatiently for another five minutes before my sister appeared. I **dashed**<sup>1</sup> into the bathroom to have a **shower**.<sup>2</sup> My goodness, the water was freezing cold. Those who had their shower before me had used up all the hot water. So I had no choice but to have a really quick cold shower.

After washing up I felt a bit better. I returned to my room to dress up for school. It seemed to take such a long time to dress up when I had to hurry. Finally I managed to and hurried downstairs to the kitchen to **grab**<sup>3</sup> something to eat.

There was nothing but cold coffee and bread crusts left. My greedy brothers and sisters had eaten everything. My mother told me **it served me right**<sup>4</sup> for getting up late. I sighed and got out of the house. I **mounted**<sup>5</sup> my bicycle and moved two metres before I realised that I had forgotten my school bag. I dismounted and hurried upstairs to get it. I moved another two metres after remounting the bicycle before I realised I had a **flat**<sup>6</sup> tyre.

It was so **infuriating**.<sup>7</sup> I wanted to scream. My neck hurt, I took a cold shower, had no breakfast and now the tyre had to be flat. But I calmed myself, got down and pushed the bicycle to a shop half a kilometre away.

As though expecting things to turn out wrong, I was not surprised to find the shop closed. It was seven thirty. I was late for school but was too early for the shop to open. So I left the bicycle in front of the shop. They would know that it was my bicycle.

I walked to the bus stand a stone's throw away and waited. The bus came at eight. I was really late for school.

When I finally arrived at school, classes were in full session. In fact the first period was over. The headmaster caught me coming late and gave me a terrific scolding, but I was in no mood to argue. I just wanted to get to class.

I entered my class when the mathematics teacher was there. I received another scolding for being late. Five minutes later I received yet another for forgetting to bring my instrument box. Of all days, we were having **geometry**<sup>8</sup> and I had no instruments. So I spent the period watching the others do their sums.

The rest of the day in school was one big mess. I could not concentrate. I **sort of**<sup>9</sup> went through the lessons half-aware of them. When the bell finally rang to signal the end of the day I was so glad to go home.

However that was not the end yet.

After lunch I wanted to take a nap, but I could not get to sleep because of the pain in my neck. So I tossed and turned which made the pain worse. Finally I gave up and went into the garden to relax.

Evening came and I did not even bother to go and play games. I just wanted to have dinner and go to bed.

After what seemed to be a long wait my sister told me dinner was ready. I had a quick dinner as I did not have an appetite. After dinner I rested for a while, had a shower and

then went to bed. It was not even nine yet but I was so glad to get into bed and let sleep embrace me. It had been a hard day when nothing went right.

1. dash (into) /dæʃ/ (v) xông vào, lao vào
2. shower /'ʃaʊə(r)/ (n) việc tắm dưới vòi hoa sen
3. grab /græb/ (v) có hoặc lấy (cái gì) một cách vội vã
4. serve sb right (idm) đáng đời ai
5. mount /maʊnt/ (v) leo lên, trèo lên ≠ dismount /dɪs'maʊnt/ (v) leo xuống
6. flat /flæt/ (adj) (về lốp xe) bị xẹp
7. infuriating /ɪn'fjʊəriɪtɪŋ/ (adj) làm nổi giận điên người
8. geometry /dʒɪ'ɒmətɪ/ (n) môn hình học
9. sort of /sɔ:t əv/ (idm) ở chừng mực nào đó

## 90. A DAY I SPENT IN STRANGE SURROUNDINGS

### MỘT NGÀY TRONG MÔI TRƯỜNG XA LẠ

I have a cousin, Brian, who is a writer for a newspaper in Kuala Lumpur. Last year when I visited him, he told me that he had an **assignment**<sup>1</sup> to write about life in a remote village in the national forest reserve in Pahang. He **challenged**<sup>2</sup> me, a city boy, to accompany him and experience a day in totally unfamiliar surroundings.

We drove to a small town where we boarded a boat for the ride down the river. The boat was a long one with just a few seats. Most of the passengers sat on the floor.

The journey was a thrilling adventure. The boat had to pass through a number of rapids, and at certain points the boatman used a long pole to steer it. Brian and I were obviously excited but the other passengers took it in a casual, even bored, way. To them, it was an usual occurrence. "They have to take this journey every time they need to go to town. Look at you, you have the MRT and you complain if the journey is longer than 40 minutes!" Brian **teased**<sup>3</sup> me.

After three hours in the boat, we reached our destination. After getting off at the pier, the first building that we saw was the village shop. Actually, it was a small shop crammed with canned and dry food. Brian chatted with the owner and we found out that the shop was also the only place in the village where people buy their stamps and newspapers. However the postal service and the newspaper delivery came only once a week.

He then showed us the direction to the headman's house. The headman's name was Tok Kassim. When we found his house, he invited us in and told us stories about himself and his village. Then he took us for a tour around the village. Since bicycle was the only form of transport, people walked from place to place.

The village was very peaceful and green. The river was the **focal**<sup>4</sup> place of the villagers. We saw people fishing in the river and women washing their clothes there. But what struck me most was the way the children enjoyed it. They swam in it, and they rode in **rafts**<sup>5</sup> which they put together from bamboo poles.

Tok Kassim **recounted**<sup>6</sup> the time when his father and the other villagers rebelled against British rule. The river was often the battlefield between the two opponents. He talked about the river as though it was an old friend. He explained how it had seen them through the worst of times like the **starvation**<sup>7</sup> they experienced during the Japanese occupation of Malaya, and how the river has helped them throughout their lives.

That night we had a wonderful dinner at Tok Kassim's house. Many of the villagers came and brought some food. A neighbour even brought fresh honey still attached to pieces of honeycomb. It was one of the most natural food I have ever tasted.

The next morning, we left on the boat. During the journey, I thought about how strange the life of this village and the surroundings seemed to me and my friends in Singapore. Despite the simplicity of their lives, they are strong people who could weather bad times.

But most of all, while we talk about "green" living, these people are quietly practising it.

1. assignment /ə'saɪnmənt/ (n) *nhiệm vụ được giao*
2. challenge /tʃælɪndʒ/ (v) *thách, thách thức*
3. tease /ti:z/ (v) *chòng ghẹo, trêu chọc*
4. focal /'fəʊkl/ (adj) *thuộc về hoặc vị trí tiêu điểm*
5. raft /rɑ:ft/ (n) *bè, mảng*
6. recount /rɪ'kaʊnt/ (v) *thuật lại, kể lại*
7. starvation /stɑ:'veɪʃn/ (n) *sự đói, sự chết đói*

## 91. A SMALL QUARREL *MỘT CUỘC TRANH CÃI NHỎ NHẶT*

People these days are become quite quarrelsome. They have very little **tolerance**<sup>1</sup> and small incidents which should be accepted with a smile can make them lose their tempers. Quarrelling have become more and frequent. I have personally witnessed a quarrel.

My friends and I were at the park. There was also a small field for the children. I saw two boys quarrelling over a ball. I tried to stop them, to my surprise I saw two ladies approaching, I thought they were going to thank me for having stopped the boys from quarrelling. Instead of thanking me and take their kids home, they started quarrelling themselves. They started screaming at each other.

The passers-by were astounded and soon gathered around, none tried to stop them. Instead some **added fuel to the fire**<sup>2</sup> by their comments. Soon they seemed to be exhausted by their verbal warfare and were about to exchange blows when suddenly two policemen appeared.

The policemen refused to listen and in their authoritative manner, silenced the both of them. The police questioned them about the fight. To everyone's surprise, they pointed to me as the witness and **alleged**<sup>3</sup> that one of the boys had taken the other's ball. The policemen looked at me for an answer. I tried to explain that I was in no way concerned. Suddenly one of the policeman pointed at the two boys who were now playing happily and not paying much attention to what was going nearby. The two women were ashamed of themselves and left immediately.

1. tolerance /'tɒlərəns/ (n) *sự chịu đựng, sự dung thứ*

2. add fuel to the fire (idm) *châm dầu vào lửa, nói vô làm người ta phản ứng mạnh mẽ hơn*

3. allege /ə'ledʒ/ (v) *tuyên bố (cái gì) là sự thật nhưng không chứng minh*

## 92. A QUARREL AMONG FRIENDS VỤ CÁI CỌ GIỮA BẠN BÈ

I saw John and Rajoo shouting at each other near the school field. A few students had gathered around them. I walked towards them so that I could find out what was happening.

John appeared to be more angry than Rajoo. He kept saying that his composition was the better one, and that it was not fair. Whenever John shouted at him, Rajoo also lost his patience and shouted back. He said that John was a bad loser.

After listening for a while, I gathered that the argument was about the prize for the best English composition in class. Rajoo had won it. But John felt that his composition was better and that Rajoo had won it because he was the favourite of Miss Chan, the English teacher. Of course, Rajoo **denied**<sup>1</sup> this and was angry at John for making the **accusation**.<sup>2</sup>

Their argument grew louder and a student called Miss Chan to the scene. When she arrived, she scolded them for making such a commotion, and asked them what was the argument about. When they had finished explaining, she turned to John and told him that his accusation was **unfair**.<sup>3</sup> There were two other teachers besides Miss Chan who judged the compositions. John's composition was a close second to Rajoo's.

Ms Chan added that they were both good students and that she was proud of them. Rajoo's winning composition would appear in the yearbook representing the class. Since John's composition was very good, she would try to include his in the yearbook as well.

Both boys seemed to accept Miss Chan's explanation. John then apologised to Rajoo for shouting at him. Rajoo accepted his apology and offered his hand. John **grasped**<sup>4</sup> it and, with friendly smiles on their faces, they shook hands.

1. deny /dɪ'naɪ/ (v) *phủ nhận, từ chối*
2. accusation /ækju:'zeɪʃn/ (n) *sự buộc tội*
3. unfair /ʌn'feə(r)/ (adj) *không công bằng, bất công*
4. grasp /grɑ:sp/ (v) *nắm chặt lấy (bằng tay, v.v...)*

### 93. MY EXPERIENCE IN RIDING A BICYCLE KINH NGHIỆM CHẠY XE ĐẠP CỦA TÔI

I have a memorable experience when I was five years old. My father bought for me a medium sized learner's bicycle, with two side wheels. I was very happy. For a year, I practised every morning and evening. But, after that I **envied**<sup>1</sup> other boys who could ride their bicycles without the two side wheels. I wanted to be able to ride a normal bicycle. So one day, I asked my father to **remove**<sup>2</sup> the side wheels.

At first, he **hesitated**,<sup>3</sup> fearing I might fall and get myself **injured**.<sup>4</sup> I was his only child. But my mother persuaded and **nagged**<sup>5</sup> him everyday. Finally, but reluctantly he removed the side wheels for me. Initially, my father hold the seat, I had nothing to worry about. As I started to **pedal**,<sup>6</sup> the wheels responded beautifully, I was **thrilled**<sup>7</sup> and I kept pedalling for quite a distance. Suddenly, I realised that my father was not beside me. I pressed the brakes and I fell on my side. My father started laughing and came running towards me. He helped me up and asked me to try again, I tried and slowly I gained confidence. But I was only able to move straight.

Within a week of continuous practice, I was able to pedal without help. The feeling of achievement was so immense that my heart was filled with pride and joy. In two weeks, I was able to ride my bicycle with the other boys.

I had many falls, but they were worth it. Now I can ride my bicycle well and have no fear at all. I am now eagerly looking forward to the day when I can ride my own motorcycle.

1. envy /'envɪ/ (v) ganh tỵ
2. remove /rɪ'mu:v/ (v) tháo ra
3. hesitate /hezɪ'teɪt/ (v) ngần ngại, do dự
4. injured /'ɪndʒəd/ (adj) bị thương, bị tổn thương
5. nag /næg/ (v) quấy rầy (ai) liên tục
6. pedal /'pedl/ (v) đạp (bằng bàn đạp)
7. thrilled /θrɪld/ (adj) xúc động, hồi hộp

## 94. MY FIRST AIR TRAVEL

### CHUYẾN DU LỊCH BẰNG MÁY BAY ĐẦU TIÊN CỦA TÔI

My first experience in air travel was at the age of nine. My father and mother were planning the trip. When I asked them where we were going, they told me that we are all going to Hongkong by flight. I was so excited and waited nervously for the day of departure.

It was a Wednesday. My father had **booked**<sup>1</sup> three tickets on the Singapore Airlines flight to Hongkong. The flight was leaving at noon. We arrived at Changi airport around 10 a.m. to check in our luggage and **confirm**<sup>2</sup> our seats. We completed the routine check up and passed the brightly lit duty free shops to board our plane. The air hostess smiled and said "hello" and directed us to our seats. It was a Bigtop aircraft and I occupied the window seat. All seats were soon occupied and the air hostess **demonstrated**<sup>3</sup> the emergency **procedures**.<sup>4</sup> **In the meantime**<sup>5</sup> the aircraft started to move along the runway. We checked whether we had fastened our seat belts. Then the aircraft started to **take off**<sup>6</sup> at high speed. As I looked through the window I saw the beautiful landscape, houses, cars and ships became very tiny within minutes that we were airborne.

In about fifteen minutes we were invited to undo our seat belts. The air hostess served us drinks. I looked outside and I could see nothing but clouds. In a short while, they served a delicious lunch. The air hostesses were nice and polite. I was just simply enjoying every moment of my first air travel. More than three hours passed before the plane began to descend. We were asked to fasten our seat belts once again. Suddenly the plane began to **shudder**<sup>7</sup> mildly. My father told me it is due to air **turbulence**<sup>8</sup> and there was nothing to worry. In a few minutes I was able to see the magnificent view of Hongkong's coastline and the sea. All of a sudden the building looked very near and in no time the flight landed smoothly at Kai Tak airport. The plane finally parked at the end of the runway and we **disembarked**.<sup>9</sup>

My first experience on a plane was a memorable one which I shall never forget.

1. book /bʊk/ (v) mua trước (vé, v.v...)

2. confirm /kən'fɜ:m/ (v) khẳng định, xác nhận

3. demonstrate /'demənstreit/ (v) trình bày và giải thích (cách vận hành của cái gì, v.v...)

4. procedure /prə'si:dʒə(r)/ (n) thủ tục

5. in the meantime /mi:ntaɪm/ (idm) trong lúc đó

6. take off /teɪk ɒf/ (v) cất cánh

7. shudder /'ʃʌdə(r)/ (v) lắc, giật mạnh, rung lên

8. turbulence /'tɜ:bjʊləns/ (n) sự nhiễu loạn (của không khí, nước)

9. disembark /dɪsɪm'bu:k/ (v) rời tàu thủy hoặc máy bay

## 95. MY FIRST RIDE ON A HORSE

### *CHUYẾN CỠ NGỰA LẦN ĐẦU CỦA TÔI*

My first ride on a horse **dispelled**<sup>1</sup> forever whatever previous **notions**<sup>2</sup> I had about riding horses. I had thought that it was easy to ride a horse just like the cowboys on television. I realised how wrong I was through a rather painful experience.

I was down in Australia visiting my relatives when they decided to take me horse-riding one Sunday. I was thrilled. So we hopped into my cousin's car and headed towards one of the many riding schools on the outskirts of Melbourne.

We managed to book five horses at a riding school. The man in charge asked whether we knew how to ride a horse. Everybody said yes except me. I had never seen a live horse before that time, **let alone**<sup>3</sup> ridden one. The man asked me to mount the smallest one.

I mounted up surprising myself at my ability. I thought I was already an expert. The man gave me the **reins**<sup>4</sup> and said, "Pull the reins to the right to turn right, pull to the left to turn left".

I nodded confidently and took the reins. Next moment I lost the reins as the horse pulled them from my hands. The silly horse had reached down to **graze**<sup>5</sup> on the grass making me lose my **grip**.<sup>6</sup> The man laughed and returned the reins to me.

After a while, my cousins started to move their horses slowly towards a large field. My horse followed. Initially I felt myself **wobbling**<sup>7</sup> a bit but I kept my balance. This was not going to be easy, I thought. How right I was !

Gradually the other horses picked up the pace. My horse followed suit. I felt my bottom **bump**<sup>8</sup> up and down against the **saddle**.<sup>9</sup> Still it was manageable. Soon the bumping became uncomfortable as the horses moved faster and faster.

Suddenly I saw my cousins begin to **gallop**<sup>10</sup> their horses. I wanted to **protest**<sup>11</sup> for I was definitely losing control of my horse. Before any words left my mouth the silly horse of mine began galloping too. I hung on **for dear life**<sup>12</sup> as I was bounced up and down on the saddle. However hanging on for dear life was not enough. I lost my right **stirrup**<sup>13</sup> and immediately began to slide down the horse's left **flank**.<sup>14</sup> I **clutched**<sup>15</sup> desperately on the horse's **mane**<sup>16</sup> but it was no good. The next moment I fell off the horse.

I landed with a mighty **thud**<sup>17</sup> onto the ground. For a moment all I saw was white clouds against blue sky. Then I realised I was lying flat on the ground. I picked myself up. Except for being winded a bit, I was otherwise unhurt. I was lucky. I looked around and saw four riders and five horses galloping into the distance. They did not even know that I had fallen.

I turned around and headed back to the riding school on foot. I had had my share of riding that day. Before I reached the school I heard horses behind me. My cousins had discovered my disappearance and promptly returned to look for me. They laughed loudly at my misfortune but were glad that I was not hurt. They urged me to remount the horse but I **declined**.<sup>18</sup> I told them to carry on without me. Then I took the reins of my horse and led it back to the school.

For the rest of the week I had to rest my sore bottom and aching muscles. My first ride on a horse was certainly an unforgettable one.

1. dispel /dɪ'spel/ (v) *xua tan*
2. notion /'nəʊʃn/ (n) *khái niệm, ý niệm*
3. let alone /let ə'ləʊn/ (idm) *không kể, đừng nói gì đến, hướng chi là*
4. rein /reɪn/ (n) *dây cương*
5. graze /greɪz/ (v) (về gia súc, v.v...) *gặm cỏ*
6. grip /grɪp/ (n) *hành động nắm chặt, giữ chặt*
7. wobble /'wɒbl/ (v) *lắc lư, đảo đảo*
8. bump /bʌmp/ (n) *va chạm hoặc đập (bộ phận của cơ thể)*
9. saddle /'sædl/ (n) *yên ngựa*
10. gallop /'gælɒp/ (v) (về ngựa hay người cỡi ngựa) *phi nước đại*
11. protest /prə'test/ (v) *phản kháng, phản đối*
12. for dear life (idm) *thực mạng*
13. stirrup /'stɪrəp/ (n) *bàn đạp ngựa*
14. flank /flæŋk/ (n) *sườn (vật hoặc người)*
15. clutch /klʌtʃ/ (v) *giữ chặt lấy trong bàn tay*
16. mane /meɪn/ (n) *bờm (ngựa, sư tử, v.v...)*
17. thud /θʌd/ (n) *tiếng thịch, tiếng ụcch*
18. decline /dɪ'klaɪn/ (v) *từ chối*

## 96. A CRUISE<sup>1</sup>

### MỘT CUỘC DU NGOẠN TRÊN BIỂN

It was a sunny day. My father drove the whole family to Clifford pier. We were going on a cruise on board the Equator Dream. My brother and I were very excited as we had never been on a cruise before.

The Equator Dream is a big ship with four storeys. It has a huge dining room and a **lounge**.<sup>2</sup> On the lowest level is a **discotheque**<sup>3</sup> which my father said is not a suitable place for children. On the highest level is a sun **deck**<sup>4</sup> where most people will gather during the day.

We cruised around Singapore. We were served a buffet lunch on board. Then, we went up on the deck to enjoy the sunshine and the sea breeze. The scenery was beautiful.

In the evening, we were treated to a delicious Chinese meal. After dinner, we went to the lounge to chat and laze about. Of course, we also went up on the deck again to look at the **captivating**<sup>5</sup> night scene of Singapore. We could see the lights on the island **flickering**<sup>6</sup> from afar.

Slowly, the lights became larger and brighter. The Equator Dream docked and we disembarked at World Trade Centre. It had been an interesting trip and all of us went home feeling satisfied and happy.

1. cruise /kru:z/ (n) chuyến dạo chơi trên biển

2. lounge /laʊndʒ/ (n) phòng nghỉ chơi công cộng (ở khách sạn, câu lạc bộ, v.v...)

3. discotheque /'diskəteɪk/ (n) phòng nhảy disco, nơi mọi người nhảy theo các điệu nhạc pop trên đĩa hát, v.v...

4. deck /dek/ (n) boong tàu

5. captivating /'kæptɪveɪtɪŋ/ (adj) quyến rũ, mê hoặc

6. flicker /'flɪkə(r)/ (v) nhấp nháy, lập lòe

## 97. A CLASS EXCURSION<sup>1</sup> *CHUYẾN ĐI CHƠI CỦA LỚP*

It was a bright Saturday morning. The school holidays had just begun and my form teacher, Mrs Zhang, had promised to bring the whole class on an excursion to the Botanic Garden.

A bus was **chartered**<sup>2</sup> to take us there. We assembled at school punctually and Mrs Zhang did a head count before we boarded the bus. It was a long way to Botanic Garden and we sang songs merrily on the way.

Soon, we reached our destination. It was a beautiful place. We made a short tour round the garden and **snapped**<sup>3</sup> some pictures of the whole class. We then found a spacious piece of grassland and played some games there. Even Mrs Zhang joined in the fun.

When it was one o'clock, we unpacked the food we brought and **tucked into**<sup>4</sup> the noodles, sandwiches, fruits and barley drink.

In the afternoon, we went to listen to a choral performance by the National Junior College choir at the garden. They sang very well.

All too soon, it was time to leave. However, we cheered when Mrs Zhang promised to bring us on another excursion during the December holidays.

1. excursion /ɪk'skɜːʃn/ (n) *cuộc đi chơi ngắn ngày cùng với một nhóm người*
2. charter /'tʃɑːtə(r)/ (v) *thuê (một phương tiện vận chuyển vì một mục đích đặc biệt)*
3. snap /snæp/ (v) *chụp nhanh (một bức ảnh)*
4. tuck into sth /tʌk/ (v) *ăn (cái gì) một cách ngon lành, ăn ngấu nghiến*

## 98. A PICNIC MỘT CUỘC PICNIC

My father came from his office one day and told us that we were going to the nearby island for a picnic. He asked us to guess the island. My brother and I shouted together "Sentosa !" He gave us a smile. He then asked my mother to prepare food for the picnic. My elder sister, younger brother and I started to plan for the trip. We were so excited that we could hardly sleep that night.

My father took us in his car. He chose Saturday as the island will not be overcrowded. We arrived at the World Trade Centre and took the cable car to Sentosa. We reached Sentosa cable car station and took a **monorail**<sup>1</sup> to the beach.

Soon after arrival my mother spotted a thick shady tree and spread out a large cloth beneath the tree. She then arranged food and drinks on it. Unable to control our anxiety we started pestering our father to take us for a swim. He gladly accepted, leaving my younger brother in my mother's **custody**.<sup>2</sup> We dashed into the blue waters.

The water was cool and refreshing, we splashed and frolicked in the water. Several people bathing nearby gave cold stares. Sensing their **irritation**<sup>3</sup> at our mischief my father apologized to them and ordered us not to be too **naughty**.<sup>4</sup> My mother was cooling herself lying under the tree feeding my younger brother.

It was nearly an hour, we came out of the water fearing that we may get a sunburn. We **applied**<sup>5</sup> oil lotion over our body and we played in the water for another half an hour. Meantime my mother had arranged our food and called us up to eat. We realised that we had to stop playing and came out of the water half heartedly.

It was simply too hot by then and after lunch we felt too tired to continue laying. So we helped our mother to pick up our things and prepared to go home.

1. monorail /'mɒnəʊreɪl/ (n) *đường xe lửa một ray*
2. custody /'kʌstədi/ (n) (*quyền hoặc nhiệm vụ*) *coi sóc ai / cái gì*
3. irritation /'ɪrɪ'teɪʃn/ (n) *sự nổi cáu hoặc chịu*
4. naughty /'nɔ:tɪ/ (adj) *ngịch ngợm*
5. apply /ə'plai/ (v) *bôi hoặc phết (cái gì lên cái gì)*

## 99. AN EXCURSION TO NEARBY ISLANDS CUỘC ĐI CHƠI ĐẾN NHỮNG HÒN ĐẢO LÂN CẬN

Excursions are a part of education. One day we had a pleasant surprise when our teacher told us that we are going on an excursion to the nearby islands around Singapore. The coming Sunday was chosen and we were asked to be at school around 6.30 am. We were very happy and waited eagerly for the day. In the meantime we planned the programme for the trip.

On that day everyone were present as early as 6 o'clock. A bus had been arranged to take us to the World Trade Center **pier**<sup>1</sup> to take the launch for the islands. There was a big crowd of holiday makers buying tickets. But our tickets had been arranged and one launch had already been reserved for us. We all rushed in, I and my friends took seats so that we can have a better view. My teachers cautioned us about the danger of leaning on the boat's rail and looking over the sea. The boat left the pier around 8 am and we enjoyed scenes of huge ships anchored at the harbour and some big tankers in the deep seas.

The boat moved faster into the sea where it was rough. The boat started swinging from side to side. The early morning breeze was so cool and very soon the boat **berthed**<sup>2</sup> at Kusu island, which is known for its Chinese temple. We then had our breakfast and snacks and we wasted no time to **explore**<sup>3</sup> the beach.

We left the island in an hour time and our next stop was St. Johns islands. The sea was clear crystal blue and even at that time we saw many swimmers and some were resting under the tree. Some holiday makers were watching us play and some were irritated by our mischief. We finished our lunch there and our next stops were Pulau Pinane, Sentosa and other islands. Our boat merely passed by the island and we were not allowed to disembark as time was running short.

We returned to the World Trade Centre pier around 5 pm, and quickly the bus took us home.

1. pier /pɪə(r)/ (n) *bến tàu, cầu tàu*
2. berth /bɜːθ/ (v) *(về con tàu) đến nơi buồm, thả neo*
3. explore /ɪk'splɔː(r)/ (v) *thăm dò, thám hiểm*

**100. AN EVENING IN A LUXURIOUS<sup>1</sup> BOAT**  
**MỘT BUỔI TỐI TRÊN CHIẾC THUYỀN SANG TRỌNG**

A journey by boat is a pleasant experience, but think of a journey in the most luxurious boat. I had a chance to enjoy such an experience.

My father and his friends decided to go on a cruise with the family. They collected some money between them. The company also paid a share and they booked an evening in the luxury boat named Sealiner. A cruise covering a round trip of Singapore with a dinner and dance was arranged.

The invitation allowed for five members of each family. The boat was to leave around 5 p.m. sharp so we were asked to be at the pier before 4 p.m. Entrance was by invitation only. People started gathering at the **quay**<sup>2</sup> around 4 p.m. One by one, we were allowed inside the boat. Before boarding we were asked to take a lucky number.

The boat left the quay exactly at 5 p.m. Light music was played and the guests were asked to help themselves with the drinks. The boat sailed along the coast and we could see Pulau Pinani, Sentosa and even Johore from the boat. Dance started at around 6 p.m. and the youngsters danced to their heart's content. At about 7.30 p.m, the boat **anchored**<sup>3</sup> in mid sea, and everyone was asked to come to the top deck for a buffet dinner. There were more than ten varieties of delicious food.

When the dinner was over, the boat started to sail again. In the meantime, the lucky numbers were drawn. I won a prize of a hi-fi stereo cassette recorder for my lucky number 12. It was the third prize. The boat arrived at the starting point around 9 p.m. and we went home very happy.

1. luxurious /lʌg'zʊəriəs/ (*adj*) sang trọng, lộng lẫy

2. quay /ki:/ (*n*) ke, bến cảng

3. anchor /'æŋkə(r)/ (*v*) thả neo

**101. A JOURNEY BY CAR TO A DISTANT TOWN**  
**CUỘC HÀNH TRÌNH BẰNG XE HƠI ĐẾN MỘT THÀNH PHỐ XA XÔI**

When considering the distance a train journey ought to have been preferred, but my family decided this time to go by car. Our family friend offered his Sedan at our service. The car was a well-maintained one and could stand the long journey. We wanted to avoid the morning rush on the road and so we started early morning after having tea. All our luggage was packed in and the four of us left. Besides ourselves there was of course the driver.

Even before we were on the road the day was breaking. There was not much traffic on the road, except for **stray**<sup>1</sup> animals and the early risers. We sped along the road for nearly 50 km. We stopped at a hotel where we had a hearty breakfast with hot rolls, cheese, fried eggs and muffins. By the time we left the sun was up and the day was becoming hot. We talked of many things, from the latest film to the forthcoming **election**<sup>2</sup> and many joke to cut the boredom.

Though we were a family we had different views and opinions on a number of things. If one could swear by the hippie **cult**,<sup>3</sup> another could equally speak about the value of **transcendental**<sup>4</sup> **meditation**.<sup>5</sup> It is a wonder that such a **disparate**<sup>6</sup> group could occur in a family.

After sometime we switched over to the cassette player and enjoyed the song, hits of some famous musicians. This invention is a great **boon**<sup>7</sup> to a lonely traveller. Unlike the record player, the cassette is handy and the tape has a longer space and can be erased and recorded.

We stopped at a way side petrol kiosk for **refuelling**.<sup>8</sup> The road we took was the national highway and so travel was not particularly tedious. We drove past many vehicles, lorries, buses, vans and trucks. One the way we saw a coconut vendor. It was so tempting that we stopped for a few drinks. The cool, sweet drink was like **ambrosia**.<sup>9</sup> As we were nearing our destination, we just stopped to get out of the car in order to **tidy up**.<sup>10</sup> After that we continued our journey till we reached our hotel where rooms had been reserved. We were happy that we were able to cover such a distance in a car without any event.

1. stray /streɪ/ (adj) *thả rong*
2. election /ɪˈleɪʃn/ (n) *cuộc bầu cử*
3. cult /kʌlt/ (n) *sự sùng bái hoặc ngưỡng mộ đối với ai / cái gì*
4. transcendental /trænsenˈdentl/ (adj) *tiên nghiệm*
5. meditation /medɪˈteɪʃn/ (n) *sự suy ngẫm*
6. disparate /ˈdɪspərət/ (adj) *khác nhau, tạp nham*
7. boon /buːn/ (n) *mối lợi, lợi ích*
8. refuel /riːˈfjuəl/ (v) *tiếp nhiên liệu*
9. ambrosia /æmˈbrɒʒiə/ (n) *cao lương mỹ vị*
10. tidy (up) /ˈtaɪdɪ ʌp/ (v) *sửa soạn tề chỉnh*

## 102. A DARING RESCUE

### MỘT CUỘC GIẢI CỨU DŨNG CẢM

It was a seven storeyed buiding that had caught fire. The lower floors were used for offices and shops. In the three upper floors people were living with their families. There were several families living in the flats.

The fire started in a paint **godown**<sup>1</sup> on the first floor. How it all started nobody knew. The fire was notice only when it began to rage. It was an **ungodly**<sup>2</sup> hour when the fire broke out. The fire was noticed first by a night watch man who raised an alarm. He phoned up promptly for the fire service and police. It was sometime before the fire engines came to the scene. By then the fire had spread to the other floors. Between fire and smoke there were cries of **anguish**<sup>3</sup> and despair. People were at first rescued with the help of ladders and lifts. In the **confusion**<sup>4</sup> that **prevailed**<sup>5</sup> nobody knew who was rescued. In such circumstances people tend to be very selfish.

The fire fighters though they had rescued all. Then suddenly a lady remembered that her child who was sleeping in the **cradle**<sup>6</sup> had not been rescued. One can understand her anguish and pain. She began beating her breast and **wailing**<sup>7</sup> thinking that her baby would have **perished**<sup>8</sup> by then in the fire. One of the firemen did not lose hope. He told the lady assuringly that if the child was still alive he would go and surely save it.

He drenched himself with water, got up the ladder in spite of the warning given by his colleagues. Walls were **crumbling**<sup>9</sup> down and beams were falling and tongues of fire were still to be seen. Worst of all there was a thick pall of smoke. The man managed to get a foothold on a window. He got into the room and with great difficulty he was able to locate the cradle. It was a miracle that the fire had not done much damage to the side where the cradle was located. He took the screaming child and rolled it in a wet blanket which he had brought. He quickly strode to the window and called his colleagues who were waiting anxiously below with a foam mat. He threw the valuable bundle down. His colleagues caught it with **dexterity**<sup>10</sup> and the child was moved to a place of safety. No words can explain the joy of the mother.

In the meantime the fireman slipped down the ladder. In spite of the precautions he had taken, there were burns on his body. He was promptly taken to the hospital and given proper treatment. In appreciation of his service the authorities rewarded a medal to him. That was the proudest moment in the life of the fireman. Everybody was saying that he was worthy to accept the Medal for his courageous act.

1. godown /'gəʊdaʊn/ (n) kho chứa hàng
2. ungodly /ʌn'gɒdli/ (adj) rất bất tiện, phiền phức
3. anguish /'æŋɡwɪʃ/ (n) nỗi thống khổ, sự khổ não
4. confusion /kən'fju:ʒn/ (n) sự rối loạn, sự hỗn độn
5. prevail /prɪ'veɪl/ (v) tồn tại hoặc xảy ra phổ biến
6. cradle /'krædl/ (n) cái nôi
7. wail /weɪl/ (v) kêu gào, than khóc
8. perish /'perɪʃ/ (v) chết, thiệt mạng
9. crumble /'krʌmbəl/ (v) vỡ vụn
10. dexterity /dek'sterətɪ/ (n) sự khéo léo

### 103. THE NATIONAL DAY PARADE<sup>1</sup>

#### CƯỚC ĐIỀU HÀNH VÀO NGÀY QUỐC KHÁNH

I could hear the fast beating of my heart as I put on the knee-high boots which distinguished me from the other members of my group. As the drum **majorette**<sup>2</sup> of my school's brass-band, I felt responsible for the success of our performance in the National Day Parade which is going to begin in ten minutes time.

As the huge clock at the Town Hall struck three o'clock in the afternoon of the ninth day of August, we were commanded to take our positions at the Padang. Our Prime Minister arrived followed by the President in his stately Rolls Royce. They took their positions at the **grandstand**<sup>3</sup> and the National Anthem was sung.

A **pompous**<sup>4</sup> display of colours **pervaded**<sup>5</sup> the padang. Then began the march-past in earnest. One by one the **contingents**<sup>6</sup> represented groups of government servants from various departments. Then came the others such as the groups representing the Post Office Savings Banks, the nurses, the flight stewardess from Singapore Airlines, student teachers from Institute of Education and many more.

After these, I eyed a few groups of **cadets**<sup>7</sup> in green. They marched smartly and in perfect co-ordination. They were the few selected groups of National Cadet Corps members who had won the interschool competitions. Following them were three groups of National Police Cadet Corps members, the Girl Guides in their pleasant blue and the Red Cross and St. Johns in white.

My heart beat even faster as I **clenched**<sup>8</sup> my **mace**.<sup>9</sup> The Buona Vista combined band group was already half way through their performance. They were loudly applauded ; and then a moment of suspense, as I gave the command for my group to move forward to the performing ground. We made three formations and we were applauded by our school mates who were sitting together visibly in their dark green uniform. Then came my final performance. I threw my mace high into the air, positioned myself to a half kneel and caught my staff majestically. The round of applause I received was tremendous. After that, we formed our marching rows again and moved on in the procession.

We had to march for another two kilometres to the dispersal area. As we marched, we could sense thousands of pairs of eyes looking at us, observing and admiring. I was **elated**<sup>10</sup> and pleased with the performance that did us credit. I felt rightly proud for having availed myself of the opportunity to represent my school in our country's most **auspicious**<sup>11</sup> occasion. I knew that my parents watching the procession over the television, must have felt the same way too.

We reached the dispersal ground at exactly five-thirty in the afternoon. We waited for the other contingents to arrive. The beautifully coloured floats came in last. We were told that this year's procession had been a real success as hardly anybody could sense any flaw. After our refreshments, we went home, feeling proud and happy, not to mention, extremely exhausted.

1. parade /pə'reɪd/ (n) *cuộc diễu hành*

2. drum majorette /drʌm 'meɪdʒəret/ (n) *thành viên của một đội múa gậy diễu hành*

3. grandstand /'grændstænd/ (n) khán đài rộng có các dãy ghế ngồi cho khán giả trong các cuộc đua, biểu diễn thể thao, v.v...
4. pompous /'pʊmpəs/ (adj) khoa trương, phô trương
5. pervade /pə'veɪd/ (v) lan khắp, tràn ngập khắp
6. contingent /kən'tɪndʒənt/ (n) nhóm người có đặc điểm chung tham dự một cuộc tập trung
7. cadet /kə'det/ (n) học viên trường sĩ quan
8. clench /klentʃ/ (v) siết chặt, bấu chặt, nắm chặt
9. mace /meɪs/ (n) gậy quyền
10. elated /ɪ'leɪtɪd/ (adj) rất phấn chấn, rất hạnh phúc, rất tự hào
11. auspicious /ɔ:'spɪʃəs/ (adj) có triển vọng

## 104. AN UNNECESSARY ACCIDENT

### MỘT TAI NẠN KHÔNG ĐÁNG CÓ

My friend, John and I were walking through the school grounds, near the outer fence at 09.30. Suddenly, I **spotted**<sup>1</sup> an object which looked rather like a coloured rope. The object moved when we got nearer to it.

Convinced that it was a snake, John insisted that we should move away from the place. However, I wanted very much to report our find, but John feared that we might be punished for being at a place where we shouldn't be found and what was more, when it was during school hours.

The thought of somebody being killed by the snake or a possible reward if the snake had escaped from the zoo made me insist on reporting it. I suggested that we should take it to the police station but John disagreed saying that the police station was too far and that we would miss our subsequent classes.

I then suggested that we hand the snake in to the gardener as his assistant knew a lot about snakes. John agreed to this suggestion and John grabbed an old **bucket**<sup>2</sup> while I pushed the snake in with a stick. Then, John covered the bucket with a mat which he had found, to prevent the snake from getting out.

We walked towards the gardener's house but unfortunately he spotted us first, with the bucket and the mat in between us. Thinking that we had stolen these things from his house, he shouted angrily at us. We tried to deny his accusations and warned him of the poisonous **reptile**<sup>3</sup> in the bucket. He refused to believe in what we say and so he grabbed the bucket from our trembling hands.

Before we could do anything, the much-provoked reptile thrust its head out and bit the gardener. He screamed in pain and released the bucket and I saw the terrible attacker glide swiftly into the long grass by the gate. His cries brought his wife to the scene and we asked her to hurry and call for a doctor.

While John stayed with the unconscious victim, I rushed to the office to inform the police but no one was in. I left a message with the clerk and returned to the tragic scene. I realized that we could have avoided the mishap if we had reported about the snake immediately. We regret that this happened and we take this opportunity to express our sincere apologies.

1. spot /spɒt/ (v) *trông thấy, nhận ra, phát hiện*

2. bucket /'bʌkɪt/ (n) *cái xô*

3. reptile /'reptail/ (n) *động vật thuộc loài bò sát*

## 105. AN UNUSUAL INCIDENT *MỘT SỰ CỐ KHÁC THƯỜNG*

A most unusual incident took place recently at the Times House grand hall. It was on the occasion of our thirty-fourth anniversary and we had invited a guest speaker from the Times House **advisory**<sup>1</sup> **committee**<sup>2</sup> to present to speech.

It was 2.30 p.m. and the huge crowd was already waiting at the huge, old and yet **reputable**<sup>3</sup> hall. Outside, it was drizzling and this caused some uneasiness among the organizers as they have planned to have the reception out in the front lawn.

The speaker arrived on stage at 2.45 p.m. He began his speech promptly. The rain got heavier and dark, a damp **patch**<sup>4</sup> appeared on the ceiling directly above the speaker who was then engrossed in his speech. Tiny drops of water began to fall from the patch on the ceiling. The speaker **pretended**<sup>5</sup> to **ignore**<sup>6</sup> this but he couldn't do this for long as the sudden downpour outside caused water to really fall down from the ceiling.

The speaker was drenched from head to toe. A few of the organizers rushed up onto the stage. There was confusion on the stage as people tried to persuade the speaker to come down. Before he could do so, the ceiling **collapsed**<sup>7</sup> directly above him. The unfortunate speaker was hurt very badly and was given first aid treatment on the spot. Panic in the hall continued as the speaker was taken away.

While the commotion was continuing, a voice announced over the public address system that the meeting which was scheduled after the reception was to be cancelled.

The relevant authorities are now still in the midst of their investigations of this seemingly deliberate "accident". Police are still waiting for more information.

1. advisory /əd'vaɪzəri/ (adj) (có chức năng) tư vấn
2. committee /kə'mɪti/ (n) ủy ban
3. reputable /'reɪpjətəbl/ (adj) có danh tiếng đáng tin
4. patch /pætʃ/ (n) vết, mảng, đốm lớn
5. pretend /prɪ'tend/ (v) giả vờ, giả bộ, làm ra vẻ
6. ignore /ɪg'nɔ:(r)/ (n) bỏ qua, lờ đi
7. collapse /kə'læps/ (v) đổ, sập, sụp

## VĂN KỂ CHUYỆN

Kể chuyện kể dùng *một câu chuyện để phản ánh đời sống* (hoặc một lĩnh vực, một khía cạnh của đời sống), từ đó giúp người đọc hiểu biết đời sống và tự mình rút ra một thái độ, ngẫm nghĩ một bài học về tư tưởng, tình cảm, đạo đức...

Những yêu cầu chính

- Phải có một *câu chuyện* để kể. Câu chuyện có thể đơn giản chỉ có một tình tiết, có thể phức tạp với nhiều tình tiết. Diễn biến câu chuyện phải *tự nhiên, hợp lí, thú vị, hấp dẫn*.
- Chuyện phải có *nhân vật* (có thể là người, cũng có thể là loài vật hoặc vật vô tri). Tính cách nhân vật được bộc lộ trong quá trình diễn biến của câu chuyện, qua ngoại hình, hành động, cử chỉ, lời nói, ý nghĩ... của nhân vật.
- Câu chuyện có thể hoàn toàn có thật, có thể do hư cấu, tưởng tượng, nhưng phải hợp lý, phản ánh sự thật của đời sống, phù hợp với quy luật của cuộc sống.
- Từ câu chuyện phải toát ra một vấn đề bổ ích trong đời sống, giúp người đọc tự rút ra một đề nghị về cách sống, một bài học về tư tưởng, tình cảm...
- Người viết không được tự mình xen vào câu chuyện, tự mình phát biểu cảm nghĩ trong khi kể (trừ những chuyện mà người viết cũng chính là một nhân vật) mà để cho câu chuyện tự nói lên.

## 106. DAYLIGHT ROBBERY

### VỤ CƯỚP NGÀY

My neighbour Mrs Wu and her daughter Lily are rather **vain**.<sup>1</sup> They are fond of wearing expensive jewellery and displaying them in public. Whenever any friends **drop in**<sup>2</sup> to visit them, Lily enjoys showing them her collection of jewellery.

One afternoon as I was returning home from the library, I noticed a strange looking man **lurking**<sup>3</sup> outside Mrs Wu's house. I was curious to find out what he was up to. So I hid myself behind a huge tree. When it was time for Mrs Wu to go for her stroll, the man quickly hid himself behind some bushes. When she walked to the gate and was about to open it, the man rushed up and pointed a knife at her. Mrs Wu screamed. When I saw what was happening I quickly ran to get help.

I managed to stop a passing patrol car. When I told them what had happened, two burly policemen followed me. Mrs Wu was slowly taking off her jewellery and giving them to the thief. The two policemen overpowered and arrested him. Mrs Wu thanked me for my help. She learned a good lesson. After that terrible incident she never wore her jewellery.

1. vain /veɪn/ (adj) *tự cao tự đại, kiêu ngạo, hợm mình*
2. drop in /drɒp ɪn/ (v) *tạt vào thăm*
3. lurk /lɜ:k/ (v) *nấp (để chờ đợi)*

## 107. AN ACCIDENT

### MỘT TAI NẠN

I was talking to a friend over the telephone when I heard the **kettle**<sup>1</sup> singing. Calling out to my six-year-old sister, Leela, I told her to turn off the switch.

Suddenly, I heard a loud crash and Leela **yelling**<sup>2</sup> at the top of her voice. I immediately rushed into the kitchen. I was horrified to see Leela holding the electric **cord**<sup>3</sup> and sitting in a **puddle**.<sup>4</sup> The kettle was overturned on the floor. I realized that after turning off the switch, Leela had tried to pull the cord out of the kettle. However, she must have pulled so hard that the kettle fell.

I quickly carried Leela to the sofa. **Frantically**,<sup>5</sup> I grabbed my father's hair cream and applied it on Leela's scalded legs, hoping that it would help to **soothe**<sup>6</sup> the pain. Just then, our mother came back from the market. When she knew what had happened, she quickly took Leela to the hospital.

Luckily, the doctor said that Leela was not seriously hurt. She would be fine after a few applications of the cream he prescribed.

I felt very sorry for indirectly causing the accident. I apologized to my family and promised to be more responsible in future.

1. kettle /'ketl/ (n) *ấm đun nước*

2. yell /jel/ (v) *la hét, hét lên*

3. cord /kɔ:d/ (n) *dây gai, dây bện*

4. puddle /'pʌdl/ (n) *vũng nước nhỏ*

5. frantic /'fræntɪk/ (adj) *lo lắng và sợ hãi tột độ*

6. soothe /su:ð/ (v) *làm đỡ đau*

## 108. AN ACCIDENT AT HOME

### TẠI NẠN TẠI NHÀ

John is my neighbour. He is a naughty and mischievous boy. He often comes to my house to play with my **skate board**.<sup>1</sup> I knew something would happen to him one day and it really happened in my house one weekend.

One Saturday morning John came to my house to complete some homework. At that time my parents were not at home. John saw my skate board. He begged me to allow him to play with it.

At first I did not approve of it, but John **persisted**.<sup>2</sup> He **pleaded**<sup>3</sup> and pleaded. In the end I gave in to him and he was happy. He played with the skate board and while he was riding on the skate board, he accidentally tripped over a big piece of stone. To my horror he knocked himself against the wall. His forehead was bleeding. I quickly telephoned for the ambulance.

After a while the ambulance came and took John to the hospital. I was miserable because John was in hospital with a bleeding forehead. When my parents came home, I told them what had happened. Together we went to the hospital to visit John. John was not asleep and his parents were there. John apologised for being naughty and promised to be good in future.

1. skate board /sket bɔ:d/ (n) ván trượt
2. persist /pə'sɪst/ (v) kiên gan, khăng khăng
3. plead /pli:d/ (v) van nài, nài nỉ, cầu xin

**109. A BAD HABIT**  
**MỘT THÓI QUEN XẤU**

When I was younger, I used to tell lies to make people panic and laugh at them. However, an incident happened two years ago which made me kick the bad habit.

That afternoon, I thought I was alone at home. Taking out a big empty tin, I put it near the door and burnt some papers in it. The smoke of the flames was blown out to the corridor by the breeze. Hoping that the smoke would fool my neighbours, I started shouting, "Fire ! Fire !"

I hid behind the door to see what the fierce fat lady next door would do. To my surprise, I heard a loud "bang" coming from my bedroom, followed by my granny's cry. I rushed into the room and saw her lying on the floor, holding her left arm and **groaning**<sup>1</sup> in pain.

The fat neighbour heard the cry and came in. She immediately sent my granny to the hospital. I went along. The doctor told us that my granny had **fractured**<sup>2</sup> her left arm.

I felt very guilty. If not for my **lie**,<sup>3</sup> my granny would not have jumped out of bed, knocked against the table, fallen and fractured her arm. I was severely punished by my dad. Since that incident, I have never told a lie.

1. groan /grəʊn/ (v) *rên rĩ*

2. fracture /'fræktʃə(r)/ (v) (*làm cho cái gì*) *gãy hay rạn nứt*

3. lie /laɪ/ (n) *lời nói dối*

## 110. A BLACKOUT<sup>1</sup> MỘT LẦN MẮT ĐIỆN

We were all watching a **humorous**<sup>2</sup> television programme and laughing gaily. The next moment, it was pitch-dark. I was too surprised to open my mouth, but my little sister, Alice, screamed shrilly.

My elder brother immediately told her to **shut up**.<sup>3</sup> Our parents had gone for a show, so big Peter was to take charge. He felt his way into his room to get his torch. Bang !... "Ouch!" Peter must have knocked into his big chair. Soon, we saw a beam of light and Peter came out of his room, rubbing his left knee.

He told us to follow him to the kitchen to hunt for **candles**<sup>4</sup> and **matches**.<sup>5</sup> We **rummaged**<sup>6</sup> through the drawers and found twelve small coloured candles and a box of matches. I realized the candles were the ones used for my birthday a few days ago.

Together, we went back to the sitting-room and lit the candles. Peter arranged the candles in a semi-circle on the glass table and they gave a warm and cheerful glow.

To **while away**<sup>7</sup> the time, Peter told us a fairytale. However, before the tale ended, the lights came on. We felt proud that we had handled the situation well and looked forward to telling our parents about it.

1. blackout /'blækəʊt/ (n) thời điểm tối do mất điện

2. humorous /'hju:mərəs/ (adj) vui, hài hước, khôi hài

3. shut up /ʃʌt ʌp/ (v) im mồm, câm miệng lại

4. candle /'kændl/ (n) nến, đèn cây

5. match /mætʃ/ (n) diêm quẹt

6. rummage /'rʌmɪdʒ/ (v) lục lọi

7. while away /waɪl ə'weɪ/ (v) giết thời giờ (khi đang chờ đợi cái gì)

## 111. A NARROW ESCAPE THOÁT NẠM TRONG GANG TẮC

I was **in hot water**.<sup>1</sup> I could not stop my sister, Jill, from crying. We had been fighting over which television programme to watch and in the course of the struggle, I had accidentally **twisted**<sup>2</sup> her arm.

Jill ran **complaining**<sup>3</sup> to Mum. Mum was furious as this was not the first time we had fought over **trivial**<sup>4</sup> things. She scolded me harshly and went to **fetch**<sup>5</sup> a cane. Cold perspiration **trickled**<sup>6</sup> down my forehead. I **dreaded**<sup>7</sup> the thought of having to suffer the painful strokes of the cane. I wished I had given in to my sister earlier on.

I prayed for Dad to come home early to save me from Mum's **wrath**.<sup>8</sup> Just then, the doorbell rang. Jill went to answer it. We were surprised to see Aunt Polly at the door. She had come to ask Mum to show her how to make "sambal chicken".

Mum then became busy entertaining Aunt Polly in the kitchen and forgot all about punishing me. In the meantime, I apologized to Jill and applied some **ointment**<sup>9</sup> on her arm. Before long, we were on speaking terms again. Aunt Polly had certainly come at the right time. What a narrow escape !

1. in hot water (*idm*) : trong tình thế cực kỳ rắc rối

2. twist /twɪst/ (v) xoắn, vặn, quay

3. complain /kəm'pleɪn/ (v) kêu ca, oán trách

4. trivial /'trɪvɪəl/ (adj) vặt vãnh, nhỏ nhặt

5. fetch /fetʃ/ (v) đi và tìm cái gì đem về

6. trickle /'trɪkl/ (v) chảy thành một dòng mảnh

7. dread /dred/ (v) kinh sợ, khiếp sợ

8. wrath /ræθ/ (n) sự phẫn nộ, cơn tức giận tột bực

9. ointment /'ɔɪntmənt/ (n) thuốc mỡ

## 112. COURTESY<sup>1</sup> BEGETS<sup>2</sup> COURTESY *LÒNG TỐT LUÔN ĐƯỢC ĐỀN BÙ*

One afternoon, my cousin and I went for a movie. Before the movie started, I went to the public washroom. It was very crowded. I joined the queue and waited patiently for my turn.

When I was about to enter an empty toilet, the girl who was standing behind me asked me if she could use the toilet first. Her face was pale and she seemed to be having a terrible stomach upset.

"Sure!" I said without hesitation. I could tell from her face that she was very thankful.

After the movie, my cousin and I **were supposed to**<sup>3</sup> meet my uncle at the airport. We decided to catch a cab there. At the taxi-stand, I saw the girl whom I met in the washroom. This time, she was ahead of me in the queue.

We started a friendly conversation while waiting for our cabs. My cousin and I began to get worried when we had waited for quite some time and no cab had passed by. Finally a cab came. We waved good-bye to the girl but she offered to let us go in the cab first.

We thanked her for being so **considerate**.<sup>4</sup> She even helped us carry our shopping bags into the cab. From this incident, I fully agree that "courtesy begets courtesy". It certainly pays to be courteous.

1. courtesy /'kɜ:təsi/ (n) hành động, thái độ lịch sự

2. beget /br'get/ (v) gây ra (cái gì), dẫn đến kết quả là

3. be supposed to do sth /sə'pəʊzd/ (idm) có nhiệm vụ, phải làm gì

4. considerate /kən'sɪdərət/ (adj) chu đáo, ý tứ

### 113. HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY *THẬT THÀ LÀ THƯỢNG SÁCH*

One fine day, while I was on my way to school, I found a **wallet**.<sup>1</sup> It was lying outside the lift.

Opening the wallet, I found two hundred dollars and some coins inside. There were some pieces of paper but no identity card. I was **tempted**<sup>2</sup> to keep the money, but I remembered what my teacher had taught us. She said, "It is wrong to take things which do not **belong to**<sup>3</sup> us." I scolded myself for **harbouring**<sup>4</sup> such dishonest thoughts. Then, instead of going to school, I went to report what I had found to the neighbourhood police.

The policeman was very kind and listened to me patiently. As I was about to finish my story, I was my neighbour, Mr Song, walk into the police-station. He looked surprised to see me. After much **explanation**,<sup>5</sup> we discovered that the wallet belonged to Mr Song. What a **coincidence**<sup>6</sup> !

My neighbour thanked me over and over again. The policeman praised me for being an honest boy. He also called up my school to **inform**<sup>7</sup> my principal of the incident. I am glad that I had not kept the wallet. Indeed, honesty is the best policy.

1. wallet /'wɒlɪt/ (n) *cái ví (thường của nam giới)*
2. tempt /tempt/ (v) *cám dỗ*
3. belong to /bɪ'lɒŋ tə/ (v) *thuộc về*
4. harbour /'hɑ:bə(r)/ (v) *nuôi dưỡng, ấp ủ (một ý nghĩ, v.v...)*
5. explanation /eksplə'neɪʃn/ (n) *sự giải thích*
6. coincidence /kəʊ'ɪnsɪdəns/ (n) *sự việc trùng hợp ngẫu nhiên*
7. inform /ɪn'fɔ:m/ (v) *thông báo, báo cho biết*

## 114. A LESSON LEARNT

### BÀI HỌC ĐỂ ĐỜI

I was shopping for a wallet in a large shopping centre. Suddenly, a naughty thought ran through my mind.

The counter where the wallets were sold was at a corner of the store. There was nobody around me then. **Stealthily**,<sup>1</sup> I put one of the wallets into my pocket. I felt guilt written all over my face. As I was about to leave the shop, a pair of arms grabbed me by my shoulders.

"We have to **refer**<sup>2</sup> you to the police for **shop-lifting**,<sup>3</sup>" the man said. I was horrified. My parents were notified and they were furious to learn what I had done. However, they pleaded with the shop manager **on my behalf**.<sup>4</sup>

The shop manager finally decided to drop the charge against me. I truly regretted stealing the wallet and promised to turn over a new leaf. He nevertheless referred the case to my school principal. I was given a **demerit**<sup>5</sup> point as punishment and my teachers explained to me the seriousness of shoplifting.

It had indeed been a painful lesson. I **resolve**<sup>6</sup> never to **commit**<sup>7</sup> the same mistake again.

1. stealthy /'stelθi/ (adj) rón rén, lén lút - stealthily /-li/ (adv)
2. refer /rɪ'fɜ:(r)/ (v) gửi đến, đưa đến, chuyển đến
3. shop-lifting /ʃɒp 'lɪftɪŋ/ (n) hành động ăn cắp hàng hóa trong cửa hàng
4. on one's behalf /bɪ'hæf/ (idm) nhân danh, thay mặt
5. demerit /di:'merɪt/ (n) lỗi lầm, khuyết điểm
6. resolve /rɪ'zɒlv/ (v) quyết tâm, kiên quyết
7. commit /kə'mɪt/ (v) phạm (sai lầm, tội lỗi, v.v...)

**115. A GOOD DEED<sup>1</sup>**  
**MỘT VIỆC LÀM TỐT**

There is an overhead bridge in front of the block of flats where I live. An old lady sits there selling sweets and peanuts. She told me that she had been **abandoned**<sup>2</sup> by her grown-up children. Out of sympathy, I buy a packet of peanuts from her whenever I cross the bridge.

One day, as I was crossing the bridge, it started to drizzle. The old lady packed her things and hurriedly went down the stairs. Before I could run forward to **give her a hand**<sup>3</sup> she missed a step and fell. By the time I reached her, she had already **fainted**<sup>4</sup> I was shocked to see her head bleeding. Unfortunately, there was no one around to help. Thus, I left her and ran to the nearest telephone booth to call for an ambulance.

In the hospital, the doctor told me that the old lady would soon be well again as she had not lost too much blood I was relieved. As her family would not care for her. I asked my father for help. Soon, she was sent to live in an Old Folks Home.

I feel glad to have been of help to the old lady. I intend to visit her often at the Old Folks Home.

1. deed /di:d/ (n) hành động, việc đã làm
2. abandon /ə'bændən/ (v) bỏ rơi
3. give sb a hand (idm) giúp đỡ ai
4. faint /feɪnt/ (v) ngất đi, xỉu đi

## 116. A TREASURE<sup>1</sup> HUNT CUỘC SĂN TÌM KHO BÁU

One afternoon, I received a letter which contained a map of the park near my house. A big cross was marked at a corner. Right at the bottom of the piece of paper were two rows of strange words:

frut eht rednu gid

evresed uoy tahw dnif lliw uoy

It must be a secret **code**<sup>2</sup> ! After looking at it for a long time, I realized that the message could be found if I read it backward. The secret **message**<sup>3</sup> was :

Dig under the **turf**<sup>4</sup>

You will find what you deserve

Immediately, I ran to the park. I found the corner where the turf was and started digging with a fallen tree branch. Soon, I saw a small box. In a state of great excitement, I opened it and found a piece of paper. It said : Dig harder !

I shouted with **frustration**<sup>5</sup> and started digging again. I began to perspire and I felt my arms aching. I was about to give up when I spotted another box. Holding my breath in excitement, I opened the box... and found another piece of paper. This time, there was a picture of an **idiot**<sup>6</sup> and the words : *This is what you deserve. Hee ! Hee !*

I was mad with anger. However, when I calmed down, I realized that I had indeed been a fool, wasting one afternoon on dreams of getting rich without working for it.

1. treasure /'treʒə(r)/ (n) (kho) vàng, bạc, đá quý, v.v...
2. code /kəʊd/ (n) mật mã
3. message /'mesɪdʒ/ (n) thông điệp
4. turf /tɜ:f/ (n) lớp đất mặt có cỏ
5. frustration /frʌ'streɪʃn/ (n) sự thất vọng, sự nản lòng
6. idiot /'ɪdɪət/ (n) kẻ khờ dại, người ngu ngốc

**117. A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY**  
**MỘT VỤ NHẬN DIỆN LẦM**

A strange incident happened to me one year ago.

It all started at a fast-food restaurant where I was having lunch with my friends. Suddenly, a woman walked up to us and called, "Lisa". We all turned and looked at her. I was surprised to find that she was talking to me. She even asked me why I did not go home. When I told her that she had made a mistake, she became **agitated**<sup>1</sup> and started crying loudly.

At that moment, a man came up to her and tried to calm her down. Then, turning around, he saw me and was **startled**.<sup>2</sup> **Gravely**,<sup>3</sup> he explained to me why his wife had behaved that way. They had had a daughter who looked like me. She had been killed in a road accident recently. His wife had not learnt to accept the mishap and that was why she insisted that I was her daughter.

I felt sorry for her. Therefore, I decided to visit her often, hoping that it would help her recover faster. My parents' supported my decision. Since that incident, I have been visiting the couple weekly. They dote on me as if I were their daughter. I believe the woman is getting better.

1. agitated /'ædʒɪteɪtɪd/ (*adj*) bị kích động

2. startled /'stɑ:tld/ (*adj*) giật mình, sửng sốt

3. grave /greɪv/ (*adj*) (về người) trang nghiêm hoặc long trọng - gravely /-lɪ/ (*adv*)

## 118. AN AMUSING INCIDENT

### MỘT VIỆC BUỒN CƯỜI

It was **April Fools' Day**.<sup>1</sup> My identical **twin brother**,<sup>2</sup> Jack, and I thought of a mischievous **trick**.<sup>3</sup> As we were in different classes, we decided to exchange places and pretend to be each other for a day.

I walked into Jack's class **confidently**<sup>4</sup> and **mingled**<sup>5</sup> with his friends. Nobody **suspected**<sup>6</sup> that I was not Jack. Only our parents could tell us apart. One of Jack's classmates happened to celebrate his birthday that day and had brought a big ice-cream cake to class. Of course, I took Jack's share of the ice-cream cake. What a treat !

Jack's classmates tried hard to make one another the biggest fool of the day. However, I was careful not to be tricked. Jack's closest friends were surprised and **remarked**,<sup>7</sup> "Jack is strangely alert today." I almost burst out in laughter but managed to keep a straight face.

Pretending to be Jack seemed fun until Jack's teacher scolded me for failing a maths test. It was so shameful ! However, instead of feeling angry, I felt sorry for Jack and decided to help him with his maths in future.

At the end of the day, Jack and I told each other what happened. The next day, we laughed at our class-mates for being fools not to **smell a rat**.<sup>8</sup>

1. April Fools' Day : ngày cá tháng Tư (1/4), ngày mọi người có quyền nói dối để đùa vui với nhau

2. twin brother /twɪn 'brʌðə(r)/ (n) anh (em) sinh đôi

3. trick /trɪk/ (n) trò bịp, trò chơi xỏ

4. confident /'kɒnfɪdənt/ (adj) tự tin - confidently /-lɪ/ (adv)

5. mingle /'mɪŋɡl/ (v) hòa vào, trà trộn

6. suspect /sə'spekt/ (v) nghi ngờ, ngờ vực

7. remark /rɪ'mɑ:k/ (v) nhận xét

8. smell a rat (idm) nghi ngờ có âm mưu, có sự dối trá

## 119. A PRICELESS GIFT

### MÓN QUÀ VÔ GIÁ

I have had this little wooden pencil case with me for about two years. It is the most precious gift that I have because it was made for me by my late grandfather for my tenth birthday.

My grandfather was a **carpenter**.<sup>1</sup> After he **retired**,<sup>2</sup> he continued to spend his time on woodwork. He liked to work in the garden where it was cooler. I used to sit beside him and watch him while he **hammered away**.<sup>3</sup>

One day, I could not find my grandfather in his usual place in the garden. After hunting **high and low**,<sup>4</sup> I found him in his room. His head was bent over a **rectangular**<sup>5</sup> object and his hands were busy **carving**<sup>6</sup> something. As soon as he saw me, he hid the object behind his back and smiled guiltily, like someone caught in a naughty act.

Just before my birthday, my grandfather fell sick. On the eve of my birthday, he **passed away**.<sup>7</sup>

The next day, I found the wooden pencil case in his drawer. There were some words carved on it : "Happy birthday to my beloved grandson". I was touched. So that was what my grandfather had been so secretive about. Since that day, I have always **cherished**<sup>8</sup> the birthday gift from my grandfather. To me, it is a priceless gift.

1. carpenter /'ka:pəntə(r)/ (n) thợ mộc

2. retire /rɪ'taɪə(r)/ (v) về hưu, nghỉ hưu

3. hammer away /'hæmə(r)/ (v) làm (việc gì) một cách tích cực

4. high and low (idm) khắp mọi nơi

5. rectangular /rek'tæŋgjələ(r)/ (adj) có hình chữ nhật

6. carve /kɑ:v/ (v) chạm, khắc

7. pass away /pæs ə'weɪ/ (v) qua đời, khuất núi

8. cherish /'tʃerɪʃ/ (v) yêu thương, gìn giữ cẩn thận

**120. A PLEASANT SURPRISE**  
**MỘT SỰ BẤT NGỜ THÚ VỊ**

The door bell rang and I went to answer it. At the doorway stood a fair and pretty girl with rosy cheeks.

"You Mona ? Me Yoko, you **pen-pal**<sup>1</sup> from Japan," she said in **broken**<sup>2</sup> English. I could not believe my ears. What a surprise! Yoko explained, with difficulty, that her family was stopping over in Singapore for two days before flying off to Australia for holidays. I was glad that my **elementary**<sup>3</sup> Japanese helped in our conversation.

I was also surprised to see the many beautiful presents Yoko had brought for me from Japan. It included a kimono, a Japanese paper **lantern**,<sup>4</sup> some beautiful badges with faces of popular Japanese singers and lots of delicious Japanese foodstuff.

She also took me to Hotel New Otani where her family was staying in a **suite**.<sup>5</sup> Her parents, Mr and Mrs Tanaka, were very friendly and generous. They treated me to a **sumptuous**<sup>6</sup> Japanese meal in a cosy Japanese restaurant.

I took the Tanaka family on a brief tour round Singapore before inviting them to my home for dinner. Meeting Yoko and her parents had certainly been a pleasant surprise.

1. pen-pal /'penpæl/ (n) (cũng pen-friend) bạn qua thư từ
2. broken /'brʊkən/ (adj) (về ngôn ngữ) nói sai, không trôi chảy
3. elementary /elɪ'mentri/ (adj) cơ bản, cơ sở
4. lantern /'læntən/ (n) đèn lồng, đèn xách
5. suite /swi:t/ (n) dãy phòng trong khách sạn
6. sumptuous /'sʌmptʃʊəs/ (adj) xa xỉ, xa hoa

## 121. A PLEASANT DREAM *MỘT GIẤC MƠ THÚ VỊ*

My story book **entitled**<sup>1</sup> "Fairy tales" slipped off from my fingers and fell onto the carpet. I felt too sleepy to pick it up.

Suddenly, the doorbell rang. I went to answer it and was surprised to see seven **dwarfs**<sup>2</sup> standing at the door. One of them was holding a glittering shoe. When I put it on, I was immediately transformed into a beautiful princess in a lovely **gown**.<sup>3</sup> The dwarfs then took me to the palace in a pumpkin-carriage to see the king.

The king gave me a warm embrace. "Cinderella, my daughter, you're finally home," he said. "The **maids**<sup>4</sup> will **see to**<sup>5</sup> your every need." Jane, who was always quarrelling with me in class, became very **submissive**<sup>6</sup> as my maid. I tried on many beautiful dresses and shoes and thought that I had never looked so pretty before. There were also many cooks who prepared all my favourite dishes.

One day, I was riding my horse to visit a **duke**<sup>7</sup> when I heard my mum saying, "Cindy, hurry up! You'll be late!" She started shaking me so hard that I almost **fell off**<sup>8</sup> my horse. I woke up and found myself in my bedroom. It had only been a dream, but it was certainly a wonderful start to my day.

1. entitle /ɪn'taɪtl/ (v) *đặt tên, đặt tựa đề*

2. dwarf /dwɔ:f/ (n) *chú lùn*

3. gown /gaʊn/ (n) *áo dài của phụ nữ dùng để mặc trong các dịp đặc biệt*

4. maid /meɪd/ (n) *người hầu gái*

5. see to /si: tə/ (v) *chăm lo (ai / cái gì)*

6. submissive /səb'mɪsɪv/ (adj) *ngoan ngoãn, dễ bảo, dễ phục tùng*

7. duke /dju:k/ (n) *công tước*

8. fall off /fɔ:l ɒf/ (v) *ngã khỏi, rơi khỏi (cái gì)*

## 122. AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

### CUỘC GẶP GỠ BẤT NGỜ

There was a tap on my shoulder. I turned around and was surprised to see Huiling. My greetings were so loud that everyone stared at me. Only then did I realize that I was still in the library. **Hastily**,<sup>1</sup> we went out to the corridor to talk.

Huiling is my former neighbour. We used to be very close friends. We were in the same class in school and attended the same church together. But since we **shifted**<sup>2</sup> to new HDB flats, we had drifted apart. Both of us were busy trying to **adapt**<sup>3</sup> to our new environment. Hence, we stopped writing to each other and lost **contact**.<sup>4</sup>

I never dreamt that I would meet her in the library. We were eager to know about the well-being of each other's family. We loaded each other with questions. Sweet **reminiscences**<sup>5</sup> of the past also came to our minds. We reminded each other of the games we had played - paper dolls and hide-and-seek. We also laughed as we recalled how we both got scolded at the same time when we were naughty. What delightful recollections !

After conversing for almost an hour, Huiling had to go because she had to meet a friend. However, before we parted, both of us reached an agreement. We would make an extra effort to renew and maintain our friendship.

1. hasty /'heɪstɪ/ (*adj*) vội vã, hấp tấp - hastily /-lɪ/ (*adv*)

2. shift /ʃɪft/ (*v*) chuyển đi

3. adapt /æ'dæpt/ (*v*) thích nghi

4. contact /'kɒntækt/ (*n*) sự tiếp xúc

5. reminiscence /remɪ'nɪsns/ (*n*) hồi ức

## 123. RECALLING MY FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

### NHỚ LẠI NGÀY ĐẦU TÔI ĐI HỌC

I am a Primary Six student in De La Salle School. I enjoy going to school because I have many friends. However, I still remember how frightened and lonely I felt on my first day at school.

That morning, my mother drove me to school. I felt frightened when I saw so many students running about in the school field.

I joined a queue and was brought into Class 1A by my teacher, Mrs Devi. I was in tears when my mother left. Many of my class-mates were also crying and Mrs Devi had a hard time **pacifying**<sup>1</sup> us. She played some games with us to make us talk about ourselves. Soon, I got to know a few friends.

Suddenly, we heard a bell ringing loudly and we started packing our things. However, Mrs Devi told us it was only a **break**<sup>2</sup> and led us to the canteen. I was glad to see my mother waiting for me with a bowl of **prawn noodles**.<sup>3</sup> As I ate, I told her about my new friends.

After **recess**,<sup>4</sup> another teacher came into our class and we sang **nursery rhymes**.<sup>5</sup>

At the end of the day, I was no longer frightened or lonely. My parents were glad when I told them I was looking forward to going to school the next day.

1. pacify /'pæsɪfaɪ/ (v) làm nguôi

2. break /breɪk/ (n) sự tạm nghỉ

3. prawn noodle /prɔːn 'nuːdl/ (comp. n) mì tôm

4. recess /rɪ'ses/ (n) giờ giải lao

5. nursery rhyme /'nɜːsəri raɪm/ (n) bài thơ hoặc bài hát dành cho trẻ nhỏ

## 124. THINGS I REMEMBER DOING AS A CHILD *NHỮNG VIỆC TÔI ĐÃ LÀM KHI CÒN BÉ*

I can't understand how and what I did when I was younger could interest anybody. Since it has been asked I can try to **recollect**.<sup>1</sup>

My first recollection were about my living in my uncle's house. Those were the days when family ties were strong and relatives mingled as often as possible. I was the first grandson to come into the family, hence I was a favourite. I had nice things to eat and children of my age could come to our house and play all sorts of childish games. We used to dress in simple clothes.

The monthly **ritual**<sup>2</sup> of being given **castor oil**<sup>3</sup> by my grandmother has brought bad memories even today. I used to rebel at it but my uncle and others would force the cupful of heated castor oil down my throat of which half would have spilled on my body. So the whole day would be spent **purging**.<sup>4</sup> Modern children are never **subjected to**<sup>5</sup> this awful ritual.

The next event I remember is going to school for the first time. It was a play school and the teacher **coaxed**<sup>6</sup> me to sit and learn the mystery of writing. We started writing on sand. The child felt and the finger learnt. After all we spelt with the fingers. There were very few books. Learning the tables in Arithmetic was common and the copy books were universally used. There were not many of the aids of today in the classroom. The teacher rarely used the board because rote memory was insisted upon. We were having only **indigenous**<sup>7</sup> games and since the school closed by 5 o'clock in the afternoon, games were very rarely organized at schools. The day when the Inspector visited used to be very important but I can't exactly remember the things that might have happened then.

My going to the high school was an event by itself. I was called as they say to fit myself into the high school. My uncle took me to the school and presented me to the Headmaster who was an **august**<sup>8</sup> person. I almost shuddered when I stood before him and looked like a **liliputian**.<sup>9</sup> The Headmaster was the Gulliver who gave a dictation and a few sums in arithmetic in which I did well. So I was admitted.

I never forgot the old teacher who pushed us through the complex ways of English Grammar. He pumped it into our poor heads and those who were slow had a tough time. **Corporal punishment**<sup>10</sup> was not frowned upon in those days for they did not believe in the **dictum**<sup>11</sup>. "**Spare the rod and spoil the child**"<sup>12</sup>. With the cinema not in the **advent**<sup>13</sup>, we spent our time between the home, the school and the play field.

We were not innocent either ; we had our share of pranks but we never broke the law. One funny incident was that we drew the figure of the teacher on one side of the board which could be rolled and the other side had some problems. We rolled the problem side to the front - When the teacher came in and rolled the board to use the cleaner side he had a shock to see his **caricature**.<sup>14</sup> The class roared but nobody admitted who had drawn that picture. One of the boys who was a bit timid gave the name. The furious teacher thrashed the culprit but we **boycotted**<sup>15</sup> the informer for a few days until he tearfully apologised.

Now I look back on my young days with **nostalgia**.<sup>16</sup>

1. recollect /rekə'lekt/ (v) *hồi tưởng, nhớ lại*
2. ritual /'rɪtʃʊəl/ (n) *nghi lễ*
3. castor oil /,kɑːstər 'ɔɪl/ (n) *dầu thầu dầu (làm thuốc xổ)*
4. purge /pɜːdʒ/ (v) *uống thuốc xổ*
5. subject to /sʌb'dʒɪkt tə/ (v) *buộc phải tuân theo (ai / cái gì)*
6. coax /kəʊks/ (v) *thuyết phục nhẹ nhàng; dỗ dành*
7. indigenous /ɪn'dɪdʒɪnəs/ (adj) *thuộc địa phương, bản xứ*
8. august /ɔː'ɡʌst/ (adj) *oai nghiêm, đường bệ*
9. liliputian /lɪlɪ'pjʊːʃn/ (n) *người tí hon*
10. corporal punishment /,kɔːpərəl 'pʌnɪʃmənt/ (n) *nhục hình; hình phạt thể xác*
11. dictum /'dɪktəm/ (n) *tục ngữ, châm ngôn*
12. spare the rod and spoil the child (idm) *yêu cho vọt, ghét cho chơi*
13. advent /'ædvənt/ (n) *sự tới gần của một người, sự kiện v.v...*
14. caricature /'kærɪkətʃə(r)/ (n) *tranh biếm họa*
15. boycott /bɔɪ'kɒt/ (v) *tẩy chay*
16. nostalgia /nɒ'stældʒə/ (n) *nỗi luyến tiếc quá khứ; niềm hoài cổ*

## 125. MY MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION

### TÀI SẢN QUÝ GIÁ NHẤT CỦA TÔI

My most precious possession is a **bullet**.<sup>1</sup> Well, to be more **accurate**,<sup>2</sup> it is a bullet that has been fired from a **revolver**.<sup>3</sup> It no longer has the normal shape of a bullet. It looks more like a twenty sen coin now. It became shaped like this after it hit a metal post in the **shooting range**.<sup>4</sup>

Our possessions are usually what we intentionally went out to get. In the case of this misshapen bullet it was not so. I never intended to get it nor think it would become my most precious possession. Things sort of just happened without my trying.

It began one day about a year ago when my brother took me to the shooting range. He is a keen member of the local gun club and sometimes I tag along with him when he goes for shooting practice. It was on one of these occasions that I got this precious possession. I was watching him shoot some **targets**<sup>5</sup> with his 0.38 revolver when he asked me whether I would like to have a go. I grabbed the opportunity. I had never fired a gun before in my life and was always waiting for an opportunity like this. First he showed me the safety procedure. Then he showed me how to shoot the **pistol**.<sup>6</sup>

So I followed his instructions and held the revolver in both hands. I took aim at a man-shaped target some distance away and pulled the **trigger**.<sup>7</sup> I heard a loud crack even though I was wearing earmuffs. I saw the bullet hit a metal post way off the target. I even heard a soft "ting" as the bullet struck the post and **rebounded**.<sup>8</sup> My brother reminded me to hold the gun more firmly so that the bullet went where I was aiming at. I corrected myself and tried again. The second time I was more successful. I hit the target. Feeling a bit more confident I fired the revolver until it was empty. Out of five shots I hit the target with three. It was quite good for my first go at shooting.

My brother took the revolver back and continued his shooting practice. After the practice we went over to the target to see how well he had done. He did not do too bad at all.

While we were examining the target my eyes came upon a tiny grey object on the ground. Out of curiosity I picked it up. It was a flattened bullet, the result of the bullet's **collision**<sup>9</sup> with a metal post. I showed it to my brother. He said it was the first one I fired that hit the metal post. I looked at it with disbelief. Here was the result of my first shot with a pistol. How many people get to keep the first bullet they ever fired ? Perhaps I was the only one.

So I decided to keep the bullet as a **memento**.<sup>10</sup> It is still with me to this day.

1. bullet /'bʊlɪt/ (n) viên đạn

2. accurate /'ækjərət/ (adj) chính xác

3. revolver /rɪ'vɒlvə(r)/ (n) súng lục ổ quay

4. shooting range /'ʃu:tɪŋ reɪndʒ/ (n) bãi tập bắn

5. target /'tɑ:ɡɪt/ (n) bia (để nhắm bắn), mục tiêu, đích

6. pistol /'pɪstl/ (n) súng lục, súng ngắn

7. trigger /'trɪɡə(r)/ (n) cò súng

8. rebound /rɪ'baʊnd/ (v) dội lại, nảy lại

9. collision /kə'lɪʒn/ (n) sự va chạm, sự va vào nhau

10. memento /mɪ'mentəʊ/ (n) vật lưu niệm, kỷ vật

## 126. AN UNUSUAL BET<sup>1</sup>

### CƯỢC CÁ CƯỢC KHÁC THƯỜNG

**Challenge**<sup>2</sup> is a word made familiar today whether it be breaking a record at the Olympics or getting solar energy to work for us. Everything is a challenge. Betting is also a challenge. Here one uses one's sense of **speculation**.<sup>3</sup> From time immemorial betting has been in **vogue**.<sup>4</sup> Betting is for fun and profit is not uncommon. In gambling betting is usual especially in horse racing and in international football. Sometimes there are occasions of unusual betting. There was once a musician who was a tough guy. When it came to a matter of challenge he would rather break than bend. So people who knew him did not dare get into an argument with him. This man had a problem with his roof which was **leaking**.<sup>5</sup> The tiles had to be removed and replaced and some minor repairs made. So he called a **mason**<sup>6</sup> and discussed the problem. The mason agreed to do the job provided he was given a certain amount by way of his wages. It was **exorbitant**<sup>7</sup> and there was a lot of **higgling**<sup>8</sup> and both parties were stubborn, one demanding a higher wage and the other for reducing it considerably.

In this **zigzag**<sup>9</sup> affair the mason threw a challenger to the professional musician. He said that the other might know something of music but he didn't know anything about a mason's work and so couldn't do his job. The musician rose up to the challenge and said that he would show the mason how well he could do the job.

The next morning the musician was seen on his roof. He had tucked up his loins, bared his shoulders and was removing the tiles. His fingers which used to keep **time**<sup>10</sup> now lifted the tiles, which was a hard job indeed. But the musician would not back out. He removed the tiles, cleaned the roof, replaced the tiles in their place with a professional touch and applied cement and **mortar**<sup>11</sup> to keep the tiles in their place. Thus he **toiled and moiled**<sup>12</sup> for three days and had done the job to the wonder of his neighbours who were watching the man at his job. People who were at first pessimistic came forward vociferously to congratulate him. They said he was indeed a **nut**<sup>13</sup> and had showed that he could do anything once he made up his mind. The mason admitted his defeat and thence forward he became staunch admirer of the musician. He had lost his earnings by throwing a challenge to a man who meant business.

1. bet /bet/ (n) *cuộc cá độ, cuộc cá cược*
2. challenge /tʃælɪndʒ/ (n) *sự thách thức*
3. speculation /spekjuˈleɪʃn/ (n) *sự suy đoán*
4. vogue /vəʊg/ (n) *mốt, thứ đang thịnh hành*
5. leak /li:k/ (v) *rò rỉ*
6. mason /ˈmeɪsn/ (n) *thợ nề*
7. exorbitant /ɪgˈzɔːbɪtənt/ (adj) *(về giá cả) cắt cổ*
8. higggle /ˈhɪɡl/ (v) *mặc cả*
9. zigzag /ˈzɪgzæɡ/ (adj) *ngoằn ngoèo*
10. time /taɪm/ (n) *(trong âm nhạc) nhịp*
11. mortar /ˈmɔːtə(r)/ (n) *vữa, hồ*
12. toil and moil /tɔɪl ənd mɔɪl/ (idm) *làm việc cặm cùi, làm quần quật*
13. nut /nʌt/ (n) *người gàn dở*

**127. HONESTY PAYS IN THE END**  
**CUỐI CÙNG TÍNH TRUNG THỰC LUÔN CHIẾN THẮNG**

We shall call him Mr.X. He was a brilliant young man, an **all-rounder**<sup>1</sup> and was popular. No wonder he chose to become a teacher and he did become one. He put himself to his tasks with heart and soul and no wonder he became popular very soon. He could be seen in the field, he would be called to address a students' audience, and he would be the foremost in organizing any school function. Thus he became the favourite of the Headmaster, and the envy of some of his seniors.

To **mar**<sup>2</sup> his reputation something serious happened. It was the annual examination and the question papers were being set. Naturally, Mr. X being the confident of the Headmaster was helping the latter in collecting the question papers and sending them to the press.

But suddenly **like a bolt from the blue**,<sup>3</sup> two days before the Mathematics examination, the question paper was out and it was in the hands of every boy. At first the news was a whisper and then it became public. There was commotion in the school and the matter reached the ears of the Headmaster. Indeed it was a shock to him and he could not rush into any conclusion. He was a mature person but the teachers began to view Mr. X with suspicion and, though they never blamed him openly, they spread **rumours**<sup>4</sup> that Mr. X had a hand in the **pilfering**<sup>5</sup> of the question papers.

The rumour reached the ears of the Headmaster. Formally he spoke to Mr. X about the leakage of the question papers and secretly arranged for a fresh set of papers to be also printed through Mr. X. So on the day of the examination the new set of papers was given to the surprise and shock of all.

Mr. X had been worried when his colleagues looked upon him with suspicion and the boys too began talking about his alleged **complicity**<sup>6</sup> in the leakage. The matter didn't stop there. It had reached the ears of the management and so the Secretary wanted the Headmaster to hold an enquiry into the conduct of Mr. X in this affair. Poor Mr. X had been spending sleepless nights and wanted to clear his name.

Mr. X started enquiring from the boys how they had got the paper. But the clue was not easily forthcoming as the boys refused to talk. Mr. X would not take **defeat**.<sup>7</sup> After all he was popular and there were a few boys who were devoted to him. So Mr. X caught hold of one such boy and promised him complete secrecy and protection. The boy was reluctant at first but at last began slowly **yielding**<sup>8</sup> to persuasion. He told Mr. X how he got hold of the copy of the question paper and also the **modus operandi**<sup>9</sup> behind the **de b cle**.<sup>10</sup>

It had all happened this way. The question paper packets had been sent by post to the press to be printed. The packets were sent through the **peon**<sup>11</sup> to the post office. One of the boys who was poor in Mathematics and who wanted to pass bought the peon with a bribe and got the question paper packets from him. He had it copied and then repacked the original packet and posted it.

The boy with the question paper could not keep his secret contained. He circulated copies of it to his intimate friends who in their turn gave it to other boys until every student was having one copy of the Mathematics paper.

The information from the boy was passed on discreetly to the Headmaster who enquired very tactfully. The boy who had actually master-minded the plan refused to speak the truth, but the peon under threat of dismissal admitted his having parted with the question papers to the boy. When **confronted**<sup>12</sup> by the guilty peon, the boy could not hold his fort. He had to admit his guilt. Mr. X was relieved and now he could go about his duties with a clear mind.

His honour was restored by the management of the school as well as the public. Thus honesty always pays.

1. all-rounder /'ɔ:l raʊndə(r)/ (n) người toàn năng
2. mar /mɑ:(r)/ (v) làm hại, làm hỏng
3. like a bolt from the blue (idm) như sét đánh ngang tai
4. rumour /'ru:mə(r)/ (n) tin đồn, lời đồn đại
5. pilfer /'pɪlfə(r)/ (v) ăn cắp vặt
6. complicity /kəm'plɪsətɪ/ (n) sự đồng lõa
7. to take defeat /teɪk dɪ'fi:t/ (idm) chịu thất bại
8. yield /ji:ld/ (v) chịu thua, đầu hàng
9. modus operandi /,mɒdəs ɒpə'rændɪ/ (n) cách làm việc, cách hoạt động
10. de b cle /deɪ'ba:kl/ (n) sự thất bại đột ngột và hoàn toàn
11. peon /'pj:ən/ (n) người làm công
12. confront /kən'frʌnt/ (v) đối đầu

## 128. RETELLING AN OLD STORY

### KỂ LẠI MỘT CÂU CHUYỆN CỔ

The Master Swordsman

In old Japan, the **ultimate**<sup>1</sup> weapon was the sword. It was a much respected weapon often carried by a **samurai**<sup>2</sup> and other people of Japan's violent past. There have been many stories told about these skilful swordsmen and their incredible **feats of valour**.<sup>3</sup> The following is about how a man became one of the most skilful swordsmen in Japan.

A **brash**<sup>4</sup> young man approached a renowned master swordsman and **beseech**<sup>5</sup> the master to teach him how to use the sword. The master refused and asked him to go away, but the young man was very persistent. Finally the master **relented**<sup>6</sup> and accepted the young man as a pupil.

For the next two years the master **forbade**<sup>7</sup> the young man to even touch a sword and was given all sorts of chores to do. He had to cut firewood, fetch water, sweep the floor and attend to the master's every need. The young man did everything as told but as time went on he grew impatient.

One day he asked the master why he still never received any sword-fighting lesson. In reply the master took a stick and hit him so hard that he had to run away.

From that day on the master would come up on him when he least expected it and beat him with a stick. He could not fight back for the master was far better a fighter than he.

The beatings continued while he had to carry out his chores. But gradually he learned to **dodge**<sup>8</sup> and **parry**<sup>9</sup> the master's blows. After a year of this harsh beatings he became very **adept**<sup>10</sup> in **anticipating**<sup>11</sup> and avoiding the blows. Soon he could cope with anything the master threw at him.

As his skill in avoiding the beatings increased he realised that this was the master's way of teaching him how to deal with being attacked ! What a strange way the master used, but it worked, for now he could handle any attack.

The master, on seeing that this young man had become so adept in avoiding being attacked, then gave him a sword and taught him how to handle a sword properly.

After a short time the young man became very skilful in handling a sword. So the master told him that it was time for him to leave. The young man knew now that the master had first taught him to be **humble**<sup>12</sup> by making him do all sorts of chores. Next he learned how to cope with being attacked and finally he learned how to handle a sword. All these things he learned without really realising it. So with a heart full of gratitude to the master, he left and continued to be one of the greatest swordsmen Japan had ever known.

1. ultimate /'ʌltɪmət/ (adj) tối ưu, tối thượng

2. samurai /'sæmʊraɪ/ (n) kiếm sĩ Nhật Bản

3. feat of valour /fi:t əv 'vælə(r)/ (n) hành động cao thượng và dũng cảm

4. brash /bræʃ/ (adj) xấc láo, lì lợm

5. beseech /br'i:si:tʃ/ (v) cầu khẩn, van nài

6. relent /rɪ'lənt/ (v) bớt nghiêm khắc, xiêu lòng

7. forbid /fə'brɪd/ (v) (forbade-forbidden) cấm, không cho phép

8. dodge /dɒdʒ/ (v) né tránh
9. parry /'pærɪ/ (v) gạt, đỡ
10. adept /'ædept/ (adj) thành thạo hoặc tinh thông cái gì
11. anticipate /æn'tɪsɪpeɪt/ (v) đoán trước
12. humble /'hʌmbəl/ (adj) khiêm tốn, nhún nhường

## 129. AN UNFORGETTABLE CHILDHOOD INCIDENT

### MỘT SỰ VIỆC KHÓ QUÊN THỜI THƠ ẤU

I was about four or five years old at that time. My family lived in a wooden house bordering a coconut plantation. The coconut trees **loomed**<sup>1</sup> tall and straight. Many animals and insects could be found **scurrying**<sup>2</sup> up and down the trunks. Occasionally we could see flying lizards gliding from tree to tree.

Sometimes the older coconut trees would collapse whenever there was a storm. It was with one of these fallen trees that I had a most unforgettable and painful experience.

My brothers, sisters and I were playing near the trunk of a tree that had fallen the previous day. As young children we were very curious and wanted to have a close look at it. I was more **inquisitive**<sup>3</sup> than the others. Also I was more foolish. I climbed onto the trunk and started to walk along it. It seemed fun and I had to show off how well I could keep my balance.

The tree trunk was not totally straight. It **inclined**<sup>4</sup> upwards near the fronds. Bravely I walked up along the inclination. I felt very confident and sure. Higher and higher I walked. By then I was so **cocksure**<sup>5</sup> of my ability that I started to shake the trunk. That was my undoing for the next moment down I came with a thud on the ground.

I felt **excruciating**<sup>6</sup> pain and could not get up. I cried out. My elder brother tried to lift me but he was not strong enough. So one of my sisters ran home and fetched my father. My father came hurriedly and carried me back to the house.

He put me down on the sofa. I was still in great pain and I could not move my left arm. My mother came and examined me. She said my elbow was **dislocated**<sup>7</sup> and told my father to take me to the hospital at once.

Quickly my father reversed out the family car, bundled me into it and drove quickly to the hospital. My mother could not come for she had to look after my brothers and sisters. What anxiety she must have felt.

Nevertheless we reached the hospital in double quick time and I was attended to by a doctor in the emergency room. He carefully **manipulated**<sup>8</sup> my arm and finally put the elbow joint back into place again. All the time I was in a sort of a **daze**<sup>9</sup> as the pain was really terrible even after the doctor gave me a **jab**<sup>10</sup> to **lessen**<sup>11</sup> it.

I had to stay in the hospital for a couple of days for the injury to heal a bit. Fortunately there were no bones broken. So after two days I left the hospital and was greeted happily by my family. What an unforgettable but painful experience it had been. I learned not to repeat the foolish climbing act again.

1. loom /lu:m/ (v) hiện ra lơ lơ

2. scurry /'skʌrɪ/ (v) chạy nhanh, chạy thoăn thoắt

3. inquisitive /ɪn'kwɪzətɪv/ (adj) tò mò, hiếu kỳ

4. incline /ɪn'klaɪn/ (v) nghiêng hoặc dốc về phía cái gì

5. cocksure /'kɒkʃʊə(r)/ (adj) tự phụ đến mức kiêu ngạo hoặc chướng tai gai mắt

6. excruciating /ɪk'skru:ʃɪeɪtɪŋ/ (adj) (về cơn đau thể chất hoặc tinh thần) nhức nhối, đau buốt

7. dislocate /'dɪsləkeɪt/ (v) làm sai khớp, làm trật khớp

8. manipulate /mə'nɪpjəleɪt/ (v) điều khiển hoặc sử dụng cái gì bằng tay có kỹ năng

9. daze /deɪz/ (n) trạng thái choáng váng

10. jab /dʒæb/ (n) mũi tiêm

11. lessen /ˈlesn/ (v) làm giảm bớt, làm dịu bớt

### 130. AN ODD<sup>1</sup> INCIDENT

#### SỰ VIỆC LẠ LÙNG

It was very odd. There were no people on the bus, but the engine was running and their belongings were there. But the bus stop was deserted.

I had just visited my aunt who lived in the countryside. The bus that would take us back to town came only once every hour. I thought I would miss it so I ran all the way from my aunt's house. But when I reached the bus stop, this strange sight confronted me. Where were the driver and the passengers ?

There was a sandy field behind the bus stop and I went there to investigate. I saw **footprints**<sup>2</sup> on the sand which were probably made by the passengers. The footprints were all leading to one direction - towards the centre of the field.

I plucked up my courage and ran towards it. As I was about to reach it, an unusual sight caught my eyes. There was a big **crater**<sup>3</sup> in the sand, and a bright light, as though from an explosion, shone upwards. People stood at the edge of the crater, looking into it.

I continued to run towards it. Then I felt a hand grabbed my arm, and I screamed. "Hey, don't be frightened. Don't run to the crater, or you will be like them," said the stranger. I turned to face him, and saw that it was an old man whom I had seen in the village.

"Look at those people," the old man continued. "If you look carefully, you can see that they are not moving. They are **frozen**<sup>4</sup> like **statues**<sup>5</sup>." He told me that when the bus was about to leave, a glowing, bright object crashed into the field and formed the crater. The pull of the light was so strong that everyone seemed drawn and rushed towards it. Even the young children were not frightened by it. The old man could not keep up with the rest of them because of his weak leg. He noticed that whoever looked at the object in the crater became immovable, as though **transfixed**<sup>6</sup> by it.

I asked the old man what should we do. I wanted to run back to the village for help. "Wait," he said. "I think something is about to happen that will save them. The sky is dark. I hope the gods will bless us with rain."

We waited for the rain to fall. I **could not help**<sup>7</sup> stealing looks at those immovable figures surrounding the bright light. It was very eerie.

Then it rained, followed by a heavy downpour. The old man and I watched an incredible sight. The bright light grew weaker and disappeared, and at that moment, the people started to come "alive" again. We approached them and they seemed not to have any knowledge of what had happened to them. They were all busily talking about the crater, and had no memory that some minutes of their lives had been frozen by an **alien**<sup>8</sup> force.

I looked into the crater and saw that there was a smooth globe inside it. But when the rain **wiped out**<sup>9</sup> the light, it lost its power. The old man looked at me, and I nodded at him. We both understood that we would not tell the passengers the truth about the incident. They were better off not knowing, and besides they might not believe us, **anyway**<sup>10</sup>.

1. odd /ɒd/ (adj) kỳ quặc, lạ lùng

2. footprint /'fotprint/ (n) vết chân, dấu chân

3. crater /'kreɪtə(r)/ (n) hố trên mặt đất do bom hoặc thiên thạch rơi xuống

4. frozen /'frəʊzn/ (*adj*) bị đông cứng; sưng lại và bất động
5. statue /'stætʃu:/ (*n*) bức tượng
6. transfix /træn'sfiks/ (*v*) làm chết đứng, làm sững sờ
7. can't help + gerund không thể không
8. alien /'eɪlɪən/ (*adj*) xa lạ
9. wipe out /waɪp aʊt/ (*v*) xóa sạch
10. anyway /'eniweɪ/ (*adv*) dù sao đi nữa

**131. THE DISCOVERY OF A HUGE OIL FIELD<sup>1</sup> HAS CAUSED MANY  
CHANGES AND DISAGREEMENTS. WRITE A STORY**  
**VIỆC KHÁM PHÁ MỘT MỎ DẦU LỚN ĐÃ GÂY RA NHIỀU THAY ĐỔI VÀ BẤT  
ĐỒNG. HÃY VIẾT MỘT CÂU CHUYỆN**

The day was winding down in the desert **community**<sup>2</sup> in Saudi Arabia. Men were resting, smoking their pipes and exchanging jokes. The women were sipping tea while the children were playing in the sand.

Suddenly, Talib, one of the villagers and a Caucasian man were seen running towards them. "We have discovered oil in our village. We'll be rich !" Talib shouted to the villagers in an excited voice.

Everyone became excited and there was a lot of commotion. One of them told the others to calm down so that Talib could explain the situation to them. They then sat around in a circle while Talib explained that an American company represented by the Caucasian man had been **drilling for**<sup>3</sup> oil in their village. Today, they discovered, that underneath the land, there was a huge oil field. The company wanted to develop it and would buy the villagers' land for a great sum of money.

The Caucasian man mentioned the sums that the company was willing to pay. A few people gasped with wonder. He then left, and the villagers started to argue.

A majority of them, especially the younger men, agreed with Talib that they should sell their land and, with the money, start a new life. "After all, what do we have here ?" said one young man. "Nothing except goats, sand and mud houses."

That remarks angered some of the people. Ben Ahmad, a respected member of the community stood up and said that this was **ancestral**<sup>4</sup> land which had supported them and their ancestors for many generations. "How dare you look down on you community," he continued. "Do not be blinded by money. Here we all care for each other, and our culture must always remain strong." The whole room was silent for a while. Then it was agreed that they would **vote on**<sup>5</sup> the matter in a week's time.

From that time onwards, the oil field discovery was the main topic of conversation. Some people started dreaming of moving to the city and buying a lot of gold. While others could not bear to imagine leaving their beloved homes. People who wanted to sell their land were constantly arguing with those who did not want to sell. Old friends became enemies over the **issue**<sup>6</sup>.

Then the day of voting came. Those who had decided to sell their land **outnumbered**<sup>7</sup> those who wanted to stay by a slim majority.

The American company quickly arranged the sale and purchase of the land, and soon it was time for the villagers to leave. Since it would be their last time together, they put aside their disagreements and bade each other farewell.

Two years later, Ben Ahmed came back to his old village to pay a visit. He could not believe what he saw. Huge **oil rigs**<sup>8</sup> had been built on the land. Instead of the music of the desert wind and the rustle of the sand, pounding noises from the rigs fill the air. He realised that the black oil is powerful that it could change so many lives.

1. field /fi:ld/ (n) khu vực khai thác, mỏ

2. community /kə'mju:nəti/ (n) cộng đồng

3. drill (for) /drɪl/ (v) khoan (để tìm cái gì)
4. ancestral /æn'sestrəl/ (adj) thuộc về hoặc thừa hưởng của
5. vote (on) /vəʊt/ (v) bỏ phiếu cho một vấn đề gì
6. issue /'ɪʃuː/ (n) vấn đề đang được bàn đến
7. outnumber /aʊt'nʌmbə(r)/ (v) đông hơn (ai)
8. oil rig /ɔɪl rɪɡ/ (n) giàn khoan dầu lửa

### 132. A MISUNDERSTANDING

#### MỘT SỰ HIỂU LẦM

"If only he would listen to me," she **sobbed**<sup>1</sup>, "I could explain everything." May Ling reread the note. Her son Raymond had left it on her dressing table. Raymond wrote that he was leaving their home because he was disappointed in his mother. It had been only six months since his father's death and he had seen his mother **dating**<sup>2</sup> another man. He felt that she did not care for him as well as his younger brother.

May Ling blamed herself. She remembered last night when Raymond was sulking in the living room. She had asked him what was the matter. He started to **mumble**<sup>3</sup> something about a man, but did not continue. She tried to talk to him, but he became angry and left the flat. But May Ling blamed herself even more for keeping the truth away from her sons. She had wanted to surprise them, but it turned out to be a **disaster**<sup>4</sup>.

Raymond had apparently seen her with Seck Whee. She had met him at the restaurant near their home a couple of times. But there was nothing romantic about the meetings. Seck Whee was a car **dealer**<sup>5</sup> and May Ling wanted to buy a car for herself and her family.

May Ling thought that a car would help her with her errands as well as cheer up the boys. They had missed their father badly. With the car, they could go to more places together. Raymond had also obtained his driving licence and May Ling wanted to give him the pleasure and the responsibility of looking after the car.

But she wanted to surprise them. The last six months, she had been very busy working and saving for the car. She also spent the evening taking driving lessons as she and her late husband never knew how to drive. "I was wrong," she said to herself, "I neglected the boys. I should have explained to them what I was trying to achieve".

She had planned with Seck Whee to have the car **delivered**<sup>6</sup> to them next month. They were going to celebrate Raymond's nineteenth birthday at the restaurant near their home. Seck Whee would then deliver the car to them when they were at the restaurant.

Now, because of the secret she kept, Raymond had left home. May Ling was determined to find her son. She tried to think of all his favourite places, and somehow she felt that he would be at the lake where he used to go fishing with his father.

She hurried to the place, and sure enough, she saw him sitting by the lake. May Ling approached him. Raymond refused to listen when she first tried to explain. But when she showed him the purchase contract for the car and explained the situation, his anger cooled down.

May Ling was thankful that she was given the opportunity to mend the problem. She hoped that they could rebuild their lives and be a happy family again.

1. sob /sɒb/ (v) *khóc (nức nở)*

2. date /deɪt/ (v) *hẹn hò*

3. mumble /'mʌmbəl/ (v) *nói lí nhí, nói lầm bầm*

4. disaster /dɪ'zɑ:stə(r)/ (n) *tai họa*

5. dealer /'di:lə(r)/ (n) *người buôn bán*

6. deliver /dɪ'lɪvə(r)/ (v) *phát, giao*

### 133. THE TRIAL<sup>1</sup>

#### PHIÊN TÒA

Andy felt his heart thumping as the policeman led him to the **courtroom**<sup>2</sup>. He looked for his family and saw them sitting in the second row. The policeman told him to stand in the **dock**<sup>3</sup> with the other accused, his friend Beng Lee. When he was in the dock, Andy felt that everyone in the room was staring at him.

The judge walked into the courtroom, and everyone stood up. Soon, the proceedings started. Andy and Beng Lee were charged with shoplifting. They were caught trying to leave a department store with a small radio which had not been paid for.

Beng Lee's lawyer told the judge that it was Andy's idea to steal the radio. Andy was shocked to hear this. It was, in fact, the other way around. He never thought that Beng Lee, his good friend, would **make up**<sup>4</sup> such a lie to save himself !

Then Andy's lawyer stood up to address the court. He said that it was true that Andy had accompanied Beng Lee to the department store that day. When they passed the counter which displayed the radio, Beng Lee suddenly **whispered**<sup>5</sup> that he was going to take it and see if they could get away with it. Before Andy had a chance to react or protest, Beng Lee **snatched**<sup>6</sup> the radio. He also grabbed Andy by the arm and rushed him towards the exit of the store. When they stepped out, the store's security guard caught them and called the police.

When both lawyers finished addressing the court, the judge studied the papers in front of him before he made a judgement.

Some minutes later, which felt more like hours to Andy, the judge announced his decision. He said that Beng Lee had previously been convicted of two other offences of shoplifting. For this offence, he would be **fined**<sup>7</sup> and sent to a correction school so that he could change his ways. As for Andy, the judge **reprimanded**<sup>8</sup> him for mixing with bad company. He said that Andy's school record had been good so far. Since Andy had no previous criminal record, the judge imposed a fine on him, and he would be free. But he had to report to a **probation**<sup>9</sup> officer once a month to make sure that he would stay out of trouble.

Andy was very relieved to hear this. He did not have to go to **jail**<sup>10</sup>, and could go home after this terrible **ordeal**<sup>11</sup>.

But when he got home, things were not quite as before. His family seemed somewhat uncomfortable with him. He knew that he had disappointed them by being involved in such a situation. His mother was her usual loving self. She kept reminding him to use this experience as a lesson, and to concentrate on his studies.

But Andy knew that not only his mother, but the whole family loved him. They had given him so much support and hope throughout the ordeal. He realised that he had to be a person of good character to **make up for**<sup>12</sup> all the trouble he had caused. The court trial was over, but the trial to win back his family's approval and trust had just begun.

1. trial /'traɪəl/ (n) *phiên tòa xử*

2. courtroom /'kɔ:tru:m/ (n) *phòng xử án*

3. dock /dɒk/ (n) *ghế bị cáo*

4. make up /meɪk ʌp/ (v) *bịa ra, bịa đặt*
5. whisper /'wɪspə(r)/ (v) *(nói) thì thầm*
6. snatch /snætʃ/ (v) *vồ, chớp lấy*
7. fine /faɪn/ (v) *phạt ai bằng tiền* – (n) *số tiền phạt*
8. reprimand /'reprɪmɑ:nd/ (v) *khiển trách*
9. probation /prə'beɪʃn/ (n) *án treo, thời gian quản chế*
10. jail /dʒeɪl/ (n) *(cũng gaol) nhà tù*
11. ordeal /ɔ:'di:əl/ (n) *sự thử thách*
12. make up for /meɪk ʌp fə(r)/ (v) *đền bù, bù đắp cho (cái gì)*

134. "SOMETIMES WE HAVE TO TREAT PEOPLE UNKINDLY FOR THEIR OWN GOOD." WRITE A STORY.

**“ĐÔI KHI CHÚNG TA PHẢI ĐỐI XỬ VỚI NGƯỜI KHÁC MỘT CÁCH NGHIÊM KHẮC VÌ LỢI ÍCH CỦA CHÍNH HỌ”. HÃY MINH HỌA BẰNG MỘT CÂU CHUYỆN**

Hamid had grown up as a **pampered**<sup>1</sup> boy. His father was frequently away on business trips and his mother had spoiled him to make up for his father's absence. He did not have to lift a finger in the house. His mother and the maid did everything for him. He always got what he wanted and sometimes he was **rude**<sup>2</sup> to people.

One day his father noticed how pampered Hamid had become. Even though he was already 16 years old, he was still a spoilt child. During that same period, Hamid's grandfather who lived in the countryside was there for a visit. He noticed the same thing too. The two men agreed that Hamid should be more independent, and they felt that spending his month-long school holiday in the countryside might help him.

When they told him about this plan, Hamid refused to go. But his father put his foot down and told him that he had no choice in the matter.

When he arrived at the village, his grandparents who lived by themselves told Hamid that he would have to help them with all the chores. They would be too busy to attend to him. So Hamid had to be taught how to wash dishes and other simple household chores. His grandmother told him not to **scorn**<sup>3</sup> these skills. She said that if he were to go abroad for studies, he would be able to take care of himself.

Hamid still looked down at the villagers as "country bumpkins." But he gradually realised that they worked very hard. They spent long hours tending to the paddy fields. At first, Hamid complained about all the bending and the physical work. He also could not bear to be in the hot sun. But his grandfather told him not to be a "**softie**<sup>4</sup>", and advised him to take it as a challenge.

The villagers also help each other to build and mend their houses. One day, they gathered to help an old couple build an **extension**<sup>5</sup> to their small house. Someone had **shoved**<sup>6</sup> a hammer and nails to Hamid and told him to pitch in. Hamid did not know where to begin or exactly what to do. Some of the young boys noticed his confusion and laughed at his ignorance. Hamid was angry. He had always laughed at these boys for their lack of **sophistication**<sup>7</sup>. But now they were the ones laughing at him.

Hamid made a new friend, Malik. Malik helped his family, and even assisted other children with their schoolwork. But he was still a good student who **aspired**<sup>8</sup> to be a doctor. This made Hamid feel ashamed because he always used the excuse of his studies to avoid doing any errand for his parents.

The month went by and it was time for Hamid to return home. Hamid had hated the idea of visiting the village when his family first brought it up. He thought they were being cruel to him. He also thought that it was unkind of his grandparents to make him do all those chores. But now he realised that his stay there had taught him to be independent, **self-reliant**<sup>9</sup> and useful to others.

1. pampered /'pæmpəd/ (adj) được nuông chiều đến hư hỏng

2. rude /ru:d/ (*adj*) thô lỗ, hỗn láo
3. scorn /skɔ:n/ (*v*) khinh thường, coi khinh
4. softie /'sɒftɪ/ (*n*) (cũng softy) người yếu ớt
5. extension /ɪk'stɛnʃn/ (*n*) phần mở rộng
6. shove /ʃʌv/ (*v*) nhét bừa vào
7. sophistication /sə'fɪstɪkɪʃn/ (*n*) sự tinh tế
8. aspire /ə'spaɪə(r)/ (*v*) khao khát
9. self-reliant /self rɪ'laɪənt/ (*adj*) tự lực

### 135. THE JEALOUS REACTIONS OF ONE PERSON TO THE SUCCESS OF A FRIEND *PHẢN ỨNG GANH TỶ CỦA MỘT NGƯỜI ĐỐI VỚI THÀNH CÔNG CỦA BẠN BÈ*

"We used to go to school together, sit together, eat together from a plate, talk over the telephone every night and even spend our weekends together," thought Diana as she walked sulkily home from school. She was thinking about her closest friend Liza who had suddenly decided to end their **established**<sup>1</sup> friendship.

This was how it happened. Diana was a favourite among her teachers. She was very much respected by her schoolmates. Diana, a very bright student who was always top in standard was befriended by Liza, the school's best athlete. Everybody knew that both of them were inseparable.

It so happened that a student from Primary Six needed to be chosen as the assistant secretary of the school's sports department. She was to represent the students of primary four, five and six at any meeting held in preparation of the school's coming sports meet.

The teachers had **unanimously**<sup>2</sup> chosen Diana because of her popularity among the other students. Besides, she could speak very well. Liza was not chosen because the teacher thought that she would be very busy with her practice as she would be running in a few events during the sports day.

When the choice was announced, Diana was cheered tremendously by the students. However, Liza's face became pale, she excused herself and hurried away from the assembly ground. Diana was not able to follow her as she was surrounded by the others. When school was dismissed, Diana waited for Liza at the school gate. When she did not turn up after half an hour, Diana went to look for her. Surprisingly she was nowhere to be found.

Thinking that she must have hurried home to attend to some personal matters. Diana walked home alone. That night Diana telephoned her friend to inquire about her. However, Liza made up some excuses to hang up the telephone. Diana believed her and readily excused her.

In school, the next day, Liza avoided Diana as much as possible. In class, she had to sit beside Diana but she kept quiet all along. During the break, Liza went off to the canteen without waiting for Diana. Diana saw her at the canteen, eating with another girl. Then only did she realise that something must be wrong. She searched herself to see if she had done anything wrong. The more she thought the more her mind suggested to her the possible reasons. At last she gave up and sat on a bench and ate her sandwiches.

As she was eating, two girls passed by and she overheard them talking. The mention of her name made her strain her neck and try to catch a few words from their conversation. What a shock she had when she finally **pieced**<sup>3</sup> the information together Liza was actually jealous of her position as the student's representative in the sport department. Diana could not believe that such a trivial matter could cause this heart-aching break.

Diana thought about the matter again as she walked home. She decided that Liza had to come to a self realization. She must realize that friendship should be cherished above all. Diana felt that she should give up her new post if that would **patch up**<sup>4</sup> the hole in their relationship. But... that would only pamper Liza and would not make her realize her **folly**.<sup>5</sup> She continued her walk deep in thought.

1. established /ɪ'stæblɪʃt/ (*adj*) vững bền
2. unanimous /ju:'nænɪməs/ (*adj*) nhất trí - unanimously /-lɪ/ (*adv*)
3. piece /pi:s/ (*v*) khám phá (câu chuyện, sự thật, v.v...) từ các chứng cứ tách biệt
4. patch up /pætʃ ʌp/ (*v*) hàn gắn, vá vú
5. folly /'fɒli/ (*n*) hành động, thái độ ngu xuẩn

### 136. A VIVID<sup>1</sup> DREAM *MỘT GIẤC MƠ SỐNG ĐỘNG*

I could not sleep. I kept remembering about the awful fright I had had that day. I kept wishing that Aunt Mariam would not tell Mom that I had been to the huge, old house down the hill.

I remembered walking down the **winding**<sup>2</sup> path through the thick woods, hot tears streaming down my cheeks. I kept thinking of Mom **cooing**<sup>3</sup> softly down at my born baby brother and then turning sharply to scold me for forgetting to do my chores. The rain drops from the drizzle washed my tears. The ground was already wet as it had rained earlier. I slipped many times as I made my way through the winding track to the huge, burnt house.

I was **panting**<sup>4</sup> by the time I reached the front gate of the house. It stood like an empty shell, black and burnt from that fire long ago. There was an eerie silence about the place **secluded**<sup>5</sup> from all sides by tall **menacing**<sup>6</sup> trees. Only my heart **throbbed**<sup>7</sup> away as I recalled the village children telling tales of the house being haunted by a girl and her brother who had died in the fire.

It was very dark inside. I **groped**<sup>8</sup> around for a while to get used to the dark. The place smelt of dampness and **mildew**<sup>9</sup>. I stood in the middle of the massive, empty hall and stared at the dusty ruin and decay that had gathered. The place was full of dark, shadowed corners covered with cobwebs. I noticed that the left wing of the house was untouched by the fire. I made my way lightly through the **debris**<sup>10</sup> toward the left of the house.

This room was surprisingly bright. All around there were oil painted canvasses, some hung, others covered with white sheets. I uncovered one to find a water colour painting of a girl of about my age, standing **pensively**,<sup>11</sup> grinning widely by a fountain. It was the sad, wistful look in those expressive eyes that held my attention for a long while. Then carefully I covered it. I was about to uncover another when a dark shadow crossed the room.

I looked up sharply in the dim light. Holding my breath I moved back slowly without turning around. I almost expected a **vampire**<sup>12</sup> to come out among the shadows. There it was again, huge black wings flapped towards me, screeching loudly. I lifted my sweaty palms to cover my eyes, swung myself around and cowered on the floor.

Lightning flashed into the dimness of the dimness of the room, thunder cracked through the walls. I got up slowly. Something must have hit my head when I swung round. There was an awful **lump**<sup>13</sup> at the side of my head ; it throbbed painfully.

Outside it was raining heavily and the wind howled loudly. There was something else too. I smelt something strange. It was smoke !

The house was on fire again. From inside the room I could see tongues of red flares. I looked around desperately. Lightning flashed again. Then before me was a rocking horse and a **cot**<sup>14</sup> on fire. I stood there not knowing what to do. Then the fire went out.

Before me was the burnt remains of the cot and as I gazed. I was horrified to see what looked like the **charred**<sup>15</sup> remains of a baby boy, black and lifeless.

I sat up, breathing hard, clutching my blanket. Looking around the familiar sights I sprang out of bed to my parents bedroom. There he was, my baby brother sleeping

soundly ; but my parents were not there. I still smelt smoke and heard fire crackling. I walked into the living room and there it was - the fire.

Across the road, the shophouses were on fire. I stood there, clutching my mother's hands watching the firemen do battle with the blazing monster for a long while. Then my mom carried me back to bed and tucked me into bed again.

1. vivid /'vɪvɪd/ (adj) sống động, mạnh mẽ
2. winding /'waɪndɪŋ/ (adj) uốn khúc, ngoằn ngoèo
3. coo /ku:/ (v) thì thầm dịu dàng và êm ái
4. pant /pænt/ (v) thở hổn hển
5. seclude (from) /sɪ'klu:d/ (v) tách biệt khỏi
6. menace /'menəs/ (v) đe dọa, gây nguy hiểm cho ai / cái gì
7. throb /θrɒb/ (v) (về tim, mạch, v.v...) đập nhanh và mạnh hơn bình thường
8. grope /grəʊp/ (v) dò dẫm, mò mẫm
9. mildew /'mɪldju:/ (n) nấm mốc
10. debris /'deɪbrɪs/ (n) mảnh vỡ
11. pensive /'pensɪv/ (adj) có vẻ trầm ngâm, dâm chiêu và buồn bã - pensively /-lɪ/ (adv)
12. vampire /'væmpaɪə(r)/ (n) ma cà rồng
13. lump /lʌmp/ (n) cái bướu
14. cot /kɒt/ (n) giường cũ (dành cho trẻ nhỏ ngủ)
15. charred /tʃɑ:d/ (adj) bị cháy sém

### 137. A MAD DOG CON CHÓ ĐIÊN

The road up the hill is long and winding. There's hardly any traffic, in fact it seems to be quieter than usual. Mrs. Foster takes a deep breath with a feeling of gladness and satisfaction. "Thank goddness ! There doesn't seem to be many people camping out up there", she thinks. She turns to her left to see the little boy sitting patiently beside her with eyes open wide, eagerly looking at the uncommonly peaceful surroundings. The little yellow Volkswagon moves slowly up the hill with Mrs. Foster driving and her little boy Billy on the front seat next to her.

"When are we going to see daddy, mum ?" asks Billy.

"In three hours time honey, at noon. We're going to have lunch together, remember ?" replies Mrs. Foster. Her son nods his head and continues to look at the scenery. They have driven for almost two hours. Suddenly the car moves very slowly. Only then does she realize she's running out of gas. She manages to drive up to the nearest gas station and presses the horn several times. No one responds, so she decides to get out to look for somebody in the station. The station is deserted but the doors are not locked. "Strange", thinks Mrs. Foster. Suddenly there's a sound coming from behind her. She turns to see only a dog staring at her. She pays no attention to it and starts to walk back to her car. Grrrrrrrrrr! "There's something strange about the dog". Mrs. Foster says to herself. Something strange that makes her hair stand. She decides not to turn around but walk quickly to her car. She opens her car door and quickly gets in. As she **slams**<sup>1</sup> the door, the dog pounces on it with great strength that makes the car shake. Billy screams and Mrs. Foster realizes that the dog is a mad dog.

She **winds**<sup>2</sup> up her car windows and locks both door. Just then the dog **rams**<sup>3</sup> her car again, this time shaking it even more. She realizes that there's nothing she can do to get out of the situation. Her car won't move and there's no way she can get out to make a phone call. As she holds Billy in her arms, there's another bang. This time the dog is on the front of her car looking dangerously at Mrs Foster and her son through the **windscreen**<sup>4</sup>. It begins to hit and scratch the windscreen as if to reach to the frightened victims inside the car. Billy's screams and cries only agitate the dog more and its movements become more **vigorous**<sup>5</sup> as it begins to hit harder and harder until the windscreen cracks. To her horror Mrs. Foster realizes what the dog is up to, so she tries to calm Billy down and it works. For almost two hours they sit there quietly, not even daring to breathe properly. The dog lays itself down on the **bonnet**<sup>6</sup> of the car and keeps a watchful eye on any slight movements.

Suddenly there's a sound of a truck. Several men get out of it armed with rifles and shot guns. The dog jumps down from her car and Mrs. Foster gives a sigh of relief. As she closes her eyes, she hears a loud bang, a gun shot, followed by the cry of the fatally wounded dog.

1. slam /slæm/ (v) *đóng sầm*

2. wind (up) /waɪnd/ (v) *làm cho cái gì chuyển động lên bằng cách quay tay quay, cuộn, v.v...*

3. ram /ræm/ (v) *đâm vào, đụng mạnh*

4. windscreen /'wɪndskri:n/ (n) kính chắn gió xe hơi
5. vigorous /'vɪɡərəs/ (adj) mạnh mẽ, dữ dội
6. bonnet /'bɒnɪt/ (n) nắp đậy động cơ của xe cộ; capô

## 138. GRANDPARENTS

### ÔNG BÀ

With **faltering**<sup>1</sup> steps two loving figures walked, hand in hand. Affection was shining in their eyes. **Silhouetted**<sup>2</sup> by the morning sun, they painstakingly made their way towards an empty bench. Beyond them, the sun shone bright but the sky was of a pale **azure**.<sup>3</sup> They sat down close as if afraid of losing each other after what they had been through. Occasionally smiling that little sad smile of his, the old man did not seem to mind the wind teasing the last few **strands**<sup>4</sup> of his white hair. He was drifting in his dreams. But it was only a seconds before he looked subdued again lost in his own world. The old woman too felt likewise.

Minutes passed in complete silence. Tears of misery trickled down slowly tracing the strained lines on the face **contorted**<sup>5</sup> with wrinkles. The only thing left for them was their love for each other, which glowed like a flame that will never die.

"Damn it ! Can't you take care of yourselves ? Do you expect me to do every single thing for you ? Look at that mess ! God ! Can't you see that I have my own family to take care of ? Isn't it enough that you have **wrecked**<sup>6</sup> my marriage. Why do you have to do this to me ?"

The bitter words stung them but they couldn't do anything about it. They were too old. All they could do was sit and stare at the empty space biting their trembling lips. They hard come to accept the fact that they were a **nuisance**<sup>7</sup> to their good daughter. As the heart-rending words trailed on, they realised that they were the cause of her **shattered**<sup>8</sup> marriage. They wanted to say they were sorry but she never gave them a chance.

She regarded them as a barrier to a happy life. She had wanted too much and had tried to understand too litte. They struggled throught life just because they wanted her to be happy and this was their reward for all the hardship they had endured in trying to please her.

One day they were forced to packed up and leave for their new home. It was the home for neglected parents. Life was unbearable there, looking at all the old people. They were useless and lifeless as vegetables. They were dependent on others. They felt ashamed but couldn't help relying on others. "They are so different from us. We don't need others to spoon-feed us. But they do", they thought.

The old couple have come to accept the reality of life. This is their home now, and it is going to be till the end of their days.

They held hands. He **squeezed**<sup>9</sup> hers smiling, showing gaps where teeth had once been. She smiled back assured that everything would be alright. In the **solace**<sup>10</sup> of mutual love and care they carried on their journey through life.

1. falter /'fɔ:lɔ:(r)/ (v) (về đi chuyển, đi bộ, v.v...) ngập ngừng, nao núng (do yếu sức hoặc sợ hãi)

2. silhouette /sɪlu:'et/ (v) in bóng, rọi bóng

3. azure /'æzə(r)/ (n) màu xanh da trời

4. strand /strænd/ (n) món tóc

5. contorted /kən'tɔ:tɪd/ (adj) nhăn nhó, vặn vẹo, nhăn nheo

6. wreck /rek/ (v) *phá hoại, làm hỏng*
7. nuisance /'nju:sns/ (n) *mối phiền hà*
8. shatter /'ʃætə(r)/ (v) *làm tan vỡ, làm tiêu tan*
9. squeeze /skwi:z/ (v) *bóp, siết chặt*
10. solace /'sɒlɪs/ (n) *sự khuây khỏa, niềm an ủi*

**139. THE DAY DAD DECIDED TO DO IT HIMSELF**  
**NGÀY CHA TÔI QUYẾT ĐỊNH TỰ LÀM LẤY MỌI VIỆC**

"Damn this stupid thing. Not again!", I heard mum say. Even without **popping**<sup>1</sup> my head inside the kitchen I knew that it was the dish-washer making trouble again. That was the third time this month.

I hate it when the dish-washer breaks down, because I would end up doing the washing. Mum had given up hope on the dish-washer. But is not dad ! He loves it when something breaks down in the house. He is always out to prove that he is the handy man around the house. After the amount of money he had paid to have the dish-washer repaired, I was sure, he wouldn't believe in anymore repairs. I was wrong.

When he got home and found out about the dish-washer, he was all ready to **try out**<sup>2</sup> the new tool-set my uncle had bought for me recently.

He started working on the dish-washer soon afterwards. The first thing he laid his hands on was the motor. God knows how he managed to get it out. This was preceded by a lot of banging and hammering. My mum and I spent the evening in the living-room, away from the noise. My mum did not quite mind the **mess**<sup>3</sup> my dad was making, because the dish-washer was not functioning well anyway, even before it decided to go on "strike" that day for the third time.

Dad continued to work through the evening. He was engrossed with the dish-washer and was not **distracted**<sup>4</sup> by anything else.

While preparing dinner, mum and I tried our best to avoid directing our curious eyes to my dad's working spot. But habit was so deeply **ingrained**<sup>5</sup> that we found ourselves turning our eyes on him. Believe it or not, it wasn't so bad. There wasn't much of a mess. Just **screws**<sup>6</sup> and **spanners**<sup>7</sup> of different sizes lying around - apart from the dish-racks and the motor. Dad gave us a mischievous grin.

We heard a couple of "ouches" and **curses**<sup>8</sup> in the kitchen but did not approach him. There were sounds of deafening hammerings. Suddenly, dad shouted for help. He sounded desperate.

Mum and I rushed to him. We knew what was coming. It was a disaster! On the kitchen floor was the motor which was somehow working on its own. The door was off its **hinges**.<sup>9</sup> Dad was surely for the dish-washer's lid was off too. I was not surprised. Dad was capable of anything !

What did my dad have to say after all these ? "They do not make tools like they used to anymore!" That's my dad.

The next best thing was to pull him away from the kitchen before he brought down the wires, saying that the wires had caused the trouble. My mum then called the Electric Company to collect the remains of the dishwasher. I went straight for the tools and placed them back in the store room. I was not surprised the least, when we did not receive any cash for the **junk**<sup>10</sup> we sent away.

1. pop /pɒp/ (v) làm (cái gì) nổ bốp

2. try out /traɪ aʊt/ (v) kiểm tra ai/cái gì bằng cách sử dụng người đó/cái đó – thử nghiệm

3. mess /mes/ (n) tình trạng lộn xộn, bừa bãi

4. distract /dɪ'strækt/ (v) làm rối trí, làm lãng trí
5. ingrained /ɪnɡreɪnd/ (adj) ăn sâu, thâm căn cố đế
6. screw /skruː/ (n) đinh vít
7. spanner /'spænə(r)/ (n) cờ lê
8. curse /kɜːs/ (n) lời chửi rủa, câu chửi thề
9. hinge /hɪndʒ/ (n) bản lề
10. junk /dʒʌŋk/ (n) đồ đồng nát, đồ tạp nhạp ít giá trị

**140. BEING THE ODD ONE OUT**  
**CON NGƯỜI LẠC LỔNG**

I took a final look at myself in the mirror before I put on my high heeled shoes. I thought I looked presentable enough. My brother was furiously sounding the horn hurrying me up. I went down the steps with difficulty due to my shoes. The minute I stepped into the car, he sped off, not caring that my heart had leapt into my mouth.

He was to meet his friends for a barbecue. He hated to take me along on such occasions. He said that I was a **spoil-spon**<sup>1</sup> tagging along behind him. However, he had to bring me because my mother insisted. She said that every time he needed to use my father's car at night, he must take me along. Well, whether he liked it or not, he had to oblige. I was to one who had to bear his deafening **nags**<sup>2</sup> while we travelled to and fro in the car.

He stopped at the East Coast Park and told me to get down. I was nearly in tears because I thought the barbecue was to be held at friend's house. If I had known that it was to be at the beach, I would have at least put on my pants and flat sandals. I would never dream of going to such an occasion in party skirt and high heeled shoes. Oh... why didn't he inform me. Although I was very angry with him, I kept my peace. I knew better than to say anything.

I hurried behind him towards the beach. When we reached the location, I was utterly shocked to find that there was not a single female soul around. His friends stared at me. I felt strange, although I still cannot **interpret**<sup>3</sup> their stare. I looked down shyly, and my eyes met my skirt. At that moment, I felt like tearing it to pieces.

The boys did not say anything to me. I realized that my presence was not welcome. I felt amixed feeling of embarrassment and anger. Who should I blame ? I thought everybody was to blame ; my mother, my brother and I. My thoughts was rudely interrupted by a rough voice offering me a seat on an overturned pot. I thanked him and sat, looking at the pitch black, moonless sky against the dark blue, calm waters.

I had been in the company of boys for a number of times but the occasions were never as forbidding as this one. At home, my mother and I live among seven males. They are my father, two of his brothers, my elder brother and three younger brothers. I love their company.

I was again interrupted by the rough voice. This time he offered me some **mutton**<sup>4</sup> cubes pierced in an iron skewer. Without thinking, I took it and began to eat. I shouted in pain when the burning **skewer**<sup>5</sup> touched my lips. My unsympathetic brother turned around to look at me. Instead of doing something, he gave me a threatening look and turned away. I heard him telling his friends that I was a spoil-sport.

I felt tears in my eyes but I would not permit them to fall.

I waited patiently till 11.30 p.m. At exactly 11.30 p.m. my brother signalled to me to go the car. I walked away alone, without saying goodbye to anybody. This time warm tears really poured down my cheeks. I quickly wiped them away as I heard my brother coming up behind me. Then, I realized that being the odd one out was indeed trying. I thanked God that it was all over.

1. spoil-sport /'spɔɪl spɔ:t/ (n) người phá đám

2. nag /næg/ (n) lời rầy la, chỉ trích liên tục

3. interpret /ɪn'tɜːprɪt/ (v) *giải thích, lý giải*
4. mutton /'mʌtn/ (n) *thịt cừu đã trưởng thành*
5. skewer /'skjuːə(r)/ (n) *cái xiên (để nướng thịt, v.v...)*