

LISTENING TO LEARN AND LEARNING TO LISTEN

A series of listening activities for young learners of English

Welcome to Listening to Learn and Learning to Listen series by the National Council of Educational Research and Training. This series of listening activities seeks to provide learners a set of opportunities to listen to spoken language. Students need to comprehend spoken language in lectures, in the media (radio, cinema and television), and in face-to-face interactions. Listening is crucial to language acquisition because it provides ‘comprehensible input’. Comprehensible input refers to meaningful oral and written language somewhat above the learners’ current level of mastery. Such input allows for the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary, which, in turn, makes additional input more comprehensible. Mere exposure to language is insufficient. Learners must take notice of key features of the language to get the maximum benefit out of it.

How do we comprehend spoken language? One model is called ‘bottom-up’ approach. According to this view, we piece together a message by first understanding the smallest units of language -- sounds. Then, we hear the sound sequences together to form words. Our knowledge of words enables us to understand phrases and sentences, and finally an entire passage. An alternative view is known as ‘top-down’ approach. In this model, based on our knowledge of the topic and situation, we can figure out the specific meaning of a passage; and the sentences, phrases and words that form the message.

Current thinking suggests an ‘interactive’ model, in which listeners simultaneously use both top-down and bottom-up strategies. One strategy compensates for the gaps in the other, until the entire message is understood.

You are aware that there are many types of listening. Sometimes we listen for the general meaning of a message and sometimes for specific information. At times, listening is a one-way process (e.g. a lecture or a movie), and at other times it is a two-

way process and involves both listening and speaking as in a piece of conversation. Sometimes, listening entails mainly information exchange. At other times listening may be social or emotional in which feelings are more prominent. Now as practicing teachers, how can we promote listening as a skill in language learning among children? What strategies should we adopt to realize the maximum from listening activities? Let us explore what strategies could work in our classrooms, Try and design your own strategies that suit the local contexts. Here are some tips for you.

- Before administering a listening task, ask students what they know about the topic so that they can recall their prior knowledge. A teacher may also preview vocabulary and ideas prior to listening.
- Following the listening, ask students about the general points of the passage.
- If details are to be recalled, allow students to take notes or work through the handout, if provided.
- Use natural language for a listening passage. It is better to use short pieces of real language at the initial level than artificial teacher-made language.
- Use a variety of listening activities such as one-way and two-way processes through various texts.
- You may chalk out your own strategy for using the audio material. Ask the students to work in pairs, small groups or individually and play the audio more than once (or even many times) to enhance children's learning. If they take time to complete one task followed by listening, repeat playing so that they can understand it fully.

The texts for the listening activities in this series are drawn from various sources and genres consistent with the interests of learners. Activities followed by each listening task are given in print accompanying the CD or the cassette. Learners may be given the worksheet before they begin to listen.

Happy Listening

References

- Brown, G. (1992) *Listening to spoken language*. 2nd ed. London. Longman.
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- Rust, M. (1993) *Listening in language learning*. London. Longman.

Listening Activity One

Have you ever met a dragon? You can now meet one and listen to his problems

The Dragon Who Grew

Ah Ming was a dragon.

A very large, green and black dragon. When he breathed he puffed out a lot of smoke as if he had a great fire inside him. His eyes shone like rubies and his tail seemed to stretch for miles and miles.

He had not always been so large and imposing, for when he was only a few years old he was very small and thin, with no tail at all. In fact, his mother, who was beautiful, was quite ashamed of him.

"I do wish Ah Ming would grow a little," she said to the other dragons. "No one will ever be frightened of him, he will never be able to fight battles or look impressive in a procession."

This made Ah Ming very unhappy. He used to hide among the rocks and trees where no one could see him, and tears would roll down his dragon cheeks. He decided he would run away.

"No one is really kind to me," he said. "I'll find a new home where I can live happily all by myself and I'll be a kind, gentle dragon, even if I cannot be a large, beautiful and fierce one."

So one dark night, when a half moon gave just enough light for Ah Ming to see the road he would take, and which led over the hills and far away, he left home. He felt a little sad and lonely leaving all the other dragons he knew so well, but he was quite determined to make his own way in the world. He was so small that he was able to take the little paths and tracks between the hills and across the rice fields, which would have been much too narrow for most dragons. By morning he had gone a long way. He slept under a banyan tree and waited until it was dark before moving on again. He traveled like this for several days and soon he was a long, long way from his old home.

One morning he came to a place where tall trees grew on the top of a little hill. There was a huge, rocky cave out of which a stream bubbled. Down below in the valley he could see a village with lots of houses. It was a lovely, quiet place.

"I shall stay here for ever and ever and ever," said Ah Ming happily. So he settled down in the cave and made up his mind to be kind and good.

He ate green grass and wild fruits and the blossoms that fell from the trees and the little mushrooms that sprang up on the hillside. Sometime, he found honey that the bees had left in a hollow tree, and he drank the cool bubbling water from the little stream.

Weeks went by and Ah Ming felt 'very' peaceful; no one came to disturb him and from the grassy mound outside his cave he had a wonderful view of the village below him in the valley. He watched the children playing; he heard the sound of music and bells. He saw the street stalls and everyone going shopping and he watched the carts, wagons and rickshaws moving along the road. During festivals and holidays, banners, paper lanterns, and flags filled the narrow streets with colour.

One bright, sunny morning, Ah Ming decided he would go down to the village and make friends with everyone, for he felt sure they would like him. "I am such a tiny dragon," he said to himself. "Even the children will want to play with me."

So, when the sun was high in the sky and the street was full of noisy activities, Ah Ming suddenly appeared. He expected everyone to come running to meet him, to stroke his head, to admire his colours and to ask his name. Instead, there was the most terrible confusion. People dropped everything and ran; doors were slammed and bolted, windows closed and mothers hid their children. In a moment the street was empty.

"Oh dear, oh dear, whatever is the matter'?" said Ah, Ming. "Surely, they can't be frightened of me?"

He walked very slowly and carefully down the village street until he came to the village fountain with its lovely, clear pool of water. Sitting on the low wall around the pool was a small boy. Ah Ming stopped at once, and he and the boy looked at each other.

"Why has everybody but you run away?" asked Ah Ming. "I'm not going to hurt anyone after all; I'm just a very tiny dragon."

"Really!" said the little boy in surprise. "I'm afraid everyone was very, very frightened of you. They thought you were going to eat them up. I nearly ran away myself but my grandfather had been telling me such wonderful old stories about dragons, I thought I would stay and see what you really looked like. How very, very large, you are!"

"Large!" said Ah Ming in astonishment. "Me?" He shook his head. "Why, I'm perhaps the smallest dragon in the world — that's why I had to leave home."

"You've made a big mistake," said the small boy. "Just take a look at yourself." Ah Ming turned and looked down into the bright, clear water of the pool and suddenly saw that he was simply enormous. He was puffing out clouds of smoke into the still air, his tail stretched out behind him, his neck curved high, his eyes glittered like jewels. "Oh, dear, oh dear!" said Ah Ming. "What has happened to me?"

"You've grown," said the small boy, "that's all, but you look simply beautiful, a real dragon. If you honestly don't eat up people I'll hurry off and tell them all that you are quite harmless and then they will come out of their houses and look at you."

In a short time Ah Ming was surrounded by an admiring crowd. Children climbed on his back, little boys sat on his tail, babies were held up to stroke his cheeks. He felt very happy — everybody really liked him.

After a lot of talk and discussion, the village council decided to adopt Ah Ming as their special dragon. So nearly every day he came down from his cave and stretched out on the village street. He took up a great deal of room but he was very careful not to knock down any of the stalls and the children were able to play the most exciting games — jumping over his back and sliding down his tail.

His fame soon spread abroad and people came from far and wide to see him.

Ah Ming was very happy. At festivals and holidays he always led the processions; he was gentle and good tempered with the children and polite to everyone. Luckily, he stopped growing, though he got rather fat. He is living there to this day, a contented and well-satisfied dragon.

That was the story of the dragon. Now let us see how you feel about the story. Answer the following based on your listening of the story.

1. Ah Ming's mother was ashamed of him because _____

2. a. What sort of place did Ah Ming choose?

- b. Why

3. Ah Ming discovered that he had grown when
 - a. he saw his reflection on water.
 - b. the little boy told Ram that he was large and beautiful.
 - c. his mother came to forest in search of him.
 - d. a hunter chased him.

4. Could you recall the words which mean the following. You may consult your dictionary.
feeling shame: _____
decided : _____

5. The setting of the Ah Ming story is
 - a. India
 - b. China
 - c. Greece

Listening Activity Two

Knowing many languages has its our advantages. It help one to travel from place to place and understand people and their culture. Those who know their own language often face difficulties when they visit places and fail to interact with people who speak a different language. This may land us in trouble or may result in a pleasant surprise. Here is such an experience. Listen to the Great Truth

The Great Truth

This is the story of a German traveller who arrived at a great truth by error. This gentleman arrived at Amsterdam during the course of his Journey. He went round the city and was deeply impressed by its beautiful buildings and busy people. He saw a house larger and more beautiful than any he had ever seen during all his travels. For a long time he gazed in wonder at the expensive building.

Finally he addressed a passerby, "Excuse me" he said, "can you tell me the name of the gentleman who owns this beautiful house with the windows full of all kinds of flowers?" But 'the man, who probably had something more important to attend to, and understood as little German as the questioner did Dutch, replied, "Kannitverstan," and went away. This is a Dutch word and means no more than, 'I cannot understand you. But the traveller thought it to be the name of the owner of the grand building. "He must be a mighty rich man, that Mr. Kannitverstan," he said to himself, and walked away.

Walking through the narrow streets of the town he came to the harbour. There were many ships in the harbour and he had never seen so many of them in his life. His eyes fell on a large merchant-ship that was being unloaded. The cargo consisted of all kinds of waters from distant lands.

After he had watched for a long time, he asked a man who was carrying a crate on his shoulders the name of the person for whom the ship had brought all these wares. "Kannitverstan" was the answer.

Then he thought: "So that's how it is ; if the ships bring him such riches, no wonder he can build houses with potted flowers in the windows". So he went away

thinking how poor a man he was among so many rich people in this world. But just as he was thinking, "I wish I, too could be as well off as this Mr. Kannitverstan some day," he saw a grand funeral procession in the street. White horses were pulling a black carriage slowly, as though they were aware that they were carrying a dead man to his grave. A large number of friends and acquaintances of the dead man followed silently. Our stranger remained standing in respect with his hat in his hand until the last man in the procession had passed by. Then he asked the last mourner in a low voice, "The dead man whose funeral you are going to attend must have been a good friend of yours. Who was he?"

"Kannitvetstan," was the answer.

A few large tears tumbled down from the eyes of our traveller and he felt sad and relieved at once. "Poor Kannitverstan!" he exclaimed. "What now remains of all your riches? Exactly what I shall get one day from my poverty: a linen shroud and of all your beautiful flowers, you have, perhaps, a rose on your cold breast." With these thoughts he accompanied the funeral procession to the grave as though he belonged to it. He saw the supposed Mr. Kannitverstan being lowered in his final resting place.

He left with the others and went away with a light heart. At an inn where German was understood, he ate his dinner. Whenever afterwards his heart became heavy because so many people in this world were rich and he was poor, he only thought of Mr. Kannitverstan of Amsterdam — of his big house, his merchant ship, and his narrow grave.

Answer the following questions based on your listening of the story.

1. What attracted the traveler? Why?

2. What is the meaning of the word 'Kannitverstan'? What did the traveler think it meant? Could you tell the equivalent to this word in your mother tongue to your friend?

3. The traveller felt sad and relieved when he saw the funeral procession.
 - a. Why did he feel sad?

 - b. Why did he feel relieved?

4. Give a word that best describes the German traveller.

Listening Activity Three

The Three Surprises

Have you ever given surprises to anyone? It makes you happier when you give a surprise, rather a pleasant surprise. Isn't? Look at what surprises a boy like you is facing as he explores into the world of nature. Listen to the story, *The Three Surprises* and as you listen try to mark the correct response to each question you have in hand.

Once upon a time there was a little boy. He had lots of toys to play with and books to look at. But when the spring sun shone through his window and the sky was as blue as a kingfisher's wing, he grew tired of all his things.

When his mother came into the room he said to her, "Mother, what shall I do? I don't want to play with my toys or look at my books any more today." And his mother, who could always think of lovely things for little boys to do, said, "Go out into' the sunshine and follow the path of the blowing wind across the meadow to the wood and see if you can bring me back three surprises."

So the little boy took his basket and went out into the spring sunshine. He followed the blowing wind across the meadow and it whispered and sang in his ears.

"O wind, said the little boy, "I wish I knew what you were saying perhaps you could tell me where I could find a surprise to put in my basket and take home to my mother?"

The wind blew and blew as if it wanted to be understood. Then it went winging its way ahead, and as it passed by it dropped a surprise at the little boy's' feet. There, curled like a tiny half-moon was a feather — a black, red-tipped feather. When he picked it up it lay in his hand, soft as silk, light as air, warm as spring sunshine. He put it carefully into his basket and called out to the speeding wind, "Thank you, wind, for my first surprise."

Then he went on into the little wood. Last year's leaves, russet and brown, lay about his feet on the path but the trees were green-tipped and the birds were singing.

"O birds" said the little boy, "I wish I knew what you were saying. Perhaps you could tell me where I could find a surprise to put in my basket and take home to my mother?" The birds sang sweetly and clearly as if they wanted to be understood and a fat thrush flew hurriedly out of a hawthorn bush.

Then, all at once, the little boy saw lying there on the mossy ground under the hawthorn tree, a surprise — two pale blue halves of a thrush's broken egg. A baby bird had shed them for he no longer needed their protection. They lay like two tiny, empty cups waiting to be filled. Breathlessly, in case they should break, the little boy picked them up and put them in his basket beside the feather. Then he called out to the busy, singing birds, "Thank you, thank you, birds, for my second surprise."

Then he went on through the wood to where the trees ended and the whole world seemed to lie at his feet. White clouds like wandering sheep were filling the distant sky and drifting across the sun. "O clouds and sun," said the little boy, "I wish I knew what you were saying; perhaps you would tell me where I could find a surprise to put in my basket and take home to my mother." The clouds moved slowly past as if they wanted to write a message in the sky and the little boy sat down on the soft, sandy ground under the last, tall pine tree. All at once, a little shaft of sunlight slid between the dark branches of the pine tree turning the sand to gold. The little boy buried his hands in the warm amber dust when suddenly he felt something round and hard. There, between his fingers, was a pebble.

It was clear like glass and as smooth as if all the rivers in the world had run over it for a million years. It shone like a star when he held it up to the light. Here was his last surprise.

He took his handkerchief out of his pocket and wrapped the lovely crystal pebble in it and put it in his basket. Then he looked up at the evening sky and called out, "Thank you, thank you, clouds and sun, for my third surprise."

It was time to go home. He hurried down through the wood and across the meadow. And the blowing wind, the singing birds and the moving, sun-bright clouds were with him all the way as he went.

"I have my three surprises," he called out to his mother as he opened the door.

"O, what lovely surprises!" said his mother as she took out of the basket the black, red-tipped feather, the two pale blue halves of the thrush's egg and the smooth, hard, crystal pebble.

"Now I have a surprise for you!" And there, at his place on the table, was a large, brown egg ready to be eaten and a bar of cream jelly chocolate. The little boy broke off the top of his egg and put his spoon into the yolk. His mother laughed as he spooned it on his bread.

"We will keep your surprises here, on my special table." she said and laid them out carefully — the black, red-tipped feather, the two pale blue halves of the thrush's egg and the smooth, hard, crystal pebble"

Now answer the following putting a π mark in the appropriate box. You may talk to your partner.

1. The little boy felt tired of his toys and book because

- a. he was physically tired.
- b. he disliked them.
- c. spring had come.
- d. he had to do lot of home work.

2. What did the little boy's mother ask him to do?

- a. His mother asked him to read his book.
- b. She asked him to bring some vegetable from market.
- c. She told him to sleep.
- d. She asked him to go out into the sunshine and follow the path of the blowing wind around the meadow.

3. What was his fist surprise?

4. Ask your partner what the second surprise was?

5. Whom did he thank for the second surprise?

6. Where did he find the third surprise?

7. What was the reward he got from his mother for collecting the three surprises?

8. Ask your partner "What will you do if you get bored during a holiday?" and write your answers.

Listening Activity Four

The Poles

Have you heard of the Northern and Southern extremes of the earth known as the North pole and South pole? Who do you think lives there? Why are these regions so cold? Listen to the story of the poles now.

On the northern and southern extremes of the earth are the poles: the North pole and the South pole. The North pole is called the Arctic and the South pole is known as the Antarctic. The Arctic is a hollow at the top of the globe and the Antarctic a corresponding bulge at the bottom. It is as if an immense dent, caused by the pressure of some cosmic thumb, has been made at the North pole, its effect passing through the earth to come out as a swelling at the South pole. The dent on the top of the world is the Arctic Ocean, the world's smallest ocean; the bulge at the bottom is the continent of Antarctica.

The Arctic and the Antarctic are truly contrasted. The Arctic Ocean is about 5,541,000 (Fifty Five Lakh Forty one thousand) square miles in area, the Antarctic continent is 5,100,000 (Fifty One Lakh) square miles. The average depth of the Arctic Ocean, 4,200 feet, is equaled by the Antarctic's mean elevation of 6,000 feet, which makes it the highest of all the continents. Even the maximum depth of the Arctic Ocean, 17,500 feet, has its exact opposite in the Antarctic's highest mountain which is 19,000 feet above sea-level. They are so similar in shape that one can be super-imposed on the other.

The Arctic and the Antarctic, then, are the proverbial opposites — poles apart,' as we say. But before looking at their differences let us note what they have in common. Both have a net loss of heat from the sun. In both the regions light plays amazing tricks. Here you can see the noon darkness and the mid-night sun. This happens because of the inclination of the earth on its axis. In the polar skies you can also see mock suns and double and triple mock moons. Mock suns and mock moons

are created by millions of prismatic ice crystals in the sky. Above all, the polar skies are the only stage for the show of light by the northern and southern lights.

Polar auroras appear in the form of bright, coloured arcs, bands, patches and, most often, as waving curtains. An aurora is caused by charged particles from the sun striking the rarified gases of the ionosphere and lighting them. In other words, the lights are made by electrical storms 50 to 600 miles up, in, much the same way that neon light is made in a tube. There is no sound accompanying this high lightning.

The Antarctic has much more ice than the Arctic — eight times more. This is because the Antarctic is a continent. It has very little heat-storing capacity. The Arctic is primarily an ocean. It has a capacity to store summer heat which it uses later on to moderate the cold of winter. The whole of the Antarctic is covered by an ice sheet with an average thickness of more than a mile. The Arctic does not have that much of ice. Only Greenland and the high Arctic are covered with ice today.

This ice on the poles flows out in the form of glaciers towards the sea. All ice tends to flow and find its level in the same way as water does. This outward flow of ice to the sea forms barrier-ice in the Antarctic. Ice forms itself into big blocks, often 150 ft high, presenting a face of sheer ice-cliffs. In the Arctic when the temperature goes below 28° Fahrenheit, sea ice begins to form. Miles upon miles of sea is covered with a sheet of ice. This is also known as ice-floe, which is 15 feet thick in places. All this ice is constantly on the move.

There is no life on the Antarctic, Terrific winds blow off the south polar ice-dome and mix with the westerly winds that flow around the world. The polar winds then either return to the pole or send storms across the South Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. Like the Antarctic's cold air the 'Antarctic bottom water' moves through the seas cooling all the oceans and thus regulating the climate of the world.

The Arctic is much milder and less inimical to life. It is cold enough in winter but this cold is moderated by the presence of the sea under the ice-pack. In summer the Arctic warms up and the temperature goes up to 92° Fahrenheit is recorded at Verkhoyansk which is in the Arctic circle. It is this warming up which gives life a chance in the Arctic. Vegetation like mosses, lichen and aljee is seen. Many kinds of

flowering plants appear. Water plants and marsh grasses take root during summer. New soil is constantly created by these plants. This takes place only at the surface level. Below is the permafrost which kills all life when winter comes.

The land formation of the Arctic is different from that of the Antarctic. The Arctic is mostly flat and open. The Antarctic is spiny and mountainous. The valleys are all bare and wind-swept but the mountain is the highest there, rising 12,000 feet above sea-level.

1. As you listen about the Poles try and complete the blanks in the box about the Poles.

	South Pole	North Pole
Known as		
Is there life?		
Supports life / Does not support life		

2. Mock-suns and mock moon are visible in the polar skies because

_____.

3. Arctic and Antarctic have the following in common

i. _____

ii. _____

4. An ice-floe is _____

and a barrier-ice is _____.

Listening Activity Five

The Brave Hunter

[Okeke is a Nigerian boy whose father was killed by a wild boar, which the local people call Ezi-ohia. Okeke is determined to kill the boar. One day, while he is looking for the boar, he crosses his tribe's boundary. A boy called Okeke stops him and demands to know why he is there. Okeke explains, and Fleacha agrees to help him look for the boar. What happens then? Listen to the story "The Brave Hunter"]

"That's Ezi-ohia," Okeke said, "I would know him anywhere. See, one of his ears is broken. It happened when he was battling with my father."

"When you finish killing him you must return to your own lands," Okacha said.

Okeke nodded. "But I cannot shoot him in the water." Okeke stretched himself full length at the foot of a tree.

"Soon the sun will sink behind the hill. Then he will lead his herd out of the river to graze." He cupped his chin in his hands and fixed his eyes on Ezi-ohia's great head and ears which seemed to float by themselves on the surface of the water.

Overhead, some birds made the forest clearing with their song. Okeke listened to the birds. He, too, would sing again when Ezi-ohia's ears hung in the smoke that twisted under the roof of his cave.

As the sun slid down the sky towards the west and the great heat lessened, the jungle began to come slowly to life.

Ezi-ohia lifted his huge body out of the river, the water dripping from his ears. Snake-like, Okeke slid along on his stomach until he was out of the shelter of the trees and into the dry grass at the edge of the clearing. Okacha followed him amazed, for he had never seen such a good hunter among his own people.

The boars were out of the water and struggling up the river bed, led by Ezi-ohia, the huge boar with the great ears. Okeke rolled onto his back and drew his knees up to his stomach. Gripping his bow with his feet he slipped in amazement. The great

hunters who had used this ancient method had long since died, and the younger men had never mastered it.

"You will never kill him that way, Okeke," Okacha said. "It's far too difficult. No one can do it any longer."

A smile lit up Okeke's face. "I can," he said. "My father, who was a great hunter, taught me. If he had fired his arrow this way when Ezi-ohia attacked him he would be alive today."

He twisted around on his arched back and aimed his bow at the huge leader of the herd.

"Hu!" he shouted suddenly. "Hu! Ezi-ohia!" The boar spun round and threw up its head. "Hu!" Okeke shouted again, "Hu! Ezi-ohia."

The boar tore fiercely at the ground with its long tusks; then Okeke pulled the bowstring back until his hands were against his chin and the arrow.

Okacha was ready to fly for dear life, but Okeke's arms and legs were taut and steady, and his feet gripped the five-foot bow as firmly as his lands would have done. Ezi-ohia thundered towards the boy, his great hooves beating on the hard ground. Okacha's legs began to tremble like a deer's when warned of danger. "I must not show fear in front of a boy younger than myself," he thought nervously.

Okacha's eyes widened in terror as the huge boar swept closer. There was a sudden noise as Okeke released the bow-string and the arrow sped towards its target. With this ancient method of shooting more power was given to the bow and the arrow flew at almost double the speed it would have done using the normal method. The muscles in Okacha's legs moved like springs and he ran into the jungle.

OkaCha lay in the jungle listening fearfully would the big boar come looking for him after it had killed Okeke ? He began to creep deeper into the undergrowth. He had only gone a few yards when a long drawn out "Huu" came through the forest. He jumped up. It was Okeke's voice.

Like someone in a dream, the older boy ran back to the edge of the clearing. Okeke was still lying on his back and in front of him, its broad nose almost touching the boy's feet, lay the great boar, legs folded under it, motionless.

Using Okacha's axe, Okeke cut off the boar's head and put it into a nearby anthill. It was an old trick of his people; within an hour the boar's head had been picked clean. He carried the skull down to the river and washed it scrubbing it with sand.

When he had finished, he rested the huge ears across his shoulder and turned his face towards the hill. Ezi-ohia's big ears would hang in the smoke twisting under the roof of the cave, and there would be singing and dancing round the fire.

Let's now try to recall from the story.

1. Okeke was determined to kill the boar because

- a. it has killed his father
- b. it had hurt him and his father
- c. the boar killed his cows
- d. it chased him for long time

2. Okeke recognized Ezi-hio, the boar

- a. because the boar was sleeping
- b. because the boar had a chain around his neck
- c. because one of his ears was broken
- d. because the leg of the boar was injured.

3. What did Okacha think of the way Okeke used his bow?

4. What did the two boys do when the boar charged?

5. Of the two boys –Okeke and Okacha- who do you think was more courageous?
Why?

6. Why did Okeke take the ears of Ezi-ohia back to his cave?

Listening Activity Six

Do you like coconut and its tasty water? Yes Coconut is one the most remarkable trees in the world. Listen to how the Coconut tree resists its enemies, protects its young, and performs many useful services for mankind. Coconut is now one of the most important articles of commerce. Tons of coconut oil and dried kernels are used in industry every year, and hundreds of thousands of people are engaged in manufactures in which coconut is used in some form or other. Now listen to the story of the coconut.

The Wonderful Story of the Coconut

Children are fond of coconut. It is the biggest of all the nuts, and is indeed a wonderful fruit. It grows on a tall palm and is found in tropical countries round the seashore. The name was given to it by the Portuguese because, with the three marks or eye spots at the end, it looked something like a monkey's face, and 'coco' is a Portuguese word for a bugbear or a distorted mask.

Universal Provider

The coconut palm often grows over a hundred feet high, and has at the top a crown of large feather-like leaves twenty feet long. The flowers are white, and the nuts when they form are in huge bunches of twelve to twenty.

It is doubtful if any other plant in the world is useful to man in so many ways. A Chinese proverb declares that there are as many useful properties in the coconut palm as there are days in the year. And we also have a saying that the man who plants a coconut, plants, meat and drink, hearth and home, vessels and clothing for himself, and his children after him.

Indeed, people throughout the whole world benefit from the coconut palm. Not only do the natives of the lands where it grows benefit by it, but the people of other lands also make use of the coconut in some form every day of the year.

In hot countries the solid white part of the nut gives food to thousands of people, while the milk, or liquid inside the shell, provides them with drink. It has been pointed out that the coconut really acts as a filter for the water of malarious regions, for the roots absorb polluted liquid and purify it before passing it on to the nut.

The flower stalk yields a sweet juice which is boiled to produce sugar or the juice can be fermented to produce a spirit known as toddy. By squeezing the dry nut we get coconut oil, which serves as an excellent cooking medium.

Candles, Soap, and Margarine

The kernel of the coconut is broken into small pieces and, then dried in the sun. This substance is the well-known copra, which is the principal export of many tropical lands. Vast quantities of it are imported by countries where coconut does not grow, and from the oil which it yields candles, soap, and margarine are made. During the purification process glycerin is obtained. From 500 gallons of copra, 25 gallons of coconut oil are produced.

The outside, or husk, is also very useful. The fibre surrounding the nut yields coir, which is made into ropes or woven into matting and doormats. Brushes and brooms are also made from it, and it provides an excellent stuffing for cushions.

The leaves of the coconut palm are used for thatching, while the leafstalks constitute excellent rafters or posts for fencing. The fibrous covering at the base of the leaf is a natural cloth, and is employed for native hats, and strainers. The timber of the tree is good for making furniture. The flat plates of the leaves yield the writing material on which many of the Buddhist manuscripts are inscribed.

These are only a few of the uses to which the coconut is put for the benefit of man. Its wonder, however, is not confined to its many uses. When we examine the nut and know its life-story, we marvel more than ever.

Providing against Accident

In the first place, it grows so high up that if it were an ordinary nut, a fall of ninety or hundred feet on to the hard ground would crack it and it would be ruined.

The coconut, however, has provided against such an accident. Outside the hard shell there is a mass of husk which cushions the fall.

The coconut has many parts: first an outer skin, then a fibrous covering, next a hard woody shell; then there is the nutty portion which we eat, and finally the liquid or milk with the single seed or embryo from which a new coconut palm may eventually grow.

How did the milk get into the nut? Let us look a little further into its history. The coconut is so appetising that it has many enemies who would like to eat it. Among them are the animals that climb trees. The nut, therefore, if it is to survive and produce a new tree, must take great care of itself. We have seen that it protects its shell from getting cracked by a cushion-like covering of fibre; but if the shell is so hard how is the young plant, when it sprouts, able to get out of the shell? How, indeed, is it able to sprout when no water can get in?

Three Brown Pits

If we look at the narrow end of a coconut we notice three little brown pits on the surface. Two of these are blocked by quite hard material, which makes it less easy for enemies to find a way into the coconut. But the third one has a very thin covering which can be easily bored through with a pocket knife. Boys often do this to let out the milk before cracking the shell.

Now, if we examine a coconut we shall find that inside opposite to this soft hole, there is small knob buried in the edible part of the coconut. This knob is the embryo, or seedling for whose benefit and protection the nut exists. The hole with the soft covering exists not really to let out the milk, but to let out the seedling.

The Milk in the Nut

Now, as the seed cannot get water from outside, the nut has to provide a good supply inside, and that is the real reason for the existence of the milk inside the coconut. As already explained, the water taken in through the roots, travels up the trunk, and after being filtered, is deposited inside the nut.

The hard nutty part of the coconut which we eat is really deposited on the inside of the shell by the milk. Directly the seed begins to sprout and swell the little knob, absorbing the liquid till it eventually becomes a big, spongy mass which fills up the whole of the inside of the shell. At the same time a little sprout pushes its way out of the soft hole and produces a bud, the future stem and leaves of a coconut palm. Inside, a number of long threads absorb the water or the liquid, these being the future roots of the tree.

But as the little plant grows, the spongy mass inside the nut begins to absorb all the nutty part, and uses its store of oils and starches to feed the young plant until it is old enough to open its leaves to the sunshine and send its roots into the ground to obtain its own nourishment.

One Favoured Child

Plants which provide little or no protection for their seeds produce many seeds, so that one in a hundred or a thousand may survive. But the coconut has the largest and most richly stored and protected single seed among any known plant.

In this behaviour the coconut is doing what many human beings do today. Instead of having large families and leaving the children more or less helpless, they have only few children, who are given the very best of education and attention.

Emigrant of spring

Another interesting thing about the coconut is that while it is so big as it hangs upon the tree, it is very light, and when it falls on to the beach and is washed into the sea, it does not sink, but floats and is often carried away to start its life like an emigrant in some new land overseas. That is why many isolated islands are covered with coconut palms, the only plant growing on their lonely stretches.

When it is full-grown and bearing fruit, a healthy palm will produce 120 coconuts every season, and a small group of trees is therefore sufficient to maintain a family in comfort.

Let us all remember what we ourselves owe to the coconut when we wash our hands with soap, when we put glycerine on our chapped skin or when we eat the margarine spread on our bread.

Now try the following based on your listening of the passage.

1. The name coconut came from the word _____ which means _____ in _____

2. The coconut is useful for (i) _____
(ii) _____
(iii) _____
(iv) _____

3. How does the coconut resist its enemies?

4. In what respect does the coconut resemble human beings?

5. List five uses of the coconut in the Indian kitchen.

6. Are you tempted to have a coconut? Why? Tell your friend.