

## Lesson 16 ✓

# The Ant and the Grasshopper

[ **William Somerset Maugham** was born on 25 January, 1874 in Paris. He was brought up by an uncle and educated at King's School, Canterbury. He entered St. Thomas' medical school, London and qualified as a doctor in 1897. He was famous as an English novelist, playwright and short-story writer. Some of his famous novels are 'Liza of Lambeth' (1897), 'Of Human Bondage' (1915), 'The Moon and Sixpence' (1919). He died on 16 December, 1965. ]

[ Have you heard the story of the ant and the grasshopper ? Long ago there lived an ant and a grasshopper in a forest. Throughout the sunny days of summer the hardworking ant laboured and gathered food. He worked very hard and stored food for the difficult winter days. But the grasshopper enjoyed the beautiful summer days by jumping around and singing. He did not think about the winter and did not plan for the future. When the summer days were over, the ant continued his life comfortably as he had enough food with him. But the grasshopper suffered a lot. He went to the ant and requested to give him some food. The ant replied, "You spent your summer days singing, now go and dance." ]

.....The other day, I saw George Ramsay lunching by himself in a restaurant. I never saw anyone wear an expression of such deep gloom. He was staring into space. He looked as though the burden of the whole world sat on his shoulders. I was sorry for him. I suspected at once that his unfortunate brother had been causing trouble again. I went up to him and held out my hand.

"How are you ?" I asked.

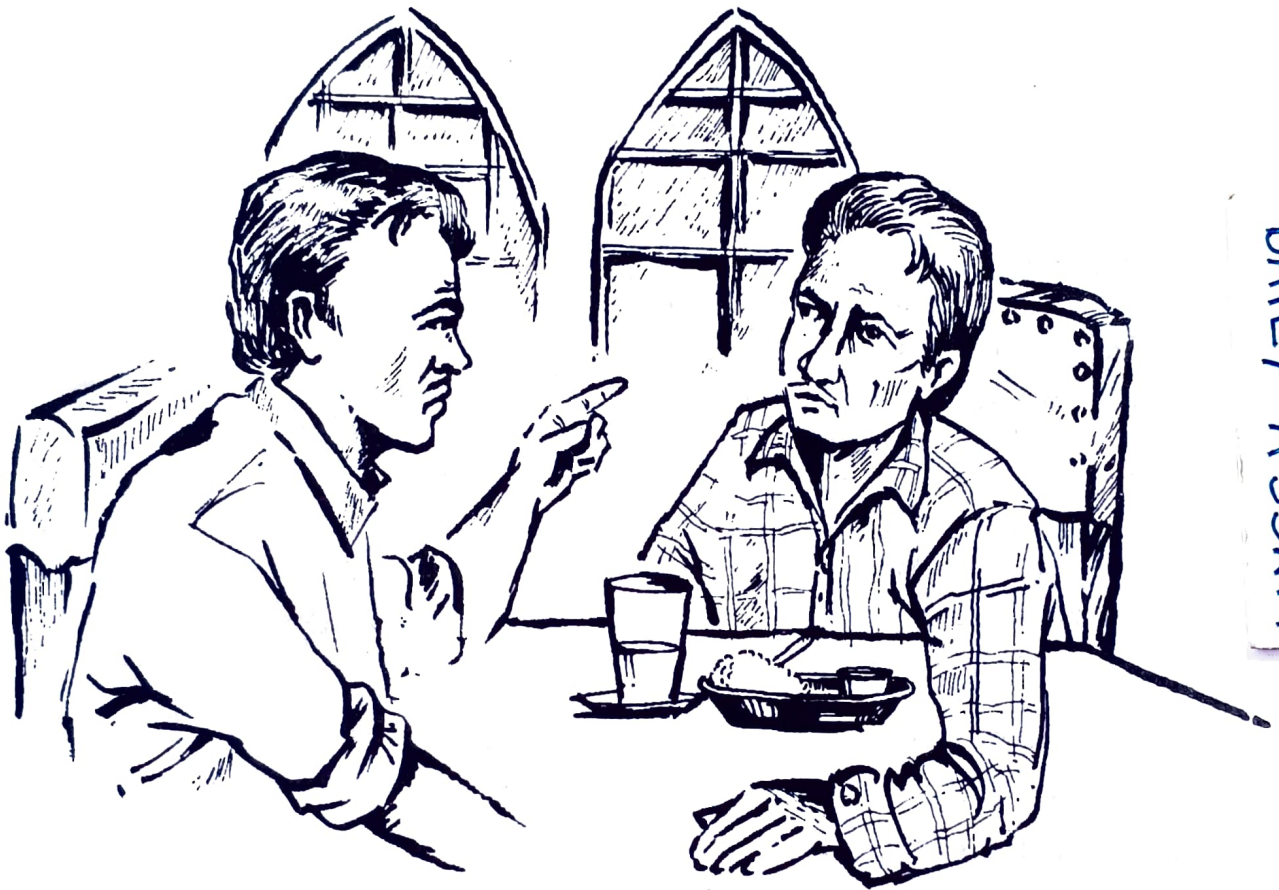
"I'm not in hilarious spirits," he announced.

"Is it Tom again ?"

"Yes, it's Tom again."

“Why don't you chuck him ? You've done everything in the world for him. You must know by now that he's quite hopeless.”

I suppose every family has a black sheep. Tom had been a sore trial to George for twenty years. He had begun life decently enough. He went into business, married and had two children. The Ramsays were perfectly respectable people and there was every reason to suppose that Tom Ramsay would have an honourable and decent career. But, one day, without warning, he announced that he didn't like work and that he wasn't suited for marriage. He wanted to enjoy himself. He left his wife and his office. He had a



little money and he spent two happy years in the various capitals of Europe. Rumours of his doings reached his relatives and they were profoundly shocked. They shook their heads and asked what would happen when his money was spent. They soon found out. He borrowed. He was charming and unscrupulous. He made a steady income from his friends and he made friends easily.

Tom spent a lot of money on luxuries. For this, he depended on his brother George. Once or twice, George fell to Tom's promises of change and gave him considerable sums in order that he make a fresh start. On these Tom bought a motor car and some very nice jewellery. But, when George realised eventually that his brother would never settle down, he washed his hands off him. But Tom, without a qualm, blackmailed him. He said that he would drive a taxi or work in a bar to earn if George did not mind it. It was not very nice for a respectable lawyer to find his brother doing these things. So, George paid.

For twenty years, Tom had raced, gambled, danced and eaten in the most expensive restaurants and dressed beautifully. He always looked as if he had just stepped out of a band box. Though he was forty-six you would never have taken him for more than thirty-five.

He was a most amusing companion and though you knew he was perfectly worthless you could not but enjoy his society. Tom Ramsay knew everybody and everybody knew Tom Ramsay.

Poor George, only a year older than his brother, looked sixty. He had never taken more than a fortnight's holiday in the year for a quarter of a century. He was in his office every morning at nine thirty and never left it till six. He was honest, industrious and worthy. He made a point of saving a third of his income and his plan was to retire at fifty five to a little house in the country where he proposed to cultivate his garden and play golf.

George was glad that he was growing old because Tom was growing old too. He rubbed his hands and said :

"It was all very well when Tom was young and good looking but he's only a year younger than I am. In four years he'll be fifty. He won't find life so easy then. I shall have thirty thousand pounds when I'm fifty. For twenty years I've said that Tom would end in the gutter. And we shall see how he likes that. We shall see if it really pays best to work or be idle."

Poor George ! I sympathised with him for what Tom had done. George was evidently very much upset.

“Do you know what’s happened now ?” he asked me.

I was prepared for the worst ! I wondered if Tom had got into the hands of the police or some such thing. George could hardly bring himself to speak.

“You’re not going to deny that all my life I’ve been hard working, decent, respectable and straightforward ?”

“True.”

“You can’t deny that Tom had been an idle, worthless and dishonourable rogue. If there were any justice, he would be in the work house.”

“True.”

George grew red in the face.

“A few weeks ago he became engaged to a woman old enough to be his mother. And now she’s died and left him every thing she had. Half a million pounds, a yacht, a house in London and a house in the country.”

George Ramsay beat his clenched fist on the table.

“It is not fair, I tell you. It’s not fair. Damn it, it is not fair.”

I could not help it. I burst into a shout of laughter as I looked at George’s wrathful face, I rolled in my chair. I very nearly fell on the floor. George never forgave me.

DAILY ASSAM

### Wordnote

lunching (v)	: taking lunch
gloom (n)	: sadness
hilarious (adj)	: extremely amusing
spirit (n)	: way of feeling
chuck (v)	: to avoid
a black sheep (idiom)	: an unsatisfactory family member

sore trial	: an annoying person
decent (adj)	: good
profoundly (adv)	: greatly
unscrupulous (adj)	: unprincipled
considerable (adj)	: large amount
eventually (adv)	: at last; finally
qualm (n)	: a feeling of doubt
gambled (v)	: to risk money on a card game
gutter (n)	: bad social condition
evidently (adv)	: clearly
wrathful (adj)	: angry
clenched (adj)	: squeezed tightly

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### EXERCISE

#### Comprehension

- Answer the following questions. 1×6=6
  - How did George Ramsay look while sitting in the restaurant?
  - Who was causing George trouble?
  - Why did Tom leave his work?
  - What did Tom do when his money was spent?
  - How old were George and Tom?
  - How did Tom become rich?
- Give brief answers to the following questions. 2×5=10
  - What did Tom Ramsay do after leaving his job?
  - How did Tom blackmail George?
  - What did Tom Ramsay do for most part of his youth?
  - Why was George happy at the approach of old age?
  - What did George call unfair?

- |    |                                                           |       |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 3. | How was George Ramsay's lifestyle ?                       | 3     |
| 4. | Write a note on Tom Ramsay's character.                   | 5     |
| 5. | Fill in the blanks with words from the text.              | 1×4=4 |
|    | a) You must know by now that _____.                       |       |
|    | b) He always looked as if _____.                          |       |
|    | c) Poor George, only a year older than his brother _____. |       |
|    | d) ..... all my life I've been _____ ?                    |       |

### Grammar and usage

[ Punctuation means the exercise of dividing a sentence into words or groups of words using special marks such as capital letter, comma, full stop, inverted commas, semi-colon, question mark etc. ]

6. Rewrite the following sentences using capital letters, comma, full stop or question mark where necessary.
- the kamakhya temple is on top of the nilachal hill
  - do you know how to swim
  - rina pori and anu have gone to shillong
  - i had my meal washed my hands and left ramen's house
  - are they coming here on sunday
  - who wrote my experiments with truth
7. Edit the following passage using appropriate punctuation marks where necessary.
- have you finished your homework jolly said mrs sarma to her daughter no mother replied jolly sadly why not my darling because i am not well mother she said i have fever mrs sarma began worrying i must make a call to dr baruah immediately she said to herself and rushed out of the room jolly went to bed and tried to have a good sleep

## Vocabulary

8. Find out the odd word from the following words.
- a) glad, happy, gloomy, pleasant, joyful
  - b) hard-working, respectable, decent, dishonourable, honest
  - c) Shelley, Keats, Wordsworth, Dickens, Blake
  - d) cricket, grasshopper, beetle, woodpecker, bee
  - e) glazier, ornithologist, archeologist, philately, geologist

## Composition

9. In a family, brothers may have very different characters. Write a story of your own with two such brothers of contradictory characters.

[Hint : one noble but the other wicked.  
one kind but the other cruel etc.]

## Spoken activity

10. Which aspects of the story do you find humourous? Do you think there is a lesson to be learnt from the story? What is it? Discuss in the class.

## Note to the teacher

In this chapter the students should be taught punctuation in detail. They should be encouraged to read modern short stories of famous writers like W.S. Maugham. They should also be encouraged to try their hand at creative writing.

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