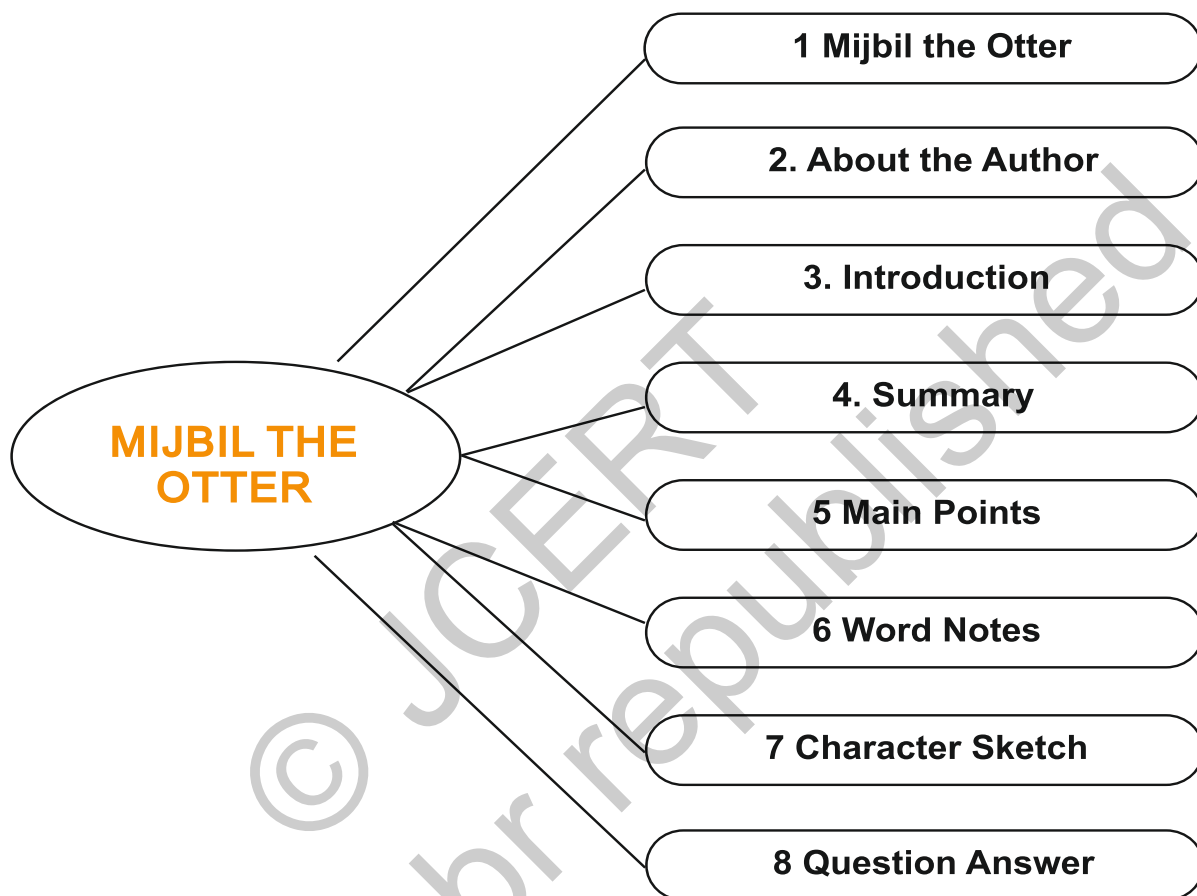
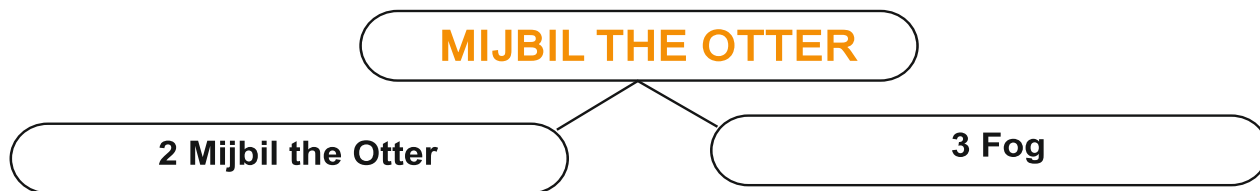


Mijbil the Otter Fog



Gavin Maxwell



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gavin Maxwell (15 July 1914 – 7 September 1969) was a Scottish naturalist and novelist, most recognized for his non-fiction work, particularly his work with otters. He wrote the book 'Ring of Bright Water' (1960) about how he brought an otter back from Iraq and raised it in Scotland. The otter was of a previously unknown sub-species which was subsequently named after Maxwell.

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INTRODUCTION

The story is a humour that comically explains the bond between the author, Gavin Maxwell, and his pet Otter, Mijbil. The author describes how his life changed after he decided to domesticate an otter after losing his pet dog in this lesson. He takes us on a voyage from Iraq to London, adjusting, playing, and traveling with Mijbil the otter, and how he built an inseparable friendship with him along the way.

SUMMARY

The story starts with the author traveling along with his friend to Basra to receive his mail. After losing his pet dog, he became alone, and thus during his journey with his friend, he expressed his wish to keep an Otter as a pet. His friend agreed with him and suggested that he get one from the Marshes along river Tigris in Iraq. After reaching the destination, they found that only a friend's mail had arrived. His friend received his mail and went away. He left a sack containing an Otter for the author. Being astonished he named the Otter Mijbil or Mij.

AN OTTER AS A PET:

The narrator said that Mij would take some time to get familiar with his surroundings. When Mij went to the bathroom, it jumped and rolled in the bathtub gladly. Mijbil loves playing with water and learned how to open the faucet by himself in a short time. In the Mijbil the Otter summary, the author says Mij loves to spend most of its time playing with marbles and rubber balls. His time is passing smoothly in Basra with Mijbil, and now it's time to go back to England. However, British Airlines didn't allow transporting animals due to which the author has to book a different flight that allows Mij on board.

The author put the Otter in a box before the flight and left it for some while. When he returned, he saw Mij created different holes in the box and ruined the internal lining. He got frightened

after seeing that blood was coming out from the air holes. The narrator hastily opened the box and saw that Mijbil was unconscious. Somehow, he managed to remove all the sharp edges from the box and placed the Otter again in the box.

There were only 10 minutes left for his flight to take off, so he rushed to the airport and caught the flight. Gavin told a summary of Mijbil to the air hostess as she was friendly and suggested the author place Mijbil on his lap. When he opened the box, the Otter disappeared and started developing chaos in the flight. It made all the passengers fearful. The air hostess in the flight helped Gavin to find Mij.

When the author arrived in London with an Otter, he left people clueless. They could not understand the summary of Mijbil the Otter and kept guessing the name of the animal. Some people think him to be a baby squirrel, seal, or a hippo. However, no one was able to make a correct guess that it was an Otter. The most shocking event was when the labourer was digging a hole in the street and placed down all his tools after seeing the animal. He screamed, what's this animal claiming to be?"

The Bond Formed Between Gavin And Otter

The author remained in London with his pet Otter for a month. Mij used to play with ping-pong balls, toys, rubber fruit, and other things for hours. While playing, he places the ball on the

slanted top of the suitcase. Gavin was supposed to take Mijbil out for a walk and exercise. The Otter developed some of the habits on those walks. He went with the narrator like children running, playing, and touching things in London streets. Within a month, the author developed a strong bond between him and his pet Otter.

MAIN POINTS:

- After his dog died, Maxwell decided to keep an otter as his pet.
- On the suggestion of a friend, he got an otter from the Tigris Marsh.
- Maxwell felt that the arrival of the otter opened a new stage in his life.
- The otter first appeared as a little dragon. He was covered with mud. Maxwell spent a lot of time and energy removing the dust.
- Otters like to play in the water and cannot stand in front of the water.
- He also likes to play with rubber balls. Marble toys are his favourite.
- A few days later, Maxwell had to return to London.
- Transport of Mijbil to London became a problem because British Airways did not allow animals on its flights.
- Another airline agreed to pack the animal in a box.
- Maxwell made a small box for the otter.
- On the plane, the otter escaped from the box. Some passengers yelled and stood on their seats when they saw the otter on the plane.
- Finally, the otter came back, lying on Maxwell's knees.
- On reaching London, the otter was unfamiliar to most people. They simply made random assumptions.
- In London, Mijbil learned to play ping-pong and developed certain habits.

WORD NOTES:

Crossed my mind-	(a thought) came into my mind
A stone's throw-	a very short distance
Otter-	a semi aquatic fish-eating mammal of the weasel family, with an elongated body, dense fur, and webbed feet
Eminently-	highly
As common as mosquitoes-	easily found
Tamed-	domesticate (an animal)
Cabled-	sent a message by telegraph (an old method of communication)
Breakdown-	a mechanical failure
Squatting-	crouch or sit with one's knees bent and one's heels close to or touching one's buttocks or the back of one's thighs
Squirmed-	twisted about
Thralldom-	(old fashioned) being under the control of
Fixation-	a very strong attachment or feeling
Christened-	named
Hostile-	unfriendly
Aloof and indifferent-	keeping a distance
Apathy-	absence of interest
Crook of my knees-	soft inside part where you bend your knee
So as to speak-	as it were (one could say this)
Provoking-	causing anger or some other reaction
Plunging-	falling; sinking
Sploshed-	splashed
Static-	motionless
Fumbling-	trying to do something in a clumsy manner
Trickle-	flow in a small stream
Chittering-	make a twittering or chattering sound
chromium-	a hard white metal used to make taps
Flick-	a quick, light movement
Shuffling-	dragging (here)
Dribble-	repeated hits on a ball to make it go ahead
Pastime-	distraction; entertainment
Accustomed-	familiar

Dreaded the prospect-	was in great fear of something that would happen in the future
An appalling spectacle-	a shocking scene
Whipped off-	quickly took off
Trickle-	drip, flow
Shreds-	pieces
Ricocheting bullet-	a bullet with changes direction after hitting a surface
Infuriated-	very angry
Took her into my confidence-	here, shared with her my experiences or secrets
Portly-	stout
Craning-	stretch out one's body or neck in order to see something
Distressed-	troubled
Recognition-	identification; acknowledgement
Nuzzle-	to rub gently with the nose
Bounded on to-	climbed up quickly
Terrapin shell-	the shell of small turtle found in North America
Engrossed-	completely interested in
Ambush-	to attack suddenly from a hidden position
Crouching-	squat; adopt a position where the knees are bent and the upper body is brought forward and down, typically in order to avoid detection or to defend oneself
Trot off-	to leave
compulsive-	irresistible
rituals-	a religious ceremony
tug-	pull
gallop-	run fast
affront-	insult
spat-	past tense of spit

CHARACTER SKETCH:

The two major characters in the story are:

1) Gavin Maxwell

2) Mijbil

GAVIN MAXWELL:

Gavin Maxwell is the author as well as the narrator of the story.

Affectionate: Maxwell's affection for Mijbil shines through when he fondly describes Mijbil's antics in the bath. He also affectionately allows Mijbil to sleep in the crook of his knees.

Thoughtful: Maxwell performs several thoughtful gestures for Mijbil throughout the story. These include making a body-belt for him, acquiring a selection of toys for him from his native marshes, giving him baths, and taking him on walks.

Protective: Maxwell's protective nature is highlighted when Mijbil cuts himself on the sharp edges of his box before being transported to London. To ensure Mijbil's safety, Maxwell trims the edges of the box. He is also grateful when the airhostess allows him to carry Mijbil on his knee during the flight.

MIJBIL:

Mijbil is the titular otter who is adopted by the narrator.

Playful: Mijbil's playfulness is demonstrated through his bath time activities. Maxwell describes how

joyfully he plunges into, rolls around, and shoots in and out of the water. He also spends hours playing with his toys which include marbles, ping-pong balls, and a terrapin shell.

Loyal: Mijbil's loyalty towards Maxwell is emphasized during the airplane incident. After escaping his box and wreaking havoc all over the aircraft, Mijbil eventually returns to Maxwell and lovingly nuzzles his neck and face.

OBJECTIVE SHORT QUESTIONS

1. The author traveled to ____ Iraq.
- (a) Southern (b) Eastern
(c) Western (d) Northern

Ans. (a)

2. The author went to Iraq in the year—
- (a) 195 (b) 1954
(c) 1956 (d) 1856

Ans. (c)

3. The author wanted to keep ____ as a pet.
- (a) Dog (b) Otter
(c) Rabbit (d) Cat

Ans. (b)

4. Camusfearna is a place surrounded by —
- (a) Greenery

- (b) Water
- (c) Mountain
- (d) Forest

Ans. (b)

5 Otters love ____.

- (a) Water
- (b) Dense forest
- (c) Green grass
- (d) Sand

Ans. (a)

6. The narrator's friend said that others were commonly found in that river –

- (a) Tigris (b) Maha Nadi
- (c) Ganga (d) Nile

Ans. (a)

7. The narrator and his friend were going to –

- (a) England
- (b) Camusfearna
- (c) Basara
- (d) Basana

Ans. (c)

8. At that time a call had to be booked before –

- (a) 1 day (b) 48 hours
- (c) One hour (d) 4 hours

Ans. (a)

9. On the second of calling the

telephone exchange was closed due to –

- (a) Religious holiday
- (b) National holiday
- (c) Breakdown
- (d) Technical fault

Ans. (a)

10. After ____ days the mail of the narrator's friend arrived to him.

- (a) 4 (b) 3
- (c) 5 (d) 2

Ans. (c)

11. The Otter was the gift for the narrator from his friend –

- (a) Friend (b) Father
- (c) Teacher (d) Brothers

Ans. (a)

12. Meaning of Threldom is –

- (a) New version
- (b) Thunder
- (c) Old fashioned
- (d) Rough

Ans. (c)

13. The Otter was looking like a –

- (a) Dragon
- (b) Mosquito
- (c) Crocodile
- (d) Mole

Ans. (a)

14. The Otters full body was covered with –

- (a) Grass
- (b) Mud
- (c) Thorn
- (d) Sand

Ans. (b)

15. The fur of the Otter was looking like ——— color made.

- (a) Chocolate – brown
- (b) Red
- (c) Black
- (d) Yellow

Ans. (a)

16. It took a — to bring out his actual color.

- (a) Day
- (b) Year
- (c) Month
- (d) Week

Ans. (c)

17. The name of the Otter was –

- (a) Mijbil
- (b) Mole
- (c) Mujibul
- (d) Miky

Ans. (a)

18. Lutrogale Perspicillate Maxwelli was the –

- (a) Scientist
- (b) Writer
- (c) Zoologist
- (d) Wild life photographer

Ans. (c)

19. The narrator made a — for the Otter.

- (a) House
- (b) Belt
- (c) Tub
- (d) Playing area

Ans. (b)

20. Two days later Mijbil escaped to the –

- (a) Garden
- (b) Pond
- (c) Forest
- (d) Bathroom

Ans. (d)

21. — were Mij's favourite toys for playing.

- (a) Football
- (b) Water bucket
- (c) Marbles
- (d) Teddy

Ans. (c)

22. Mijbil was being packed in — inches square box while travelling to England.

- (a) 16
- (b) 15
- (c) 18
- (d) 20

Ans. (c)

23. — Airline refused to allow animals along with passengers.

- (a) American
- (b) British
- (c) Indian
- (d) Australia

Ans. (b)

24. Just like a dog the narrator took Mijbil outside for –

- (a) Taking bath
- (b) A search of food
- (c) Exercise
- (d) Roaming

Ans. (c)

25. Mijbil used to behave like — while roaming around the street.

- (a) Dog
- (b) School kids
- (c) Cat
- (d) Old man

Ans. (b)

26. There was a — feet high wall running along the school boundary.

- (a) Five
- (b) Three
- (c) One
- (d) Two.

Ans. (d)

27. Others belong to a group of animal named –

- (a) Amphibian

- (b) Mustellines
- (c) Arthropod
- (d) Baby seal

Ans. (b)

28. Why does Maxwell go to Basra?

- (a) broke the toy car
- (b) threw the marbles
- (c) torn the lining of box
- (d) None of the Above

Ans. (c)

29. What did the otter look like?

- (a) Small dog
- (b) Small dragon
- (c) Small cat
- (d) Small rabbit

Ans. (b)

30. Where does the author live?

- (a) London
- (b) Southern Iraq
- (c) India
- (d) None of the Above

Ans. (a)

QUESTION AND ANSWERS

1. What 'experiment' did Maxwell think Camusfearna would be suitable for?

Ans. Maxwell thought that as Camusfearna was close to water, it was suitable for an experiment to domesticate an otter.

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

Ans. He had gone to Basra to the Consulate-General to receive and answer his mail from Europe. Unfortunately, only his friend's mail had arrived. Therefore, he tried connecting to England via telegraph and telephone but could not associate due to waiting periods, holidays and technical glitches for another couple of days. His mail arrived after waiting for 5 days.

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

Ans. When the author came to his room to read the mail, he found two Arabs with a sack that was twisting again and again. One of them handed the author a note from his friend that said the otter was a gift from him.

The author liked the otter very much. This is evident from the fact that he later uses words like "otter fixation" which means a

strong connection between the otter and the owner. This feeling is shared by other otter owners as well.

4. Why was the otter named 'Maxwell's otter'?

Ans. Otters are of a race previously unknown to science, and were at length named by zoologists as *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli*, or Maxwell's otter.

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

- Aloof and indifferent
- friendly
- hostile

Ans. In the beginning, the otter was aloof and indifferent.

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

Ans. When Maxwell took Mijbil to the bathroom, for half an hour he went wild with joy in the water, plunging and rolling in it, shooting up and down the length of the bathtub underwater, and making enough slosh and splash for a hippo. Two days later, it escaped into the bathroom and Maxwell saw it opening the tap, all by itself.

7. How was Mij to be transported to England?

he saw Mij's tail disappearing beneath a turbaned man, he tried to catch hold of him and in the process, ended up covering his face with curry. After having created such chaos, the air hostess advised him to go to his seat while she brought Mij back to him.

12. What game had Mij invented?

Ans. Mij invented a game of playing with the ball in a unique way. One of the author's suitcase was damaged and had a slope on the top part. Mij would put the ball on the high end and run to catch it as it slid to the lower end.

13. What are 'compulsive habits'? What does Maxwell say are the compulsive habits of

1. school children
2. Mij?

Ans. Compulsive habits are usually strange acts or behavior which a person does without clear reason. For example a cricket player may put on his right shoes first as he believes it would bring him good luck or a kid jumping over a fence, instead of going through the passageway. Usually compulsive behavior of children is full of childhood mischief and those of adults are of an incorrigible type.

1. As per this story, children must place their feet squarely on the

center of each paving block; must touch every seventh upright of the iron railings, or pass to the outside of every second lamp post.

2. Mijbil while on its way to home would jump over the boundary wall railing and run at full speed throughout its length.

14. What group of animals do otters belong to?

Ans. Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called Mustellines. The other animals of this group are badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink and others.

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

Ans. As otters are not found in England so Londoners made the wildest possible guesses about Mij. Their guesses ranged from a baby seal, a squirrel, a hippo to a brontosaurus.

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

Ans. Mij invented his own game out of ping-pong ball and a worn down suitcase. He loved water, and once he understood that on opening the tap water came out of it, he would get into the tub and play with water.

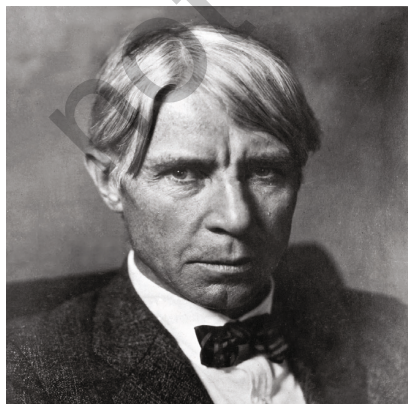
He had gradually formed a special attachment with Maxwell. It grew desperate when Maxwell left it in a box and wanted to come out as soon as possible.

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

Ans. Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called Mustellines, shared by badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink and others. They are found in large numbers in marshes. Arabs keep them as pets and tame them. Otters love to spread water and splash in it. Maxwell's otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists *Lutrogale Perspicillata Maxwelli*.

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

Ans. Maxwell's otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists *Lutrogale Perspicillata Maxwelli*, hence, it is known as Maxwell's otter in short.



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ABOUT THE POET

Carl August Sandburg (January 6, 1878 – July 22, 1967) was an American poet, writer and editor. He won three Pulitzer Prizes- two for his poetry and one for his biography of Abraham Lincoln. He wrote poems like grass, analysis, Chicago, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Fog is a very small poem written by Carl Sandburg. He has described the process of arrival of the fog into a city and the harbour. He has very beautifully compared it to a cat.



SUMMARY & ANALYSIS:

This poem has strong reflections about nature. It does have a deeper and strong meaning. The first two lines of the poem are simply describing how fog comes in.

Fogs are visible in cold areas or in mountains or forests. But in this poem, the poet describes fog which is happening in the cities and harbour. He gave a wonderful comparison between the fog and a cat. When a cat comes around us, mostly it is coming

so slowly that hardly anyone is getting notice. The same is the case with the fog and its arrival. It just comes in and engulfs the entire place. It stays on for some time, creating trouble for anyone in between it, but still stays as though it is not aware of the happenings around it.

Then the poet says that it just comes, sits at the harbour and looks at the city. It is at the silent haunches and then finally moves on. Here the poet described the happening, once the fog had arrived. Fogs as such do not cause any harm, because they are very silent and the onset is slow too. But when the fog is around, especially in the city, many accidents may occur due to low visibility. Thus due to fog people cannot properly see anything in-between them while driving on the road. Hence sometimes fog may be very harmful to human life too.

Therefore, a fog comes in similar to a small and silent kitten, and it sits and watches the beauty, while it covers the whole city.

At last, the poet is saying that as a small child gets bored playing the same game, and hence moves on to the next. Similarly, the fog does not stay in one place for a long time. Therefore, after some time the fog also moves on. Fog does not stay longer at any one place.

WORD MEANING:

Harbour: port, the place where ships load and unload

On haunches: sitting with knees bent

LITERARY DEVICES:

Metaphor: Fog is compared to cat (On little cat feet).

Rhyme scheme: There is no rhyme scheme followed. Poem is in free verse

Enjambment: When a sentence continues to the next line (It sits looking..... then moves on)

Personification: fog has been personified – Fog comes, it sits

TEXTUAL QUESTION AND ANSWERS:

Q1- What does Sandburg think the fog is like?

Ans- Sandburg thinks the fog is like a cat that comes silently so that no one can sense its arrival.

2. How does the fog come?

Ans- As per the poet the fog comes very silently like a cat.

3. What does 'it' in the third line refer to?

Ans- 'It' refers to the fog

4. Does the poet actually say that the fog is like a cat? Find three things that tell us that the fog is like a cat.

Ans- The three things that tell us that the fog is like a cat are as follows:

The fog comes on its little cat feet: This means that the fog enters silently just like a cat.

It sits looking over harbour and city: The fog is compared to cat as cats also like to sit and look here and there and fog is also looking while it sits over the city.

On silent haunches and then moves on: The fog sits on her bended legs just like a cat and then moves away very quickly and silently, just like a cat.

Q2- Does this poem have a rhyme scheme? Poetry that does not have an obvious rhythm or rhyme is called 'free verse'.

Ans- There is no rhyme scheme in the poem. It has neither internal nor external rhyme scheme. Hence, we can say that it is in free verse.

OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS

1. Who is 'It' in the poem?

- (a) cut (b) fog
- (c) city (d) harbour

Ans. (B)

2. How does fog come on ?

- (a) little dog feet
- (b) little rat feet
- (c) little birds feet
- (d) little cat feet

Ans. (D)

3. Where does the fog sit ?

- (a) harbour and city
- (b) top of the mountains
- (c) top of the tall trees
- (d) top of buildings

Ans. (A)

4. Name the poem.

- (a) Daffodils (b) The snow
- (c) The cat (d) Fog

Ans. (D)

5. The fog is compared to what ?

- (a) mouse (b) cat
- (c) dog (d) ant

Ans. (B)

6. The figure of speech used in these lines is ?

- (a) personification
- (b) analogy
- (c) personification/analogy
- (d) none of them

Ans. (C)

7. How does the cat sit ?

- (a) on its paws
- (b) on its back
- (c) on its haunches
- (d) on its stomach

Ans. (C)

8. Name the poet.
- (a) Robert Frost
 - (b) Robin Klein
 - (c) John Berryman
 - (d) Carl Sandburg

Ans. (D)

9. After sitting, the fog _
- (a) Disappears
 - (b) sits there only
 - (c) moves on
 - (d) gets dense

Ans. (C)

10. What does the fog do while it looks over the city and the harbour?
- (a) sits (b) moves
 - (c) stands
 - (d) dances

Ans. (A)

11. What is the rhyming scheme of the poem?
- (a) aabb
 - (b) abab
 - (c) Free Verse
 - (d) None of the Above.

Ans. (C)

12. Fog comes like a –
- (a) Cat (b) Bear
 - (c) Dog (d) Skyline

Ans. (A)

13. Here fog has compared with the cat because of his –
- (a) Soft nature
 - (b) Unpredictable manner
 - (c) Silent manner
 - (d) Witty manner

Ans. (B)