

# CHAPTER - 5

## SHOULD WIZARD HIT MOMMY

### QUESTIONS FROM TEXTBOOK SOLVED

#### READ AND FIND OUT

#### Q1. Who is Jo? How does she respond to her father's story-telling?

**Ans.** Jo is the shortened form of Joanne. She is the four year old daughter of Jack and Clare. For the last two years, her father, Jack, has been telling her bed-time stories. Since these stories are woven around the same basic tale and have the same characters and turn of events, Jo takes so many things for granted and takes active interest in the story-telling session. The protagonist (main character) is always named Roger. It may be Roger Fish, Roger Squirrel, Roger Chipmunk or Roger Skunk. The other characters are the huge, wise, old owl and the thin small wizard. The creatures of the forest—small animals—also take part in playing with Roger and liking/disliking him.

#### Q2. What possible plot line could the story continue with?

**Ans.** Jack told the story of Roger Skunk—an animal which emitted a foul smell and how the wizard changed his smell to that of roses at his request. The other little creatures, who earlier hated Roger Skunk, now gathered around him because he smelled so good. They played various games of children till dark and then went to their homes happily.

Jo thought that the story was all over. Jack continued the story. When Roger Skunk returned home, his mother felt angry at the unusual smell he had acquired. She called it an awful smell and asked who had made him smell like that. She took her umbrella and went to the wizard with Roger Skunk. She hit the wizard right 'wer the head. The wizard agreed to change his smell back. She wanted that a skunk should smell the way a little skunk should have. It should behave naturally and normally and not roaxn about in acquired smell or artificial manners. After a while the other small creatures got used to bhe typical smell of the skunk—the foul odour—and did not run away.

#### Q3. What do you think was Jo's problem?

**Ans.** Little Jo had been accustomed to the happy ending of the stories of Roger, where the wizard was helpful to him in fulfilling his wish. At the request of Roger Skunk, the wizard had changed his awful smell to that of the roses. Other small animals liked it and played with Roger Skunk happily. She could not digest the ending of the extended story where Roger Skunk's mother hit the wizard on the head and forced him to change Skunk's smell to the earlier foul one.

Jo could not accept Skunk's mother's stubbornness e.g. hitting the wellwisher of her son, Roger Skunk. Jo insisted that her father should tell her the same story again the next day with changed ending. The wizard should hit that unreasonable mOmmy on the head and leave Roger Skunk emitting the pleasant smell of roses. In the beautiful world of a child's imagination, fairies and wizard's are more real than reality itself. She could not digest the harsh realities of life. She did not like the rude mother who hit the benefactor of her own son.

## READING WITH INSIGHT

### Q1. What is the moral issue that the story raises?

**Ans.** The story raises a moral issue—should parents always decide what the children should do or let the children do what they like to do. There is an evident contrast between an adult's perspective on life and the world view of a little child.

Jack, the father, defends the behaviour of Roger Skunk's mother who forced the old wizard to restore the natural but offensive smell to Roger Skunk. He sums up the issue in one sentence: 'She knew what was right'. As to why the little skunk agreed to her mother's proposal, Jack says that the little skunk loved his mommy more than he loved all the other little animals. Jack cites an instance. When Roger Skunk was in bed, Mommy Skunk came up, hugged him and said he smelled like her little baby Skunk again and she loved him very much.

Little Jo, the spokesperson of children, does not agree with her father's view. She feels that the Skunk's mother should not have robbed the pleasure of her little son and deprived him of the pleasant smell of the roses. She insisted that the wizard hit that mommy on the head and did not change that little skunk back. She calls the little skunk's mother "a stupid mommy". She realised that her father was defending his own mother to her, or something odd.

Jo stuck to her view point. She insisted that her father should tell her the story the next day in a different manner. It was the wizard that took the magic wand and hit that mommy.

### Q2. How does Jo want the story to end and why?

**Ans.** Jack ends the story in a way that seems unusual to Jo. In her dream world, the wizard is a miracle worker. She can't digest the statement that the little skunk's mother hit the wizard right on his head with her umbrella and he agreed to do what she desired. Roger Skunk did not smell of roses any more. He smelled very bad again.

Jo did not want the story to end this way. She had in mind, the pleasure of all the little animals. She says, "But daddy, then he said about the other little animals run away!" Her father admits it. He agrees that Roger Skunk told his mother, "But Mommy, all the other animals run away!" -The mother does not bother about them. She says bluntly, "I don't care. You smelled the way a little skunk should have."

Jo can't, digest the ending that the mother hit the wizard right over the head and he made Roger Skunk smell very bad again. She suggested to her father to end the story in another manner—"The wizard hit her on the head and did not change that little skunk back." She "" wanted that stupid mommy to be punished and insisted repeatedly on the changed ending next night till her father agreed to consider it, saying, "Well, we'll see."

### Q3. Why does Jack insist that it was the wizard that was hit and not the mother?

**Ans.** Jack has the typical parental attitude. He is of the opinion that the parents know what is best for their children. He asserts the parental authority time and again to quieten Jo and stifle her objections and amendments to the story of the foul smelling Skunk related by him.

He defends the attitude of Roger Skunk's mother. She does not approve of the unnatural, unskunk like smell that Roger has. She calls the sweet smell of the roses an awful smell.

Earlier the little skunk smelled the way a little skunk should. She wants the natural characteristic—the foul smell—restored. He says that she knew what was right. Secondly, the little skunk loved his mommy more than he loved all the other animals. That is why, he took his mommy to the wizard. She hit the wizard and forced him to change the smell of roses to his earlier bad odour, He insisted on this ending to emphasise the concern of the parents for children and their role in bringing them up on proper lines. .

#### **Q4. What makes Jack feel caught in an ugly middle position?**

**Ans.** Jack feels that he has been caught in an ugly middle position physically, emotionally as well as mentally. The woodwork, a cage of mouldings and rails and skirting boards all around them was half old tan and half new ivory.

He was conscious of his duties as a father and as a husband. Little Bobby was already asleep. His efforts to make Jo fall asleep proved quite fatiguing. She kept on interrupting him, asking for clarifications, pointing errors and suggesting alternatives.

Jack did not like that women should take anything for granted. He liked them to be apprehensive. So, he extended the story, though he was in a haste to go down stairs and help his pregnant wife in her hard work of painting the woodwork. The result of the extension to the story proved unfruitful and unpleasant for Jo, Jack and Clare. Jo wanted him to change the ending of the story. Clare complained that he had told a long story. Jack felt utter weariness and did not want to speak with his wife or work with her or touch her. He was really caught in an ugly middle position.

#### **Q5. What is your stance regarding the two endings to the Roger Skunk story?**

**Ans.** Of the two endings to the Roger Skunk story, I approve of the mature and realistic one narrated by Jack that the mother skunk hit the wizard on the head and forced him to restore the original smell to the skunk.

Every species of animals has its special features. She wanted Roger Skunk to smell the way a little skunk should have. It should not carry the deceptive and borrowed smell of the roses.

Roger Skunk is agreed to go with her because he loved his mommy more than he loved all the other little animals. She knew what was right.

The mother's point was proved right. When the wizard restored the original foul smell to Roger Skunk, the other little animals got used to the way he was and did not mind it at all.

Of course, it took them sometime. Jack did not agree with Joanne's remark that she was a 'stupid' mother. On the other hand, we find her a caring and loving mother. When Roger Skunk was in bed, mommy skunk embraced him and said he smelled like her little baby skunk again and she loved him very much. Thus, Jack's version brings out the mother's love, care and concern for her little baby.

#### **Q6. Why is an adult's perspective on life different from that of a child's?**

**Ans.** An adult's perspective on life is different from that of a child's because of the difference between their respective experiences and exposure to the world around them. An adult comes across all sorts of experiences—good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, happy or sad, encouraging or discouraging. The child lives a sheltered life under the protection and love of his parents. In their rosy dream world of fairies and wizards, nothing good is impossible for their favourite characters. Their adoration of these characters is nothing short of hero-worship.

The world of make-believe makes the children lovers of romance, beauty and all things pleasant in nature. These characters and their super feats, which appear so real in stories, may not be real at all in real life. The adults who are familiar with harsh realities of life know that all that glitters is not gold. Everything is not honey. They accept things critically— with a pinch of salt. Children usually lack this quality.

## MORE QUESTIONS SOLVED

### SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

#### Q1. What custom did Jack follow in the evenings and for Saturday naps?

**Ans.** Jack would tell his four year old daughter Joanne (or Jo) a story out of his head in the evenings and for Saturday naps. This custom had begun when she was two and now it was nearly two years old.

#### Q2. What was the basic tale underlying each story that Jack told?

**Ans.** A small creature named Roger had some problem. He would go to the wise owl who told him to go to the wizard. The wizard performed a magic spell. It solved Roger's problem. He demanded more pennies than Roger had. Then he directed Roger to the place where extra money could be found. Roger felt happy and played many games with other creatures. He then went home. His daddy arrived from Boston. They had supper. The story wound up with the description of the items of their supper.

#### Q3. How was the custom of story telling especially fatiguing on Saturdays?

**Ans.** Jo was growing up. She never fell asleep in naps any more. Her brother, Bobby, who was two was already asleep with the bottle. But Jo would not take her nap like an infant. The bumps her feet made under the covers were halfway down the bed. Her fat face deep in the pillow shone in the sunlight. The custom seemed futile and especially fatiguing on Saturdays.

#### Q4. Which animal did Jo suggest for the story that day? What do you know about this new animal?

**Ans.** Jo suggested 'skunk' for the story that day. It was a new animal for her. They must be talking about it at nursery school. A skunk or a pole-cat is a small black and white North American animal. It can produce a strong unpleasant smell to defend itself when it is attacked.

#### Q5. Why did Roger Skunk go to see the old owl? [All India 2014]

**Ans.** Due to foul body odour of Skunk, other animals were not interested in playing with him. But he wanted to play with friends. So, Roger Skunk went to the wise owl to get rid of the foul smell.

#### Q6. How did Jo and Jack react as the new animal was mentioned?

**Ans.** Jo squeezed her eyes shut and smiled to be thinking that she was thinking. She opened her blue eyes and said firmly, "Skunk". Having a fresh hero momentarily stirred Jack to creative enthusiasm. He started telling the story of Roger Skunk that smelled so bad that none of the other little woodland creatures would play with him.

#### Q7. How did Jack imagine the reaction of Roger Skunk on being universally detested ?

**Ans.** Whenever Roger Skunk went out to play, all of the other tiny animals would cry: "Uh-oh, here comes Roger Stinky Skunk". Then they would run away. Roger Skunk would stand there all alone. Two little round tears would fall from his eyes. Jack would relate all this with zest, remembering certain humiliations of his own childhood.

#### Q8. How do you think, did Jo identify with Roger Skunk, the victim of the hatred of other creatures?

**Ans.** Jo seemed to share the pleasure and pain of the hero of the story—Roger. So complete was her identification that the mention of tears in Roger's eyes brought tears in her eyes. Her mouth drooped down and her lower lip bent forward. Jack's finger traced the course of a tear along the side of her nose.

**Q9. Which two opposite forces acted on Jack while he was telling Jo a story about the little skunk?**

**Ans.** Jack was happy that he was telling Jo something true, something she must know. He had no wish to hurry on. But just then, a chair scraped downstairs. He realised that he must get down to help his wife, Clare to paint the woodwork in the living room. Thus, the interests of daughter and wife pulled him in different directions like two opposite forces.

**Q10. "This was a new phase, just this last month, a reality phase." What do you learn about Jo's reality phase? How did her parents try to convince her?**

**Ans.** Jo would ask if the magic spells were real. When Jack told her that spiders ate bugs, she would turn to her mother and ask if that was really so. When Clare told her God was in the sky and all around them, she would turn to her father to know the reality. Jack tried to convince her by saying? "They're real in stories."

**Q11. "He felt being an old man suited him." How would Jack play the old wizard?**

**Ans.** The wizard's voice was one of Jack's own favourite effects. He did it by scrunching up his face and somehow whining through his eyes. During this brief period of time his eyes would become full of watery secretions. He would say, 'Eh? Whatzis? Whatcher want? You smell awful.'

**Q12. How was the Skunk's story different from the other stories narrated by Jack? [Delhi 2014]**

**Ans.** The stories told by Jack were well taken by Jo. But the ending of the Skunk's story did not satisfy her. She believed that the wizard should have hit back Skunk's mommy and Skunk would have kept smelling like roses.

**Q13. How did Jack make the role of the wizard more impressive?**

**Ans.** Jack fixed Jo with the trance like gaze. Then he chanted a magic spell in the wizard's elderly irritable voice. The chanting was rhythmical and had sweet rhymes. The exclamation "Bingo!" confirmed the pleasure, the pleasure of the wizard at having done what he had been trying to do. All of a sudden, the whole inside of the wizard's house was full of the smell of roses.

**Q14. How did Jo react to Jack's chanting of the magic spell ?**

**Ans.** Jack chanted the magic spell as the wizard would do. When he paused, he noticed a rapt expression widening out from his daughter's nostrils. She forced her eyebrows up and her lower lip down in a wide noiseless grin. This expression reminded Jack of his wife's expression while feigning pleasure at cocktail parties.

**Q15. "Very silly of your stupid old daddy," says Jack. Why, do you think, did Jack say so?**

**Ans.** While narrating the story of Roger Skunk, Jack by chance said Roger Fish. Jo was quick to interrupt him and point out the error. She repeated twice that he had said Roger Fish and asked if that wasn't silly. Jack had to admit that it had been very silly of him.

**Q16. What action of Jo annoyed Jack? What do you think disturbed him?**

**Ans.** Roger Skunk began to cry as he had only four pennies. Jo made the crying face again, but this time without a trace of sincerity. This annoyed Jack. Some more furniture rumbled down stairs. Jack thought that Clare shouldn't move heavy things. He was worried because she was six months pregnant. It would be their third child.

**Q17. Which two factors made Jack continue the story?**

**Ans.** Roger Skunk had returned home at dark after playing happily with the other little animals. Jo did not fall asleep. She was starting to fuss with her hands and look out of the window. She thought the story was over. Jack did not like women when they took anything for granted. He liked them to be worried. So he continued the story.

**Q18. Why was Roger Skunk's mommy angry? What did she finally tell him?**

**Ans.** She was angry because Roger Skunk had an unusual smell of roses. She called it awful and asked Roger who made him smell like that. When he said, "The wizard", she ordered him to come with her and they were going right back to that very awful wizard. She seemed to be very angry with the wizard.

**Q19. Why, do you think, did Roger Skunk's mommy insist on taking him to the wizard at once?**

**Ans.** Roger Skunk's mommy wanted young skunk to smell the way a little skunk should. She did not want him to acquire the artificial and uncharacteristic smell of the roses. The foul smell was a tool for him to keep the enemy away. That is why she hit the wizard right over the head and he agreed to restore the original 'foul' smell.

**Q20. How did Jo want the wizard to behave when mommy skunk approached him?**

**Ans.** Jo had a deep regard for the wizard. He had magical powers and could do anything. She did not agree with her father's version. She said that the wizard hit her (Roger Skunk's mommy) on the head and did not change that little skunk back. She did not want that the other little animals should hate him again for his awful smell.

**Q21. Why does Jo insist that her father should tell her the story with a different ending—where the wizard hit that mommy?**

**Ans.** Jo was not convinced that the little animals eventually got used to the way the little skunk was and did not mind it all. It was just the opposite of what her father had said at the beginning. (The other tiny creatures called him Stinky Skunk and would run away, leaving Roger alone to shed tears.) Later, when the wizard made the skunk smell like roses, the other little animals gathered around him and played with him till dark. Hence Jo wanted the wizard to punish the stupid mommy.

**LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS**

**Q1. Why did Jack conduct the 'story-session' and what story did he tell? How did he ensure active participation of the listener in the development of the story?**

**Ans.** Jack started telling bed-time stories to his two-year-old daughter Jo (Joanne) two years ago. Now she was four-year-old and had recently entered the reality phase. Jack would tell her stories in the evenings or for Saturdays naps.

Each new story was a slight variation of a basic tale. The central character was a small creature named Roger. He could be Roger Fish, Roger Squirrel, Roger Chipmunk or Roger Skunk. Roger had some problem and went for help to the wise, old owl. The owl would tell him to go to the wizard. The wizard would perform a magical spell that solved the problem. He would demand more pennies than Roger had. He would direct unhappy Roger to the place where extra pennies could be found. Roger would then feel happy and play games with other small creatures till dark. Then he went home to his mommy. His daddy arrived from Boston and they had their supper. The story would end with the description of the items of supper. Since the plot of the story and the actions and reactions of the various characters remained the same, both Jo and Jack would enact typical scenes. Thus, Jo felt involved in the story.

**Q2. What problem did Roger Skunk have? How was it solved?**

**Ans.** Roger Skunk smelled very bad—in fact so bad that none of the other little woodland creatures would play with him. Whenever Roger Skunk went out to play, all the other tiny animals would cry: 'Uh-oh, here comes Roger Stinky Skunk.' Then they would run away. Roger Skunk would stand there all alone. Two little round tears would fall from his eyes. Roger Skunk

walked along very sadly and came to a very big tree. There was a huge, wise, old owl on the topmost branch of the tree. He told the owl that all the other little animals ran away from him because he smelled very bad. The owl admitted that he did so. Skunk wanted to know what he could do and cried hard. The owl advised Roger Skunk to go to the wizard who lived in the dense forest over a little river. The wizard too observed that the Skunk smelled awful. He asked what he wanted. Roger Skunk told his problem. The wizard found his magic wand and asked Roger Skunk what he wanted to smell like. Roger thought and said, "Roses". The wizard chanted a magical spell. There was a smell of roses all around the wizard's house. Roger Skunk now smelled like that of roses

**Q3. Why, do you think, was Roger Skunk's mommy angry ? Does her anger seem justified? What did she decide to do?**

**Ans.** Roger Skunk's mommy was angry because he had lost his God-given smell. He no longer emitted the foul smell he was born with. On the other hand, he had an awful and unusually sweet smell of roses. She wanted her young one to smell the way a young skunk should. This smell was God-given protection against danger. The predator could be kept at bay. The newly acquired smell of roses, however pleasant and sweet smelling could endanger the skunk's life by attracting the predators to the tiny skunk. She wanted to know who had done so. She felt very angry at the wizard. Her anger is justified because by his simple act he had put the life of the young skunk in danger. No mother can act peacefully or rationally when there is some danger to her young one. Hence, she at once decided to go to the wizard with Roger Skunk so that his foul smell might be restored and his life might be free from dangers.

**Q4. Comment on the ending of the story 'Should Wizard Hit Mommy'?**

**Ans.** The story does not end with the wizard being hit by the mother. Joanne, who believes the fictional characters to be real, wants her papa to tell the story that the wizard hit the stupid mommy. Instead of having a nap, she kicks her legs up and sits down on the bed. Jack advises her to have a rest.

When he went downstairs, he found that his wife, Clare had spread the newspapers and opened the paint can. She was wearing an old shirt of his on top of her maternity smock. She was stroking the chair rail with a dipped brush. He heard footsteps moving overhead and scolded Joanne.

Jack watched his wife labour. He had come there to help her, but the story-session had filled him with utter weariness. Clare remarked that it was a long story. Jack uttered only three words: 'The poor kid'. He felt caught in an ugly middle position. Though he felt the presence of his wife there, he did not wish to speak to her, touch her or work with her. It leaves us baffled. We begin to ponder over human relationships. Thus, the ending is thought provoking.

**Q5. Why, do you think, the title has a question mark? How far do you find it a convincing and appropriate title?**

**Ans.** The question mark in the title 'Should Wizard Hit Mommy?' focuses the reader's attention on the two well-wishers of the main character—Roger Skunk. The wizard solves Roger Skunk's problem of bad smell and gives him the smell of roses at his request. The skunk's mother is angry, because her baby has been deprived of the bad odour which a skunk of his age should emit. This bad odour is a sort of armoura protection against predators who are kept away by the dirty smell. The mother skunk hits the wizard on the head and forces him to restore the foul smell to the skunk.

Jo, the four-year-old girl, for whom the wizard is a real do-gooder, can't digest his humiliation at the hands of a stupid mother. From her point of view, the smell of roses make skunk popular among the other little animals.

The story can take either direction and ending depending on the point of view of the adult or child. The author very cunningly seeks the reaction of his readers by putting a question mark at the end of the title. One may approve of it or reject it. Thus, the title is quite convincing and appropriate one.