8

Before you read

Two friends share their feelings about brave soldiers. One of them shares her experience of visiting the National War Memorial that has left a deep impact on her. They exchange letters and share their feelings of gratitude for the freedom they enjoy because of the sacrifices made by the bravehearts of the country. The memorial symbolises the patriotism of the Indian soldiers. Which is this memorial?

A Homage to our Brave Soldiers

I

Soumya K.
House No..., Jayanagar,
Bengaluru

Date: 14 April 2022

Dear Ananda,

Hope you are all doing well!

Do you remember our last conversation about 'war and peace'? We talked about how India had to struggle for its Independence from the British

for many centuries. Post-independence our country has had to fight several wars to protect its borders, territorial integrity, and its people. This made me wonder, who were these brave Indian people? They fought to protect our country and sacrificed their lives so that we could lead our lives in peace. What were their names? Where did they come from? Does anyone remember anything about them?

Last week I got the answers to some of my questions during an educational trip to New Delhi organised by our school. You may recall, I was looking forward to this trip and our visit to many places of historical and educational significance. I learnt several new and intersting things, and I am excited to share them with you.

Let me begin by asking you to guess the name of the monument that I found most inspiring. Lets see if you can guess? The construction of this monument started in April 2018 and was completed in February 2019. It was envisioned and then inaugurated by India's Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in February 2019. In terms of location and size, it is spread over 40 acres of land near the iconic India Gate. But more importantly, it is a tribute to some of the bravest Indians. I'm sure you've guessed! It's the 'National War Memorial'. Won't you say, a long desired aspiration was fullfilled?

territorial integrity: safeguarding nation's borders

envisioned: visualised

iconic: celebrated

tribute: showing respect, gratitude

Our visit to the National War Memorial began with our teacher explaining that even after independence, India has had to fight many wars to protect itself, and the freedom and security we enjoy today is because of the many brave men and women who have served in the Indian Armed Forces over decades. Sadly, she said, war always takes its toll, and therefore, many brave soldiers have had to sacrifice their lives for the country even after our independence in 1947. This is what makes monuments like the National War Memorial extremely important so that we should never forget the cost of freedom. We are aware, always, of the pain and horrors of war. We learnt that each brick of the memorial is called a tablet, and it bears the names of soldiers who fought for India and made the supreme sacrifice in different wars from 1947 till date, including the Indo-China conflict of 1962, the Indo-Pak Wars in 1965 & 1971 and the Kargil War in 1999. There are 29,000 tablets on which more than 26,000 names of fallen soldiers have been etched.

etched: engraved

gallantry: exceptional courage especially in battle

It was heartening to know that our government has recognised the sacrifice of brave soldiers. Our teacher told us about the 21 bravehearts who were awarded the Param Vir Chakra (PVC), India's highest wartime gallantry medal, for their service to the nation. She also told us about *Maha Vir Chakra* (MVC), *Kirti Chakra* (KC), *Vir Chakra* (VrC) and *Shaurya Chakra* (SC).

Major Somnath Sharma was posthumously awarded India's first PVC, in the Battle of Badgam in 1947. Later some more PVCs were awarded for exceptional gallantry during the India-China Conflict of 1962, and the India-Pakistan War of 1965. Besides, a PVC was also awarded for service during the U.N.Peace Keeping Operations in Congo.

In the 1971 war, some of the heroes who were awarded the PVC (posthumously) includes Lance Naik Albert Ekka, Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon, Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal and Major Hoshiar Singh. Some Navy personnel including Captain Mahendra Nath Mulla were also awarded MVC for their exemplary courage and leadership.

Then the teacher shared with us the citation of *Param Vir Chakra* awardee Lance Naik Albert Ekka. It touched my heart and also motivated me. We were awestruck and humbled by his bravery. I aspire to be couragous like him when I join the army!

posthumously: after death

citation: meritorious performance of duty

awestruck: amazed



https://www.indiatimes.com/hindi/frontlines/param-vir-chakra-awardee-lance-naik-albert-ekka-503475.html

CITATION

Lance Naik Albert Ekka,
(No. 4239746), 14 Guards

Lance Naik Albert Ekka was in the left forward company of a Battalion of the Brigade of Guards during their attack on the enemy defence at Gangasagar on the eastern front. This was a well-fortified position held in strength by the enemy. The assaulting troops were subjected to intense shelling and heavy small arms fire, but they charged on to the objective and were locked in bitter hand-to-hand combat. Lance Naik Albert Ekka noticed an enemy Light Machine Gun inflicting heavy casualties on his company. With complete disregard to his personal safety, he charged the enemy bunker, bayoneted two enemy soldiers and silenced the Light Machine Gun. Though seriously wounded in this encounter, he continued to fight alongside his comrades through the mile deep objective, clearing bunker after bunker with undaunted courage. Towards the northern end of the objective, one enemy Medium Machine Gun opened up from the second storey of a well-fortified building inflicting heavy casualties and holding up the attack. Once again, this gallant soldier without worrying about his personal safety, despite his serious injury and the heavy volume of enemy fire, crawled forward

till he reached the building and lobbed a grenade through the loophole of the bunker, killing one enemy and injuring the other. The Medium Machine Gun, however, continued to fire. With outstanding courage and grim determination, Lance Naik Albert Ekka scaled a side wall and entering the bunker, bayoneted the enemy who was still firing and thus silenced the Machine Gun, saving further casualties to his company and ensured the success of the attack. In this process, however, he received serious injuries and succumbed to them after the capture of the objective. In this action, Lance Naik Albert Ekka displayed the most conspicuous valour, determination and made the supreme sacrifice in the best traditions of the Army. (*Gazette of India* Notification No. 7– Pres./72)

As we continued our visit around the National War Memorial, we came across another important installation called *Amar Jawan Jyoti* that commemorates our soldiers. The name, as you may have guessed, represents an immortal flame that is kept ablaze all through the day and night to revere the sacrifices of our soldiers. Earlier the *Amar Jawan Jyoti* which also displayed a rifle and a helmet was alighted under the arch of India Gate in January 1972 to commemorate India's victory in the India-Pakistan War of 1971.

The National War Memorial now includes *Amar Jawan Jyoti* in the obelisk which is

commemorate: remember officially and give respect

obelisk: tapering stone piller

surrounded by four *chakras*. During the inauguration, the Prime Minister lit a new flame to commemorate the fallen heroes. Later, the old flame at India Gate was also merged with the new flame at the National War Memorial. Here is a picture of the new *Amar Jawan Jyoti* if you haven't seen it. You can see the obelisk surrounded by wreaths that have been placed as a mark of respect. The lighting design is planned in such a way that it transforms the monument's landscape as sunlight changes from dawn to dusk. It truly is a majestic site that filled me with pride for our nation. I was also overwhelmed by the interminable flame as a metaphor for eternal stories of courage and valour.

wreaths: circular arrangement of flowers used as a respect and remembrance for a person who has died



https://nationalwarmemorial.gov.in/

Our teacher also explained the significance of the *Chakras* to us. I found it interesting and hence sharing with you.

The National War Memorial consists of 4 concentric circles which are known as *Amar Chakra*, *Veerta Chakra*, *Tyag Chakra* and *Raksha Chakra* around a 15-meter-tall central obelisk with the eternal flame— the *Amar Jawan Jyoti.* It also houses bronze and stone murals and graphic panels. Isn't it amazing!

The innermost circle represents the *Amar Chakra*, also known as the 'Circle of Immortality'. This has the Obelisk with Eternal Flame. The *Amar Jawan Jyoti* flame symbolises the immortality of the spirit of fallen soldiers with the assurance that the nation will never forget their sacrifice.

The second circle is called the *Veerta Chakra* which is also known as the 'Circle of Bravery'. There is a covered gallery that exhibits six murals crafted in bronze depicting valiant battle actions of our Armed Forces.

mural: a large picture on a wall

The third circle represents the *Tyag Chakra*, also known as the 'Circle of Sacrifice'. The circular concentric walls of honour symbolise the ancient war formation which is called *Chakravyuh*. The walls are covered with granite tablets and individual tablet is solely dedicated to each fallen hero of post-Independent India. Their names are etched in golden letters.

The outermost circle represents the *Raksha Chakra*, which is also known as the 'Circle of

Protection'. In this *chakra* the row of trees is a reassurance to the citizens of the country about their safety against any threat. Each tree represents the soldiers who ensure the territorial integrity of the nation.



We spent the whole day, from morning to evening, at the National War Memorial and the surrounding areas, marked by majestic lawns and grand buildings of *Kartavyapath*. We were immersed in the ambience that was solemn and a reminder of what a free nation could achieve. The overall environment created an emotive experience that was visually inspiring. I felt as if I had developed bond with the place.

I learnt a lot. But I also have to admit that the various discourses on the day brought tears to

discourse: serious discussion of a subject

my eyes. It was sad to think about the massive devastation and loss of life caused by wars. It motivated me to live a life worthy of the sacrifices of our heroes.

After our visit, the class decided to make presentations on stories of valour of the brave hearts, we came across at the National War Memorial. We divided ourselves into five groups. We are choosing martyrs to make presentations depicting their courageous stories. Our teacher has also advised us to share our experience during the school assembly. I am delighted that all the students of our school will get to know about the National War Memorial and the soldiers it commemorates.

I am going to give a presentation on the story of Major Padmapani Acharya who fought for India in the 1999 Kargil War and was awarded the *Maha Vir Chakra*.

devastation: damage and destruction



https://www.facebook.com/RambanYouthPower/posts/-major-padmapani-acharya-was-awarded-the-mahavirchakra-posthumouslythe-gallant-i/870107096810810/

The citation for the *Maha Vir Chakra* reads as follows:

Gazette Notification: 17 Pres/2000,15.8.99
Operation: Op Vijay- Kargil Date of Award: 15 Aug 1999

CITATION
MAJOR PADMAPANI ACHARYA (IC-55072)
2 RAJPUTANA RIFLES
(POSTHUMOUS)

On 28 June 1999, Major Padmapani Acharya as a Company Commander, was assigned the formidable task of capturing an enemy position which was heavily fortified, strongly held and covered with mines and sweeping machine gun and artillery fire.

Success of the battalion and brigade operation hinged on the early capture of this position. However, the company attack almost faltered at the very beginning when the enemy's artillery fire came down squarely on the leading platoon, inflicting large number of casualties.

With utter disregard to his personal safety, Major Padmapani Acharya took the reserve platoon of his company and led it through raining artillery shells. Even as his men were falling to the murderous enemy fire, he continued to encourage his men and charged at the enemy up the steep rock face with his reserve platoon.

Unmindful of the hail of bullets from the enemy's position, Major Padmapani Acharya crawled up to the enemy position and lobbed grenades. In this daring assault, Major Acharya was severely injured. Despite being seriously injured and unable to move, he ordered his men to leave him and charge at the enemy while he continued to fire at the enemy. The enemy position was finally over-run and the objective was captured.

After completion of the mission, the officer however, succumbed to his injuries.

Major Padmapani Acharya displayed exceptional courage, leadership and spirit of self-sacrifice in the face of the enemy.

https://www.gallantryawards.gov.in/awards

Before he went into battle, he wrote a letter to his father that he wasn't afraid or scared about losing his life while trying to protect the motherland. Quoting *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* he went on to say:

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम्।
तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः।।2.37।।

Hato vaa praapsyasi svargam jitvaa vaa bhokshyase mahiim
Tasmaaduttishtha kaunteya yuddhaaya kritanischayah

If you fight, you will either be slain on the battlefield and go to the celestial abodes, or you will gain victory and enjoy the kingdom on earth. Therefore arise with determination. O, son of Kunti, and be prepared to fight.

Here is the website link for National War Memorial https://nationalwarmemorial.gov.in/. Share it with your friends to learn more about it.

We reached Bengaluru yesterday. I have written a long letter as I could not help sharing this inspring experience with you.

Give my regards to your Mom and Dad. I miss your Mom's *Chhole Bhature.* You know I am a foodie! Say hello to Amit.

Your friend,

Soumya

Comprehension Check

1. Where is the National War Memorial located and what is its significance?
2. What is the nation's highest gallantry award?
3. What do the walls of *Chakras* portray.
4. Find in the lesson the paragraph/s and the sentence that evoke the feelings given below.
   (i) feeling of wonder
   (ii) heartening
   (iii) sense of motivation
   (iv) pride
   (v) visually inspiring
   (vi) sadness
   (vii) gratitude
   (viii) inspiration

II

Ananda,
House No...., Sector ...
Chandigarh.

Date: 24 April 2022

Dear Soumya,

It was such a pleasure to receive your letter. I enjoyed reading your experience of the visit to the National War Memorial in Delhi, as well as your observations and feelings during the visit. You really have an eye for detail and being the sensitive person that you are, you have been able to capture the essence of the emotions associated with this Memorial.

I was happy to hear that you got an opportunity to visit the National War Memorial. I have heard a lot about it. Some people might see a war memorial as just a monument, statue, an edifice to celebrate a war or victory and commemorate those who were martyred or injured in war. In my view, it is also an expression of deep gratitude for the supreme sacrifice made by our brave soldiers defending the sovereignty and integrity of the country. I feel motivated and I am seriously thinking of joining the Armed Forces for serving my motherland.

I also feel it is our duty to periodically visit such places to honour our valiant soldiers, who

valiant: very brave

have made great sacrifices for us. Their sacrifices enable us to walk freely in our country without fear of enemy threats. It is nice of your teacher and school to arrange this visit to give you all a chance to learn about India's heroes and also pay your respect to them. The idea of your class to make a presentation at the school and making every one a part of your experience is wonderful! Best of luck for your presentation, I hope it goes well and motivates the school students to join the Indian Armed Forces.

Your letter has reminded me of a time when we visited the war memorial in our city. If I remember correctly, the day was National Martyrs Day. While visiting one of Chandigarh's gardens we saw a lot of activity around the Bougainvillea Garden in Sector 3. As we approached the garden, we saw people offering flowers and prayers. We joined the group out of curiosity and quickly realised that they were all there to pay respect to the soldiers at the War Memorial.

When I think back about my visit where everyone was dedicating flowers as a mark of respect to our soldiers, I was reminded of the following poem:

Pushp ki Abhilasha

Chah Nahi, Main Sur Bala
Ke Gehano Mein Goontha Jaaun,
Chaah Nahi, Premi Mala Mein
Bindh Pyaari Ko Lalchaaun!

Chaah Nahi, Samraato Ke Shav
Par, He Hari, Dala Jaaun,
Chaah Nahi, Dewon Ke Sar Par
Chadhoon, Bhagya Par Itraun!

Mujhe Tod Lena, Banmali!
Us Path Mein Tum Dena Phaink,
Matra Bhoomi Per Sheesh Chadhane
Jis Path Jaayen Veer Anek!

–Makhanlal Chaturvedi

पुष्प की अभिलाषा

चाह नहीं, मैं सुरबाला के
गहनों में गूँथा जाऊँ,
चाह नहीं, प्रेमी-माला में
बंध प्यारी को ललचाऊँ!

चाह नहीं, सम्राटों के शव
पर, हे हरि, डाला जाऊँ,
चाह नहीं, देवों के सिर पर
चढ़ूँ, भाग्य पर इठलाऊँ!

मुझे तोड़ लेना, वनमाली!
उस पथ पर देना तुम फेंक,
मातृभूमि पर शीश चढ़ाने
जिस पथ जावें वीर अनेक!

–माखनलाल चतुर्वेदी

I hope you like the poem. I must say, I was inspired by your idea of presenting the valourous stories of India's soldiers. There are so many

stories of courage, bravery, and sacrifice which remind us that many of the challenges we face in our lives are inconsequential. We can enjoy peace in our country and the luxury of exchanging ideas with our friends because our Armed Forces are alert and work hard to create that environment for us.



Captain Anuj Nayyar, MahaVir Chakra

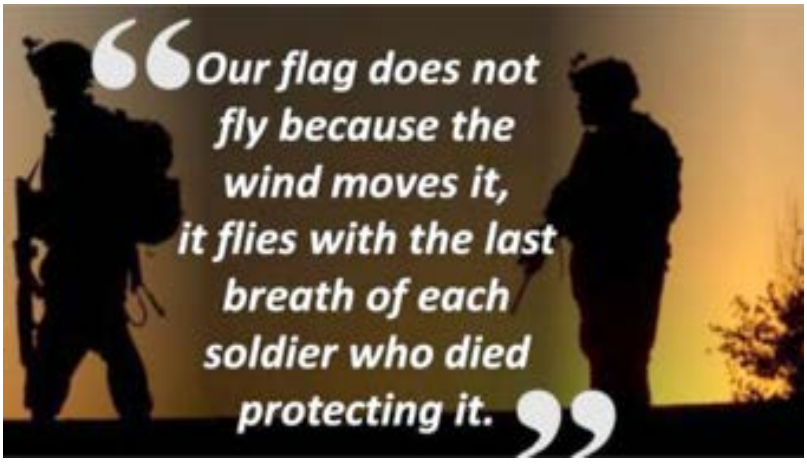
Very recently I read in the newspaper that Captain Anuj Nayyar, MVC, an Indian Army officer of the 17 Jat regiment was posthumously awarded the *Maha Vir Chakra*, India's second highest gallantry award, for exemplary valour during the Kargil War in 1999. I look forward to learning more about him. Meanwhile, I learnt that his mother Meena Nayyar has written a memoir titled *Tiger of Drass– Capt. Anuj Nayyar – 23 – Kargil Hero* which I shall certainly go through. I am sharing with you an excerpt of her interview with IANS.

memoir: an account of one's personal life and experiences

"Writing about the smallest things about your child who is not with you really used to shake me but gradually I came to terms with it by telling myself that if I didn't write about him no one in the world would or could, and no one will know about Anuj's sacrifice,"

Published on : 13 Apr, 2022, 1:59 pm

It is truly said:



https://lifenlesson.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Slide5-8.jpg

I have shared your experience with many of my friends. We all wish to visit the National War Memorial, Delhi. We have found out a mobile app 'National War Memorial and Museum'. This app is very interactive and provides answers to our queries in 21 languages. The murals on the walls are enchanting. A great learning experience indeed!

https://nationalwarmemorial.gov.in/.



Next week, I am going to share this idea with my classmates and my teacher. I think it would be great to create a collage capturing the lives and stories of people that can inspire us each day.

I know that we can email each other. I really like to receive letters from you, not just because of the ideas that you share but also because the envelope of your letters often comes with beautiful stamps, that make me happy. I don't know if I ever shared it before, but collecting stamps is one of my favourite hobbies. I've been doing it for years. But I learnt recently that the act of collecting stamps is called 'philately'. This time I received a stamp that celebrates India's independence, a theme related to your letter.

Okay, that's all from me for now. But before I conclude, guess what we had for breakfast!—*fluffy idlies* and we all remembered you. Give my regards to your parents.

I am inspired by your letter!



Hope to hear from you soon about your new adventures and experiences.

Best wishes,

Ananda

Comprehension Check

1. Which book does Ananda want to read and why?
2. How did Ananda feel after reading about the National War Memorial?
3. Why was she reminded of the poem *Pushp ki Abhilasha*?
4. Reading the letter from Soumya, Anada is inspired to act. What actions does she intend to take up. Fill in the table citing the sentences from the text.

(i)	visit	
(ii)	mobile app	
(iii)	sharing ideas	
(iv)	creating a collage	
(v)	joining the army	
(vi)	website	

Working with the Text

1. Why are war memorials built?
2. Why is it our duty to pay homage to our brave soldiers?
3. Why is it a good idea to make a presentation in front of the whole school?
4. Why were the students awestruck and humbled— explain in your own words?
5. Complete the table given below. You may have to find the information from the Internet.

Names of Wars	Dates	Soldiers Associated
Indo-China War		
India-Pakistan Wars		
Kargil War		

Working with Language

1. Find the odd one out from the words given in the box.

valiant	martyr	brave	heroic	courageous
memorial	monument	statue	cenotaph	victory
gratitude	thankfulness	appreciation	respect	gratefulness
unique	simple	matchless	exclusive	one-off

2. Fill in the blanks with appropriate form of the word given in brackets.

   The Param Vir Chakra signifies the "Wheel of the Ultimate Brave", and the award is granted for "most conspicuous bravery in the presence of the enemy". The medal was_____(institute) as a Gallantry Medal with retrospective effect from 15 August 1947 by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the then President of India. The Medal was_____ (design) by Mrs. Savitri Khanolkar. The designer_____(draw) inspiration from Sage Dadhichi, a vedic rishi who_____(make) the ultimate sacrifice by giving up his body so that the gods_____(can) make a deadly weapon_____(call) Vajra or Thunderbolt from his spine.

The medal is cast in bronze. In the centre, on a raised circle, is the state emblem, _____(surround) by four replicas of Indra's Vajra are _____(flank). The decoration is suspended from a straight swiveling suspension bar, and is held by a 32 mm purple ribbon.

3. Match the following words with their meanings.

(i) territorial integrity	(i) celebrated
(ii) iconic	(ii) engraved
(iii) envisioned	(iii) grand
(iv) etched	(iv) visualised
(v) posthumously	(v) a tapering stone piller
(vi) awestruck	(vi) after death
(vii) obelisk	(vii) amazed
(viii) majestic	(viii) never dying flame
(ix) interminable flame	(ix) very brave
(x) valiant	(x) safeguarding nation's borders

4 Complete the story of an unknown soldier. Replace the words from the box with the underlined words given in the text below.

touched everyone's heart, territorial integrity, inspired, fallen soldiers, posthumously, valour, exemplary courage, awestruck

He was posted at the Indian border to safeguard our national boundary. He had been motivated by the hundreds of stories of the soldiers who had died in action and were celebrated after their deaths for bravery.

One night as the war intensified, he was asked to take his platoon to the place of action.

He displayed outstanding bravery and led from the front. All the fellow soldiers were amazed at his courage, especially as he made the supreme sacrifice without any hesitation. He too was awarded after he died in the war. His action affected everyone very deeply.

Speaking and Writing

1. Have a class discussion on the topic, 'When there is no dialogue war begins'.
2. Find out any poem or story in your mother tongue/ context about the sacrifices/ bravery of soldiers. Make a presentation in the class.
3. People have switched to emails and whatsapp instead of writing notes and letters to each other. Which form of communication do you prefer and why? Share with your friends in class.
4. Write a paragraph on the army's work during peace-time.
5. As the citizens of a nation, we all must fulfill our duty. Write a letter to your friend describing how do you propose to serve your nation. You can choose from the themes given below:

   Save the Environment
   Health and Well-being
   Helping others
   Righteous Conduct

Meadow Surprises

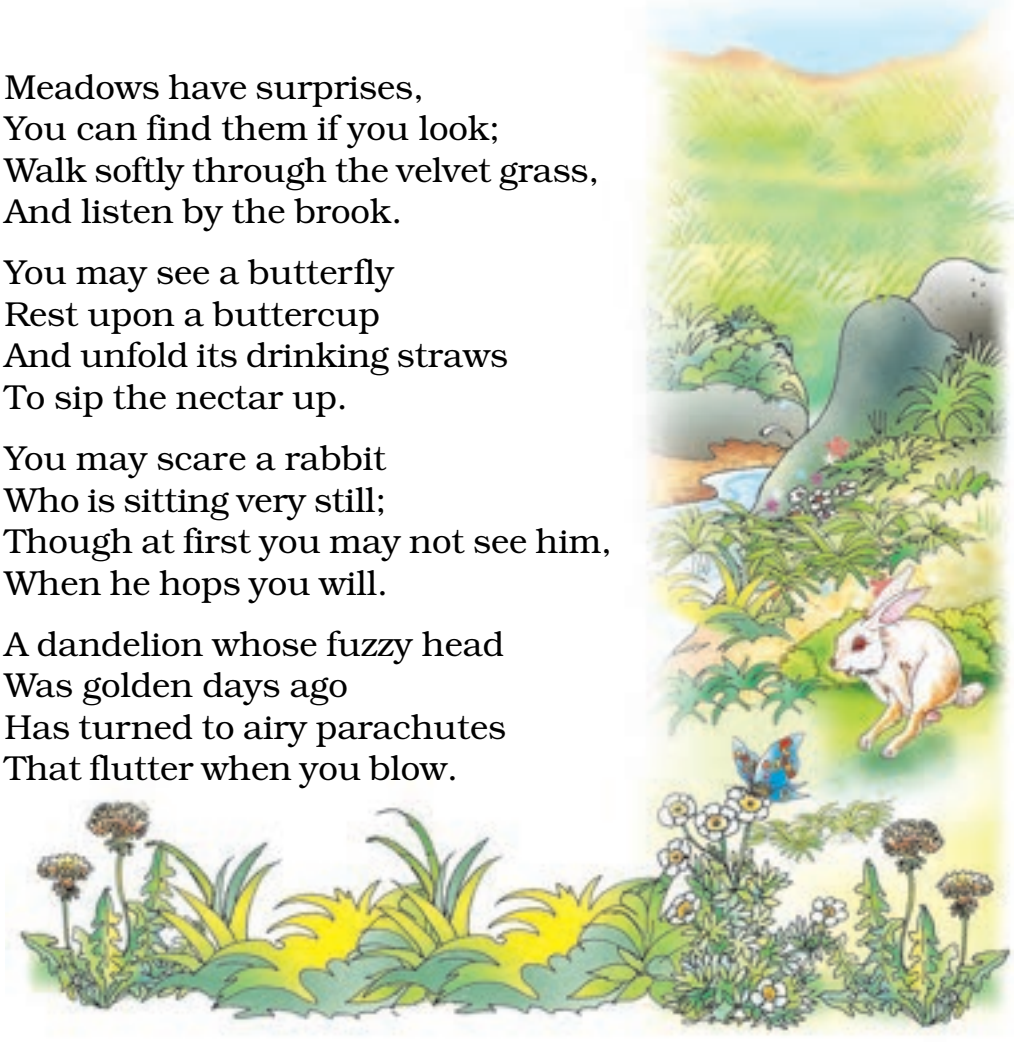
Walk across a green field, a park or even under a clump of trees, and you will notice many wonderful things. What are some of the surprises a meadow has for someone with a keen eye and a sharp ear?

Meadows have surprises,
You can find them if you look;
Walk softly through the velvet grass,
And listen by the brook.

You may see a butterfly
Rest upon a buttercup
And unfold its drinking straws
To sip the nectar up.

You may scare a rabbit
Who is sitting very still;
Though at first you may not see him,
When he hops you will.

A dandelion whose fuzzy head
Was golden days ago
Has turned to airy parachutes
That flutter when you blow.



Explore the meadow houses,
The burrows in the ground,
A nest beneath tall grasses,
The ant's amazing mound.

Oh! Meadows have surprises
And many things to tell;
You may discover these yourself,
If you look and listen well.

LOIS BRANDT PHILLIPS

Working with the Poem

1. Read the lines in which the following phrases occur. Then discuss with your partner the meaning of each phrase in its context.
   (i) velvet grass
   (ii) drinking straws
   (iii) meadow houses
   (iv) amazing mound
   (v) fuzzy head



2. Which line in the poem suggests that you need a keen eye and a sharp ear to enjoy a meadow? Read aloud the stanza that contains this line.
3. Find pictures of the kinds of birds, insects and scenes mentioned in the poem.
4. Watch a tree or a plant, or walk across a field or park at the same time everyday for a week. Keep a diary of what you see and hear. At the end of the week, write a short paragraph or a poem about your experiences. Put your writing up on the class bulletin board.



Read the following poem about the world of nature, which is as busy as the world of human beings.

Busy World

Bees are buzzing, frogs are hopping,
Moles are digging. There's no stopping
Vines from climbing, grass from growing,
Birds from singing, winds from blowing,
Buds from blooming. Bees are humming,
Sunbeams dancing, raindrops drumming.
All the world is whirling, dizzy,
Summertime is very busy!

FRANCES GORMAN RISSER

Delivery Delayed

Answer

The postman started moving round the tree in circles. The dog followed him, but as he did so, his leash got wrapped around the tree. The postman then safely walked up to the front door.

Notes