

Note: The transactional processes suggested in CISCE curriculum are highlighted in grey.

### Learning Outcomes

- To understand the moral behind the poem and inculcate the practice of obtaining joy from simple things
- Help students identify traits which always demands for more, and waste time and strength on unattainable things
- To appreciate others and their traits

### Pre-reading

*Pair work:* Let students sit in pairs and initiate a discussion on

1. What was your favourite toy as a child?
2. What game did you play with your friends when you were small?

Go around the class during the discussions, pick out a few students, and ask them to explain the game to the class and few to describe their favourite toys.

Share a few stories with the class.

3. What are some emotions children display?
4. What emotions do adults display?

### READING

*Students predict, comprehend and compare*

Ask students:

1. What is the first thing you do when you wake up?
2. What do you think the story is about?

Play the audio on the Smart Book once, and let the class listen to the poem. Instruct them to pay attention to the pronunciation, stress and rhythm. Pause after each stanza to check understanding of the text.

Stanza 1

*What is the poet talking about? Why is the child happy? What does he mean by "perhaps you glance at me and think, What a stupid game to spoil your morning with!"? (The poet describes the game of a child and regrets his condition that he forgets the real charm of life. The*

poem opens with the observation about how a child is happy even with the broken toy and has been playing since morning.)

What does this stanza tell us about: the Child / the Adult?

Stanza 2

*What does 'art of being absorbed in sticks and mud-pies' mean? What are the poet's playthings? What is the difference in the child's and the adult's game? What does the poet compare his game to? Why?*

What does this stanza tell us about: the Child / the Adult?

*Group Work*

Write down the characteristics, behaviour, feelings, actions and attitudes of the child and adult. Add similarities and differences

	<b>Adult</b>	<b>Child</b>
Playthings	Accounts, work, gold, silver	Twigs, mud pies
Nature of playthings	Costly	Broken, free, anything
Feeling	Sad, always wanting more, not satisfied	Happy, content

## Post-reading

### Group work

- A. What is the moral behind the poem? (That one can learn from children and be happy with the simple joys in life.)
- B. What are some simple, good lessons we can learn from people around us:  
e.g.: children, adults, other living beings.

Discuss with your group and create a chart presentation/ collage about "Lessons we learn from others". Share experiences / stories.

## STUDENTS' BOOK ANSWER KEY

### Playthings

#### Comprehension

- A.** 1. b            2. a            3. b            4. b            5. a            6. a
- B.** 1. The words 'a broken twig' have been repeated in these lines. *Suggested answer (accept any logical answer):* These words have been repeated to stress on the simplicity of the child's plaything—a bit of a broken twig. The speaker wants to remind us how easily the child can remain busy and happy—he does not need anything special to occupy himself.
2. *Suggested answers (accept any logical answer):*
- a. By 'costly playthings', the speaker could mean things like furniture, jewellery or even cars and houses—things that cost a lot of money and things that grown-ups value as highly as children value their toys.
  - b. No, he would not really gather gold and silver in lumps, but he mentions 'lumps' because the things made of gold and silver that he acquires feel as unattractive as lumps to him, when he looks at his child's play and compares himself with his child.
3. *Suggested answer (accept any logical answer):* These lines make the child sound wiser than the speaker. This is because the child seems to have found an easy way to be happy—he can play with a piece of broken twig all morning and not feel restless or dissatisfied. On the other hand, the speaker spends his time and energy trying to get certain things that he knows he cannot get, and yet he chases them. The contrast is thus between the child who is easily satisfied and the grown-up who is not.
4. *Suggested answer (accept any logical answer):* The speaker may be referring to his work and everything he does in order to get the things he wants, as a game. Perhaps he calls it a game because just as a child has to take certain steps in

order to achieve a goal in a game, the speaker too, has to follow certain steps in order to achieve his goals. And he could also call it a game because he finds it as meaningless as a child's game.

- C.** *Suggested answer (accept any logical answer):* The speaker wishes to remind the readers to stay in touch with the child in themselves and not to lose sight of the simplicity of childhood. He tells us that as we grow up and become busy and occupied and anxious to achieve certain things, we may actually find it more difficult to be happy. We should learn—or remember—how to be happy easily, with simple things and not make our happiness dependent on big and expensive things.

### **Appreciating the Poem**

1. a and c
2.
  - a. No, it only describes a child's simple play and the father's thoughts while watching that play.
  - b. Yes, it describes the speaker's thoughts and feelings while watching his child play.
  - c. *Suggested answer (accept any logical answer):* Yes, this poem could be a diary entry of the speaker, where he thinks about his child's play and writes down his thoughts. It could also be a letter, but not a regular letter. The speaker may not write and *post* such a letter to his child, but he could write it for the child to read when he grew up and could understand what his father was trying to say—what comparison he was trying to make.

### **Vocabulary**

ACTIVITY, ENTERTAINMENT, DIVERSION, AMUSEMENT, PASTIME and RECREATION

### **Going Further**

*Free response*

## QUESTION BANK

### Playthings Poem

#### A. Answer in brief.

Why does the speaker admire the child?

**Ans:** The speaker is very happy to see the child playing naturally, sitting in the dust and not worried much about soiling his clothes. The child can endlessly go on playing in the mud with broken twigs. The child's carefree play attracts the speaker and gives him great pleasure.

#### B. Answer in detail.

How does the speaker compare himself to the child?

**Ans:** The speaker is very pleased to see the child happily playing in the mud with twigs. While looking at the child, he is thinking of his own life and work where he has no choice but to juggle with numbers and money. He feels one has to be lucky to have the freedom to play in the mud with twigs. The speaker has forgotten the art of playing with sticks and mud pies in his pursuit of materialistic things – things which lead from one insatiable desire on to another.

#### C. Choose the correct answer.

*'Child, I have forgotten the art of being absorbed in sticks and mud-pies.' Why has the speaker forgotten the art of playing with sticks and mud-pies?*

He has forgotten the art of playing with sticks and mud-pies because

- he feels it is childish to play with these things.
- he is busy accumulating wealth.
- he prefers to play with numbers.

**Ans:** b

#### D. Read the lines and answer the questions.

*In my frail canoe I struggle to cross the sea of desire, and forget that I too am playing a game.*

- What does the speaker refer to as *frail canoe*?
- Why is it a struggle for him?
- According to the speaker, what game is he playing?

**Ans:** a. The speaker refers to his life as a fragile boat in which he has to travel and face the challenges of life.

b. It is a struggle for the speaker not to succumb to the temptations life offers.

c. He is playing a game accumulating wealth. The game is not a carefree game like the child's game, but is one in which he works around numbers and money.

#### E. Answer in detail. (Think and answer)

Is the speaker happy playing the game he claims to be playing? Why? Why not?

**Ans:** When the speaker sees the child playing, he realises how much he is missing in life. He agrees that he has no time to play a normal game where there is happiness and relaxation. The game he is playing is with accounts and money. The sole purpose of his game is to acquire gold and silver. He is caught up in the web of desire for wealth and in the process has forgotten how to enjoy the finer things in life. The speaker, obviously is not very happy with this kind of game because he is spending a lot of time and strength in acquiring something which is farfetched.