

## The Banyan Tree

THOUGH the house and grounds belonged to my grandparents, the magnificent old banyan tree was mine — **chiefly** because Grandfather, at sixty-five, could **no longer** climb it.

Its spreading branches, which **hung** to the ground and took root again, forming a number of twisting **passages**, gave me endless pleasure. Among them were squirrels and snails and butterflies. The tree was older than the house, older than Grandfather, as old as Dehra Dun itself. I could hide myself in its branches, behind thick green leaves, and **spy** on the world below.

My first friend was a small grey **squirrel**. **Arching** his back and **sniffing** into the air, he seemed at first to **resent** my **invasion** of his privacy. But when he found that I did not **arm** myself with **catapult** or air gun, he became friendly, and when I started bringing him pieces of cake and biscuit he grew quite **bold** and was soon taking **morsels** from hand. Before long, he was **delving** into my pockets and helping himself to whatever he could find. He was a very young squirrel, and his friends and relatives probably thought him **foolish** and **headstrong** for trusting a human.

In the spring, when the banyan tree was full of small red **figs**, birds of all kinds would **flock** into its branches: the red-bottomed bulbul, **cheerful** and **greedy**; parrots, myna and crows **squabbling** with one another. During **the fig season**, the banyan tree was the noisiest place in the garden.



Halfway up the tree I had built a **crude** platform where I would spend the afternoons when it was not too hot. I could read there **propping** myself **up** against the tree with a **cushion** from the living room. Treasure Island, Huckleberry Finn and The Story of Dr Dolittle were some of the books that made up my banyan tree library.

When I did not feel like reading, I could look down through the leaves at the world below. And on one particular afternoon I **had a grandstand view** of that classic of the Indian wilds, a fight between a mongoose and a cobra.

The warm **breezes** of approaching summer had sent everyone, including the gardener, into the house. I was feeling **drowsy** myself, **wondering** if I should go to the pond and have a swim with Ramu and the buffaloes, when I saw a huge black cobra **gliding** out of a **clump** of cactus. At the same time a mongoose **emerged** from the **bushes** and went straight for the cobra.

In a clearing **beneath** the banyan tree, in bright sunshine, they came face to face. The cobra knew only too well that the grey mongoose, three feet long, was a superb fighter, **clever** and aggressive.

## NCERT: Class VI – By English Madhyam

But the cobra, too, was a skilful and experienced fighter. He could move **swiftly** and **strike** with the speed of light; and the **sacs** behind his long sharp **fangs** were full of deadly poison. It was to be a battle of champions.

**Hissing defiance**, his **forked** tongue **darting** in and out, the cobra raised three of his six feet off the ground, and spread his broad, **spectacled hood**. The mongoose **bushed** his tail. The long hair on his spine stood up.

Though the **combatants** were unaware of my presence in the tree, they were soon made aware of the arrival of two other **spectators**. One was a myna, the other a jungle crow. They had seen these preparations for battle, and had **settled** on the cactus to watch the **outcome**. Had they been **content** only to watch, all would have been well with both of them.

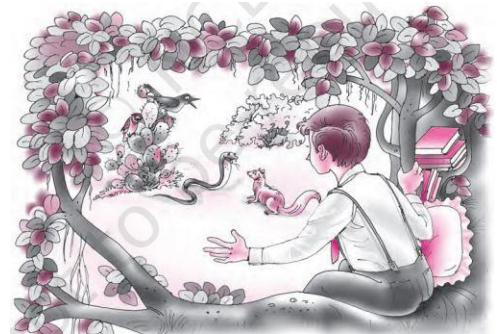
The cobra stood **on the defensive**, **swaying** slowly from side to side, trying to **mesmerise** the mongoose into making **a false move**. But the mongoose knew the power of his opponent's **glassy, unwinking** eyes, and refused to meet them. Instead he fixed his **gaze** at a point just below the cobra's hood, and opened the attack.

Moving forward quickly until he was just within the cobra's reach, the mongoose made a **pretended** move to one side. Immediately the cobra struck. His great hood came down so swiftly that I thought nothing could save the mongoose. But the little **fellow** jumped neatly to one side, and darted in as swiftly as the cobra, biting the snake on the back and darting away again out of reach.

At the same moment that the cobra **struck**, the crow and the myna **hurled** themselves at him, only to **collide** heavily in mid-air. **Shrieking insults** at each other they returned to the cactus plant. A few drops of blood **glistened** on the cobra's back.

The cobra struck and missed. Again the mongoose **sprang** aside, jumped in and bit. Again the birds **dived** at the snake, **bumped into** each other instead, and returned shrieking to the safety of the cactus.

The third round followed the same **course** as the first but with one dramatic difference. The crow and the myna, still **determined** to take part in the **proceedings**, dived at the cobra; but this time they missed each other as well as their mark. The myna flew on and reached its **perch**, but the crow tried to **pull up** in mid-air and turn back. In the second that it took the bird to



## NCERT: Class VI – By English Madhyam

---

do this the cobra **whipped** his head **back** and struck with great force, his **snout thudding** against the crow's body.

I saw the bird **flung** nearly twenty feet across the garden. It **fluttered** about **for a while**, then **lay** still. The myna remained on the cactus plant, and when the snake and the mongoose returned to the fight, very wisely decided not to interfere again! The cobra was weakening, and the mongoose, walking fearlessly up to it, raised himself on his short legs and with a lightning **snap** had the big snake by the snout. The cobra **writhed** and **lashed** about in a frightening manner, and even **coiled** itself about the mongoose, but **to no avail**. The little fellow **hung grimly on**, until the snake had **ceased** to struggle. He then smelt along its **quivering** length, gripped it round the hood, and dragged it into the bushes.

The myna dropped **cautiously** to the ground, **hopped** about, **peered** into the bushes from a safe distance, and then, with a **shrill** cry of congratulation, flew away.

English Madhyam

PRACTICE LEADS TO PERFECTION



## NCERT: Class VI – By English Madhyam

### Vocabulary

1. **Chiefly** (adverb) – mainly, in the main, primarily, principally मुख्यतः  
used by children for shooting small stones. गुलेल
2. **No longer** (adverb) – Not now as formerly. अब और नहीं
3. **Hang** (verb) – be suspended, hang down, be pendent, dangle लटकना
4. **Passage** (noun) – way, way through, route, path, course रास्ता
5. **Spy** (verb) – notice, observe, see, spot, sight, catch sight of देखना
6. **Squirrel** (noun) – An agile tree-dwelling rodent with a bushy tail, typically feeding on nuts and seeds. गिलहरी
7. **Arch** (verb) – Bend in order to stretching his body मोड़ना
8. **Sniff** (verb) – smell, test the smell of, nose at सूँघना
9. **Resent** (verb) – begrudge, be angry at, be resentful of, dislike, be displeased about बुरा मानना
10. **Arm** (oneself with) (verb) – to equip someone with whatever is needed to fight against someone or something. से लैस करना
11. **Catapult** (noun) – A forked stick with an elastic band fastened to the two prongs, used by children for shooting small stones. गुलेल
12. **Bold** (adjective) – courageous, brave, valiant, fearless, unafraid निडर/ बहादुर
13. **Morsel** (noun) – A small piece or amount of food; a mouthful निवाला
14. **Delve** (verb) – reach inside a receptacle and search for something. उलट-पुलटकर ढूँढना
15. **Foolish** (noun) – stupid, silly, idiotic, half-witted, witless, brainless, mindless मूर्ख
16. **Headstrong** (noun) – stubborn, obstinate, obdurate, unyielding, stubborn हठी
17. **Fig** (noun) – a soft sweet fruit that grows in hot countries अंजीर
18. **Flock** (verb) – (of birds) congregate in a flock. झुंड में इकट्ठा होना
19. **Cheerful** (adjective) – happy, jolly, merry, bright, glad, sunny, joyful, joyous हंसमुख
20. **Greedy** (adjective) – gluttonous, ravenous, voracious, gourmand, appetite (for food) लालची
21. **Squabble** (verb) – quarrel, row, argue, bicker, have a fight, fight झगड़ना

## NCERT: Class VI – By English Madhyam

22. **The Fig season** (noun) – It refers to spring season
23. **Crude** (adjective) – raw, unprepared, unworked, unformed, undeveloped  
कच्चा
24. **Prop oneself up** (phrasal verb) – to stand or lean someone or something against someone or something. के सहारे टिकना
25. **Cushion** (noun) – pillow तकिया
26. **Have a grandstand view** (phrase) – to be in a position where you can see something very well
27. **Breeze** (noun) – wind (warm) हवा
28. **Drowsy** (adjective) – sleepy and lethargic; half asleep. सुस्त, तंद्रालु
29. **Wonder** (verb) – think about, reflect on, deliberate about, speculate about सोचना
30. **Glide** (verb) – move with a smooth, quiet continuous motion. सरकना
31. **Clump** (noun) – A small group of trees/plants growing closely together; group, bunch गुच्छा
32. **Emerge** (verb) – come out, appear, come into view, become visible बाहर आना
33. **Bush** (noun) – shrub, woody plant, hedge plant झाड़ी
34. **Beneath** (preposition) – under, underneath, below, at the bottom of के नीचे
35. **Clever** (adjective) – intelligent, bright, smart, brilliant चतुर
36. **Swiftly** (adverb) – rapidly, quickly, fast, speedily, briskly तेजी से
37. **Strike** (verb) – hit, slap, attack, smack, beat, thrash, spank, thump प्रहार करना
38. **Sac** (noun) – a part of an animal that is like a bag and often contains liquid
39. **Fang** (noun) – The tooth of a venomous snake, by which poison is injected. साँप का विषैला दांत
40. **Hiss** (verb) – to make a sharp sibilant sound as of the letter s.
41. **Defiance** (noun) – behaviour in which refuse to obey someone opposition, confrontation ललकार, चुनौती,
42. **Forked** (adjective) – having 'Y' shape
43. **Dart** (verb) – to move quickly or suddenly
44. **Spectacled** (adjective) – (of an animal) having markings around the eyes resembling a pair of glasses
45. **Hood** (noun) – The expanded part of a snake's head

## NCERT: Class VI – By English Madhyam

46. **Bush** (verb) – to grow thickly or spread out like a bush मोटा करना या फैलाना
47. **Combatant** (noun) – fighter, opponent, competitor योद्धा/ लड़ाकू
48. **Spectator** (noun) – onlooker, watcher, looker-on, viewer, observer दर्शक
49. **Settle** (verb) – to place in a position of rest or comfort बैठ जाना
50. **Outcome** (noun) – result, end result, consequence, conclusion परिणाम
51. **Content** (adjective) – contented, satisfied, pleased संतुष्ट
52. **On the defensive** (phrase) – protecting yourself from criticism/attack instead of attacking or criticizing others बचाव में
53. **Sway** (verb) – swing, shake, oscillate, undulate, move from side to side हिलना-डुलना
54. **Mesmerise** (verb) – to hypnotize, enchant, bewitch, beguile, captivate मंत्रमुग्ध करना
55. **A false move** (phrase) – in a dangerous or risky situation, something which makes your position even more dangerous गलत चाल
56. **Glassy** (adjective) – (of a person's eyes or expression) showing no interest or animation.
57. **Unwinking** (adjective) – (of a person's eyes or gaze, or a light) steady; unwavering. अपलक
58. **Gaze** (noun) – stare, fixed look, intent look, gape टकटकी/ स्थिर नज़र
59. **Pretended** (adjective) – Not genuine; assumed., playacted, fake ढोंग
60. **Fellow** (noun) – friend, crony, comrade, partner साथी
61. **Strike** (verb) – Attack प्रहार करना
62. **Hurl** (verb) – to throw something with a lot of force, usually in an angry or violent way वेग से फेंकना
63. **Collide** (verb) – crash, crash into, come into collision, impact with टकराना
64. **Shrieking** (adjective) – Making a high-pitched piercing cry /sound; screaming, squealing ज़ोर से चिल्लाते हुए
65. **Insult** (noun) – affront, slight, snub, abuse, offence अपमान
66. **Glisten** (verb) – shine, sparkle, glint, glitter, glimmer, shimmer चमकना
67. **Spring** (verb) – Move or jump suddenly; jump, leap उछलना
68. **Dive** (verb) – to rush, go, or reach quickly हवा में नीचे की ओर झपट्टा

## NCERT: Class VI – By English Madhyam

69. **Bump into** (phrasal verb) – collide with, impinge on, hit, run into, strike टकराना
70. **Course** (noun) – pattern, sequence प्रकार
71. **Determined** (adjective) – immovable, unrelenting, steadfast, staunch, stubborn दृढ़
72. **Proceedings** (noun) – actions, events, happenings कार्यवाही
73. **Perch** (noun) – pole, rod, branch, roost, rest, resting place बसेरा
74. **Pull up** (phrasal verb) – stop रूकना
75. **Whip something back** (phrase) – Move something back suddenly
76. **Snout** (noun) – the nose and mouth of an animal नाक के आगे को उभड़ा हुआ भाग
77. **Thud** (verb) – Move, fall, or strike something with a dull, heavy sound. प्रहार करना
78. **Fling** (verb) – Throw or hurl forcefully. फेंकना
79. **Flutter** (verb) – undulate, stir, shake, quiver, shiver, tremble फड़फड़ाना
80. **For a while** (phrase) – for a short period of time थोड़ी देर तक
81. **Lay** (verb) – set in place, set in position, put in place पड़ा रहना
82. **Snap** (noun) – a sudden loud sound like something breaking or closing
83. **Writhe** (verb) – twist, twist and turn, roll, jiggle, wiggle, jerk, squirm, wriggle ऐँठना, मरोडना
84. **Lash** (verb) – Strike प्रहार करना
85. **Coil** (verb) – Move or twist into a coil. लपेटना
86. **To no avail** (phrase) – in vain, without success, unsuccessfully, vainly, with no result, कोई फायदा नहीं
87. **Hang on** (phrasal verb) – hold on to, hold fast to, grip, clutch, grasp कसकर पकड़ना
88. **Grimly** (adverb) – In an unrelenting manner despite hardship. बुरी तरह से
89. **Cease** (verb) – end, halt, stop, conclude, terminate, finish, wind up, discontinue बंद करना, समाप्त करना
90. **Quivering** (adjective) – Trembling or shaking with a slight rapid motion. हिलनेवाला
91. **Cautiously** (adverb) – In a way that deliberately avoids potential problems or dangers. सावधानी से
92. **Hop** (verb) – move by jumping with two or all feet at once. कुदकना, फुदकना

## NCERT: Class VI – By English Madhyam

---

93. **Peer** (verb) – Look keenly or with difficulty at someone or something.  
सावधानी से देखना

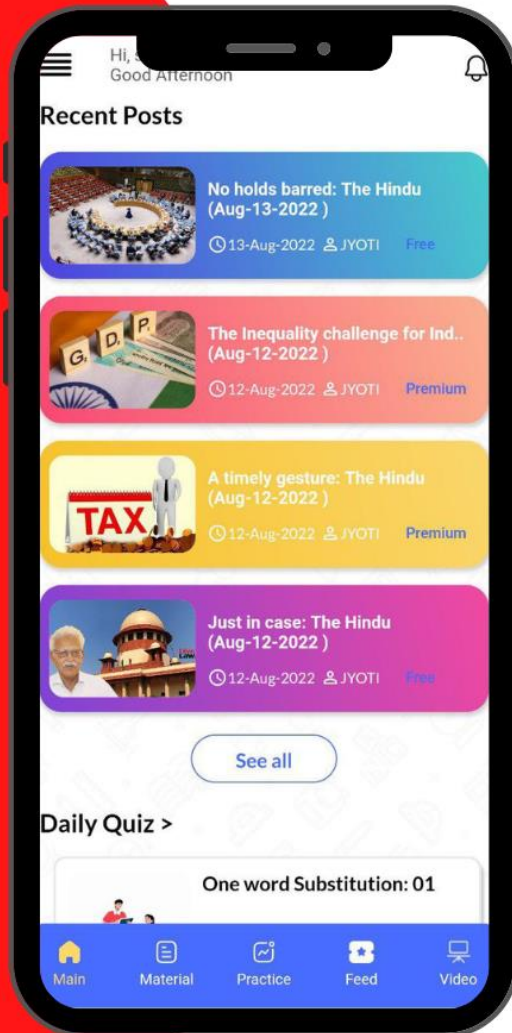
94. **Shrill** (adjective) – high-pitched, piercing, high, sharp, ear-piercing तेज, कर्णवेधी

English Madhyam

PRACTICE LEADS TO PERFECTION







# Learn Vocabulary Through Reading Articles

**English Madhyam**