

## Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard

Passage Based Question (Chapter 2)

Read an excerpt from '*Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*' below and answer the questions that follow.

- 1 Twenty years later, in the very same house and in the very same room, Sampath Chawla, with spider-like legs and arms, thin and worried looking, lay awake under a fan. It trashed and swung above him, making as much noise as a gale, although Sampath could feel only the faintest tremor of an air current playing about his toes. 5
- 2 All around him, his family lay and snored: his father, his mother, grandmother and his younger sister, Pinky swathed in quantities of flowered organza. Rrrrr. Rrrrr. Phurrrr. Wheeeeeee. Rrrrrr. What a racket! Sampath listened to each hostile inhalation. Even in sleep, he thought, disgusted, his family showed themselves incapable of pleasant displays of consideration. self-indulgent as 10 always, they worked their way noisily through their dreams, keeping Sampath meanwhile, awake and tossing. Even his mother, whom he loved most of all, had forgotten him in sleep.
- 3 She kicked a foot up into the air with impatience. 'Sshhhhh,' he said out loud, but it was a poor, sad sound and they took no notice. Wheeeeeeeee. Rrrrr. 15 Rrrrrr. It was too bad they were not rich enough for everyone to have their own room and their own fan. However, Sampath decided, for his own sake, it would be best to suppress his irritation. His family might be unable to respect the holy silence with which sleep should be imbued, but he would not lose his temper. 20
- 4 Making a new effort and a new start, he moved his body around so his head

- occupied the place where his feet had been. The puny bit of breeze picked up a strand of his hair and dangled it over his face so it tickled like a fly. He grabbed at it, pulled it out, scratched his face and composed himself again.
- 5 The fan squeaked. He thought it might fall on top of him, smashing his face as flat as a child's drawing. This thought became more and more persistent. The electrician, after all, had just been cleaning it, and it was well known in the whole of Shahkot how shamefully bad Bunty Chopra was at his job. 25
- 6 Sampath got up from under this dangerous appliance and lay on the floor, spreading his arms and legs and fingers as far apart as he could, so that not a single part of his sweaty, uncomfortable body would touch another. He lay flat like and opened his mouth wide to facilitate the easy intake of air and, he hoped, the quick arrival of dreams. As soon as he had thus arranged himself, however, the power failed and the fan slowed to a standstill. Instead of dissipating into some blissful, cloudy realm, Sampath's concentration sharpened like a knife at all the places where his bones pressed against the hard floor. Once again, despite himself, he became conscious of the snores of his family who loomed alarmingly above him now he was on the ground, their hips rising like mountains far too high to climb. 35
- 7 How did they expect him to rest as they roared and vibrated like giants? As they sent their snores all the way to the top of the ceiling? Back and forth so the disturbing qualities of each sound accumulated and weighed on Sampath like a grinding stone? The room was hot and stuffy. His body felt heavy and dull. He knew, in a flash, that it might never be possible for him to move again. He was drowning; he would sink like a stone to a place as deep and dark as the sea floor. making a heroic effort, propelled by a terrible feeling of panic, 45

- Sampath brought all the strength of his will together. In a crucial show of determination, unwitnessed by anyone, he rose, ran into the living room and burst through the door that led to the roof.
- 8 Upstairs, however it was as hot as in the room below. The moon was pale and 50  
mildew-like, just a lifeless smudge against the night. Not one of the streetlights worked, and they wouldn't work, everyone knew, until the next local election. Then there would be a flurry of excitement, with five and ten-point plans for the improvement of electricity supplies, and enough modern technology, they always promised, to send Shahkot and its residents bounding into the 55  
twenty-first century. Sampath walked up and down, the pale glow of his white pajama kurta the only moving thing in this night so still, it seemed to be moulding itself perfectly against his body, so he knew it would be impossible to shake off; that there it would be, clinging to him even if he jumped or beat around him with a stick. 60
- 9 Up and down, back and forth. He walked to calm himself, as you would with a baby who cries and cries and cannot sleep. Above, there weren't any stars, only the light now and then of planes, flying on their way to who knows where. To Calcutta? Madras? Madurai? To England or America? It was a terrible thing to be awake while some people flew, carrying the world over his head, 65  
and others slept, claiming it from under his feet. He was grateful, though, for the feel, rough and sandy, of the bricks beneath him, the uneven surfaces and the thin ridged crisscross of lines. For the cool smoothness, now and then, of a fallen leaf. He picked them up one by one and held them against his lips to imitate the dull brrrrrr of a cricket; rolled them against his cheek and in his hot, 70  
sticky fingers, until they too became damp and warm. He sampled some

- ginger pickle from a jar set out to mature on the roof along with a whole row of mango, lime and pumpkin pickle jars. As the night wore on, he sampled a bit from every jar so as to decide on which kind, if any, he liked best. By and by, between mouthfuls, without even knowing it, he started to sing: 'sooner or later,' he sang softly, 'there will come a magic hour, when I spot a princess from the kingdom of Cooch Behar.'
- 75
- 10 A passing car sent its searchlight-glare crazy and liquid over the sides of the buildings and into the trees, revealing not the colors, the daylight solidity of things, but a world of dark gaps cut from an empty skin of light.
- 80
- 11 'When my mouth I'll open, I'll think of nothing to say, and this lady so fine and beautiful will continue on her way. Goodbye, my princess of Cooch Behar, may we meet again'
- 12 The sound of his small voice, so bravely singing, cheered him up a little.

**Refer to the passage given and answer the questions which follow.**

- (a) Explain how the setting and atmosphere contribute to Sampath's state of mind.
- (b) What are your impressions of Sampath? Explain with evidence from the text.



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### *SUGGESTED ANSWERS*

- (A)- The hot atmosphere makes Sampath feel suffocated
- The noise Sampath's family makes as they sleep makes him feel frustrated
  - The stuffy atmosphere makes Sampath feel uncomfortable
- (B)- Sampath is highly sensitive
- Sampath is deeply restless
  - Sampath is a curious person