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Before you read

Who are the oldest people you know? What are the oldest things you have (i) in your house, (ii) in your city, town or village? How old are they?

Have you ever wished that you were older? Have you wished that you could grow up in a hurry?



The Invention of Vita-Wonk

Mr Willy Wonka begins by inventing Wonka-Vite, which makes people younger. But Wonka-Vite is too strong. So some people disappear, because their age becomes Minus! One person actually becomes minus eighty-seven, which means he's got to wait eighty-seven years before he can come back.

Mr Willy Wonka must invent a new thing...



set to work: began to work

recipe: instructions for making something

I

Mr Wonka said, "So once again I rolled up my sleeves and set to work. Once again I squeezed my brain, searching for the new recipe... I had to create age... to make people old... old, older, oldest... 'Ha-ha!' I cried, for now the ideas were beginning to come. 'What is the oldest living thing in the world? What lives longer than anything else?'"

"A tree," Charlie said.

"Right you are, Charlie! But what kind of a tree? Not the Douglas fir. Not the oak. Not the cedar. No, no, my boy. It is a tree called the Bristlecone pine that grows upon the slopes of Wheeler Peak in Nevada, U.S.A. You can find Bristlecone Pines on Wheeler Peak today that are over 4000 years old! This is fact, Charlie. Ask any dendrochronologist you like (and look that word up in the dictionary when you get home, will you please?). So that started me off. I jumped into the Great Glass Elevator and rushed all over the world collecting special items from the oldest living things...

- A PINT OF SAP FROM A 4000-YEAR-OLD BRISTLECONE PINE
- THE TOE-NAIL CLIPPINGS FROM A 168-YEAR-OLD RUSSIAN FARMER CALLED PETROVITCH GREGOROVITCH
- AN EGG LAID BY A 200-YEAR-OLD TORTOISE BELONGING TO THE KING OF TONGA
- THE TAIL OF A 51-YEAR-OLD HORSE IN ARABIA
- THE WHISKERS OF A 36-YEAR-OLD CAT CALLED CRUMPETS
- AN OLD FLEA WHICH HAD LIVED ON CRUMPETS FOR 36 YEARS
- THE TAIL OF A 207-YEAR-OLD GIANT RAT FROM TIBET
- THE BLACK TEETH OF A 97-YEAR-OLD GRIMALKIN LIVING IN A CAVE ON MOUNT POPOCATEPETL
- THE KNUCKLEBONES OF A 700-YEAR-OLD CATTALOO FROM PERU..."





fir: a tree with needle-like leaves, and cones



oak: a family of large trees with a hard wood. The Chinar in Kashmir is a kind of oak tree.

cedar: an evergreen tree with hard, red sweet-smelling wood, used for making boxes, pencils, fences, etc.



pine: an evergreen tree with needle-shaped leaves, and cones

flea: a small insect living on the skin of animals, for their blood







Comprehension Check

1. *Choose the right answer.*
   - *(i) Mr Willy Wonka is (a) a cook, (b) an inventor, (c) a manager.*
   - *(ii) Wonka-Vite makes people (a) older, (b) younger.*
   - *(iii) Mr Wonka wants to invent a new thing which will make people (a) younger, (b) older.*
2. *Can anyone's age be a minus number? What does "minus 87" mean?*
3. *Mr Wonka begins by asking himself two questions. What are they?*
   - *(i) What is _____?*
   - *(ii) What lives _____?*

II

tracked down: found, by searching for it

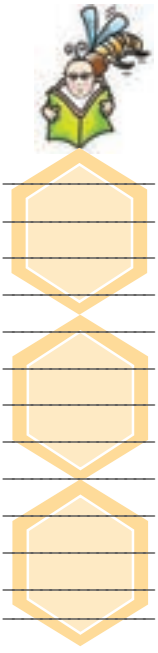
"All over the world, Charlie," Mr Wonka went on "I tracked down very old and ancient animals and took an important little bit of something from each one of them — a hair or an eyebrow or sometimes it was no more than an ounce or two of the jam scraped from between its toes while it was sleeping. I tracked down THE WHISTLE-PIG, THE BOBOLINK, THE SKROCK, THE POLLYFROG, THE GIANT CURLICUE, THE STINGING SLUG AND THE VENOMOUS SQUERKLE who can spit poison right into your eye from fifty yards away. But there's no time to tell you about them all now, Charlie. Let me just say quickly that in the end, after lots of boiling and bubbling and mixing and testing in



my Inventing Room, I produced one tiny cupful of oily black liquid and gave four drops of it to a brave twenty-year-old Oompa-Loompa volunteer to see what happened."

"What did happen?" Charlie asked.

"It was fantastic!" cried Mr Wonka. "The moment he swallowed it, he began wrinkling and shrivelling up all over and his hair started dropping off and his teeth started falling out and, before I knew it, he had suddenly become an old fellow of seventy-five! And thus, my dear Charlie, was Vita-Wonk invented!"



ROALD DAHL

[*from* Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator]



Working with the Text

1. (i) What trees does Mr Wonka mention? Which tree does he say lives the longest?

   (ii) How long does this tree live? Where can you find it?

2. How many of the oldest living things can you remember from Mr Wonka's list? (Don't look back at the story!) Do you think all these things really exist, or are some of them purely imaginary?

3. Why does Mr Wonka collect items trom the oldest things? Do you think this is the right way to begin his invention?

4. What happens to the volunteer who swallows four drops of the new invention? What is the name of the invention?

Working with Language

1. What do you call these insects in your language?


cockroach


mosquito


grasshopper


housefly


dragon fly


ant

How do these insects effect your health? Have a discussion in the class.

2. Fill in the blanks in the recipe given below with words from the box.

shred	cooker	times	tomatoes	half	onion	oil

Easy *Palak–Dal*

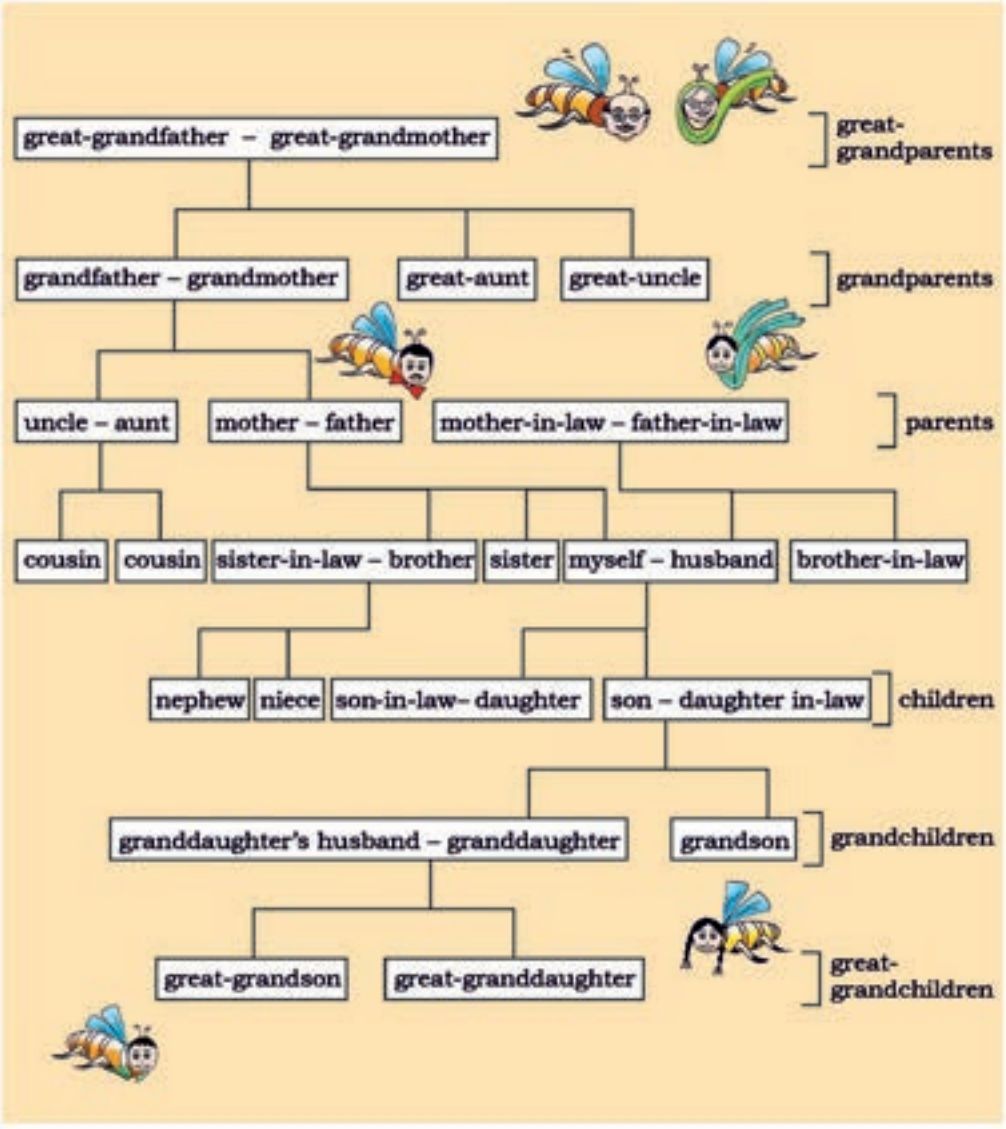
INGREDIENTS

- One _____
- One cup *dal*
- Two thin green chillies
- _____ a teaspoon red chilli powder
- Eight small bunches of *palak*
- Two _____
- Salt to taste

Wash and cut the vegetables; _____ the *palak*. Put everything in a pressure_____. Let the cooker whistle three_____, then switch it off. Fry a few cumin seeds in _____and add to the *palak–dal*.

3. A 'family tree' is a diagram that shows the relationship between the different members of a family. Fill in the family tree below with names, ages, and other details you think are relevant (you may even stick photographs, if you have them). Put your family trees up in the class.

MY FAMILY



Speaking

*Using **Do** for Emphasis*

Charlie asks, "What did happen?"

This is a way of asking the question "What happened?" with emphasis.

Given below are a few emphatic utterances. Say them to your partner. Let your partner repeat your utterance without the emphasis. Your partner may also add something to show she/he disagrees with you.

YOU : I did study.
PARTNER : You studied? I don't believe you. Look at your marks!

YOU : I did go there.
PARTNER : You went there? Then...
YOU : I do play games.
PARTNER : ...
YOU : He does read his books.
PARTNER : ...
YOU : You do say the most unbelievable things!
PARTNER : ...
YOU : The earth does spin around.
PARTNER : ...
YOU : We all do want you to come with us.
PARTNER : ...
YOU : Who does know how to cook?
PARTNER : ...
YOU : 1 do believe that man is a thief.
PARTNER : ...





Writing

1. (i) Make a list of the trees Mr Wonka mentions. Where do these trees grow? Try to find out from an encyclopaedia. Write a short paragraph about two or three of these trees.

   (ii) Name some large trees commonly found in your area. Find out something about them (How old are they? Who planted them? Do birds eat their fruit?), and write two or three sentences about each one of them.

2. Find out something interesting about age, or growing old, and write a paragraph about it. Following are a few topics, suggested as examples.

   - The age profile of a country's population — does it have more young people than old people, or vice versa? What are the consequences of this?
   - How can we tell how old a tree, a horse, or a rock is?
   - What is the 'life expectancy' of various living things, and various populations (how long can they reasonably expect to live)?

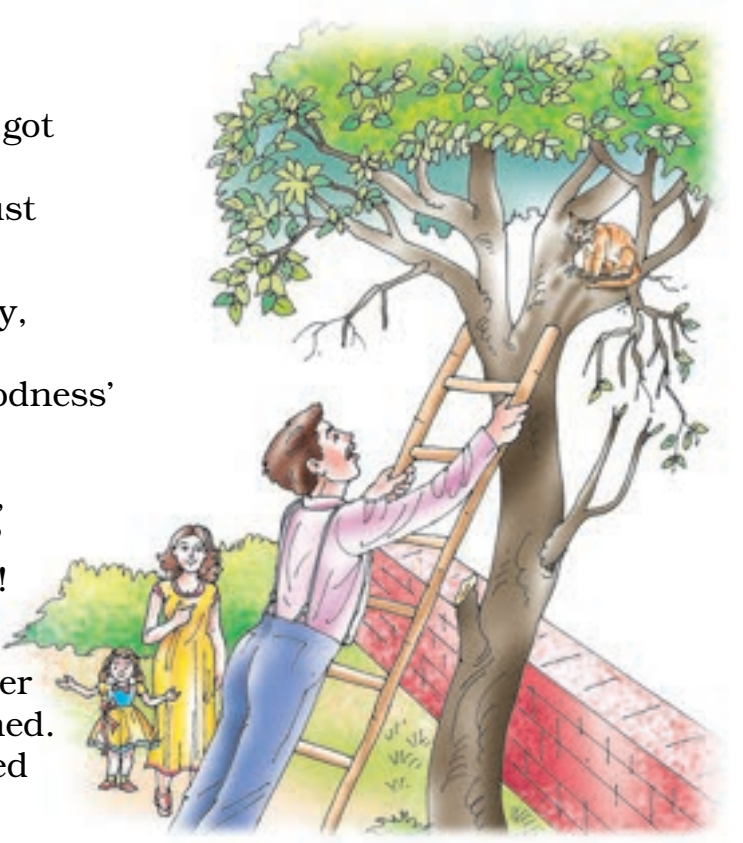
Delivery Delayed

When the postman arrived at the Roy household to deliver the mail, he was surprised to find a new vicious dog. The dog was fastened to a tree by a leash just long enough to reach the front door. The dog growled and bared its teeth. But the postman managed to outwit the dog and reach the front door safely. How?

Answer on page 139

Dad and the Cat and the Tree

Have you ever seen a cat climbing a tree? Sometimes a cat may climb too high and get stuck in the tree. The poor thing can't come down without help. How would you help it? Surely, not like Dad in the poem. Is Dad a good climber? What were his plans? Read the poem to find out.



This morning a cat got
Stuck in our tree.
Dad said, "Right, just
Leave it to me."

The tree was wobbly,
The tree was tall.
Mum said, "For goodness'
Sake don't fall!"

"Fall?" scoffed Dad,
"A climber like me?
Child's play, this is!
You wait and see."

He got out the ladder
From the garden shed.
It slipped. He landed
In the flower bed.

"Never mind," said Dad,
Brushing the dirt
Off his hair and his face
And his trousers and his shirt,

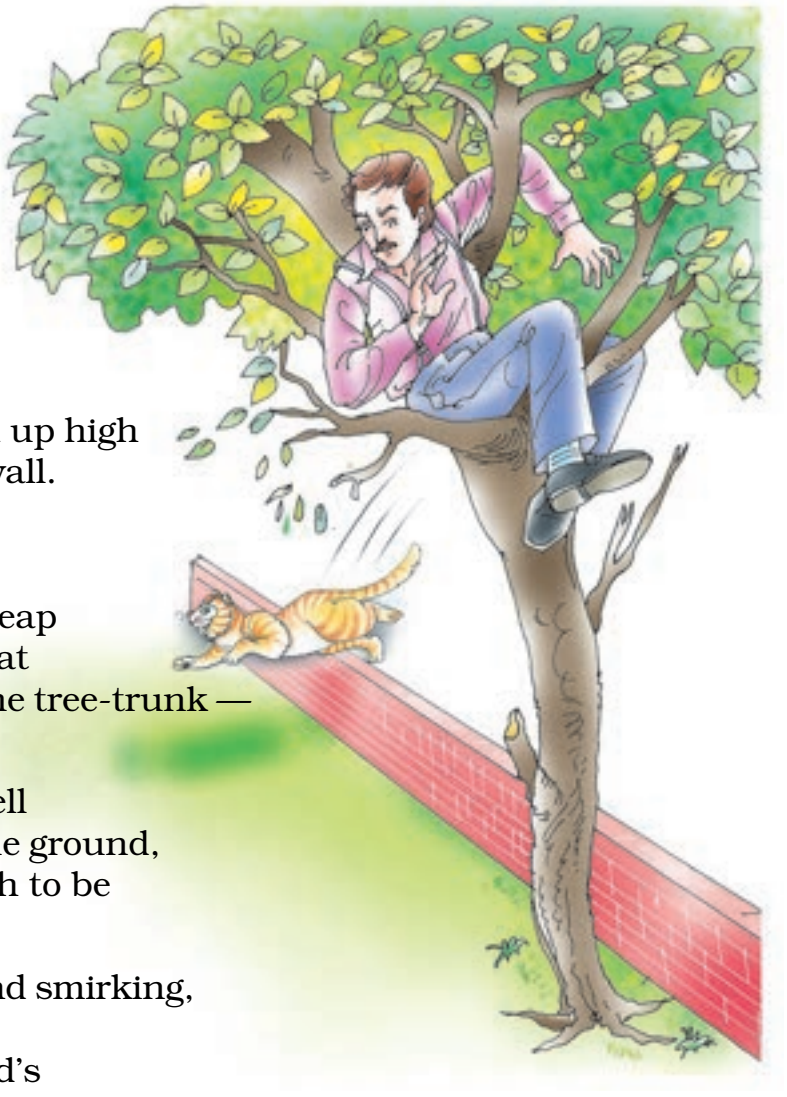
"We'll try Plan B. Stand
Out of the way!"
Mum said, "Don't fall
Again, O.K.?"

"Fall again?" said Dad.
"Funny joke!"
Then he swung himself up
On a branch. It broke.

Dad landed wallop
Back on the deck.
Mum said, "Stop it,
You'll break your neck!"

"Rubbish!" said Dad.
"Now we'll try Plan C.
Easy as winking
To a climber like me!"





Then he climbed up high
On the garden wall.
Guess what?
He didn't fall!

He gave a great leap
And he landed flat
In the crook of the tree-trunk —
Right on the cat!

The cat gave a yell
And sprang to the ground,
Pleased as Punch to be
Safe and sound.

So it's smiling and smirking,
Smug as can be,
But poor old Dad's
Still

Stuck
Up
The
Tree!

KIT WRIGHT

GLOSSARY

wobbly: unsteady
for goodness' sake: an exclamation expressing protest
scoffed: laughed mockingly
child's play: very easy to do
landed wallop: fell heavily
pleased as Punch: very pleased
safe and sound: unhurt

Working with the Poem

1. Why was Dad sure he wouldn't fall?
2. Which phrase in the poem expresses Dad's self-confidence best?
3. Describe Plan A and its consequences.
4. Plan C was a success. What went wrong then?
5. The cat was very happy to be on the ground. Pick out the phrase used to express this idea.
6. Describe the Cat and Dad situation in the beginning and at the end of the poem.
7. Why and when did Dad say each of the following?

   (i) Fall?

   (ii) Never mind

   (iii) Funny joke

   (iv) Rubbish
8. Do you find the poem humorous? Read aloud lines which make you laugh.

Do you know...

If you show love to plants or expose them to classical music, they grow well. Is this true ?

Answer on page 113

Garden Snake

Have you ever seen a snake fighting a mongoose, or getting into a hole, or swimming in the river? Everyone, almost everyone, believes that snakes are dangerous. Some are, most are not. Read this poem on a harmless garden snake.

I saw a snake and ran away...
Some snakes are dangerous, they say;
But mother says that kind is good,
And eats up insects for his food.
So when he wiggles in the grass
I'll stand aside and watch him pass,
And tell myself, "There's no mistake,
It's just a harmless garden snake!"



MURIEL L. SONNE

Working with the Poem

1. Answer the following questions.
   (i) Pick out the line that suggests that the child is afraid of snakes.



(ii) Which line shows a complete change of the child's attitude towards snakes? Read it aloud.

(iii) "But mother says that kind is good..." What is mother referring to?

2. Find the word that refers to the snake's movements in the grass.
3. There are four pairs of rhyming words in the poem. Say them aloud.
4. A snake has no legs or feet, but it moves very fast. Can you guess how? Discuss in the group.
5. Can you recall the word used for a cobra's long sharp teeth? Where did you come across this word first?

Do you know...

Answer

According to some botanists, plants are able to sense the vibrations of music through their stomata. How this occurs is not yet known. Yields of some crops are reported to have increased substantially when the plants were exposed to music. Many plant lovers, including Prince Charles of Britain, believe that talking to plants makes them grow better.