

Chapter 8 Mijbil the Otter

THINKING ABOUT THE TEXT

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

- A. Mij was an intelligent animal. It invented its own game out of the ping-pong balls. It screwed the tap till water began to flow and then it would play and splash in the water. Though it was aloof and indifferent in the beginning, it soon became very friendly. It formed a special attachment with Maxwell. It responded when Maxwell called out his name. It grew desperate when Maxwell left it in a box and it got hurt while trying to come out of it. After Maxwell took it out, it clung to his feet. It was a fun-loving animal. It enjoyed playing all kinds of games. It would play with a selection of toys, ping-pong balls, marbles, rubber fruit, and a terrapin shell. It required love and affection from Maxwell and it got that readily.

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

- A. Otters belong to a comparatively small group of animals called Mustellines, shared by the badger, mongoose, weasel, stoat, mink and others. Maxwell's otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli* or Maxwell's otter. They are found in large numbers in marshes. They are often tamed by the Arabs. It is characteristic of otters that every drop of water must be extended and spread about the place; a bowl must at once be overturned, or, if it would not be overturned, be sat in and splashed in until it overflowed. For them, water must be kept on the move. Otters love playing various games, especially with a ball.

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

- A. Maxwell's otter was of a race previously unknown to science and was at length named by zoologists *Lutrogale perspicillata maxwelli* or Maxwell's otter.

Page: 111

4. Maxwell in the story speaks for the otter, Mij. He tells us what the otter feels and thinks on different occasions. Given below are some things the otter does. Complete the column on the right to say what Maxwell says about what Mij feels and thinks.

What Mij does

How Mij feels or thinks

Plunges, rolls in the water and makes the water splash and splash

.....

Screws the tap in the wrong way

.....

Nuzzles Maxwell's face and neck in the aeroplane

.....

A. What Mij does

How Mij feels or thinks

Plunges, rolls in the water and makes the water splash and splash

went wild with joy

Screws the tap in the wrong way

irritated and disappointed

Nuzzles Maxwell's face and neck in the aeroplane and welcome

distressed chatter of recognition

- 5. Read the story and find the sentences where Maxwell describes his pet otter. Then choose and arrange your sentences to illustrate those statements below that you think are true.**

Maxwell's description

- (i) makes Mij seem almost human, like a small boy.
 - (ii) shows that he is often irritated with what Mij does.
 - (iii) shows that he is often surprised by what Mij does.
 - (iv) of Mij's antics is comical.
 - (v) shows that he observes the antics of Mij very carefully.
 - (vi) shows that he thinks Mij is a very ordinary otter.
 - (vii) shows that he thinks the otter is very unusual.
- A.
- (i) He spent most of his time in play.
 - (iii) I watched, amazed; in less than a minute he had turned the tap far enough to produce a trickle of water, and after a moment or two achieved the full flow.
 - (v) A suitcase that I had taken to Iraq had become damaged on the journey home, so that the lid, when closed, remained at a slope from one end to the other. Mij discovered that if he placed the ball on the high end it would run down the length of the suitcase. He would dash around to the other end to ambush its arrival, hide from it, crouching, to spring up and take it by surprise, grab it and trot off with it to the high end once more.
 - (vii) It is not, I suppose, in any way strange that the average Londoner should not recognize an otter, but the variety of guesses as to what kind of animal this might be came as a surprise to me. Mij was anything but an otter.