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| **The City School**  **North Nazimabad Boys Campus**  **English Blog Worksheet for Grade 9**  **Teacher: Imran Sheikh**  **Read the following extract carefully, and then answer all the questions.**  **THE OLD BICYCLE**  In a village in Selangor, Malaysia, where I grew up, coconut trees shaded the wooden houses, where father bowed to the earth working the paddy, mothers stayed at home and their children ran around barefoot. Father was not earning enough from his jobs at the cocoa estate and the paddy factory. Finally he decided he could make a better living collecting rattan from deep in the forest and selling it to a nearby furniture manufacturer.  Mother was extremely worried tigers would eat him, but Father said that it was better to risk being eaten by a tiger than to sit at home and not eat anything at all. So early one morning he set out on his motorcycle looking for rattan. Suddenly Ayu and I had no way of getting to school, which was far from our home. I could think of nothing better than to miss school and play with my little sister. As we stood at the front door waving good-bye to Father, I whispered to Ayu that we were going to scoop up tadpoles from the backyard pond and put them in a glass jar as pets. We both grinned in anticipation. Our happiness didn’t last long. Mother suddenly appeared behind us with her hands on her hips and said, “What are you both doing here? It’s getting late, get dressed.” “Get dressed for what?” I asked. Mother’s eyes bulged. “My, surely not for your wedding. For school, of course.” My jaw dropped. “Father is gone, and we can’t walk to school, if that’s what you mean.” Mother shook her head and answered, “You are not walking. I’m going to take you to school today. There’s your father’s bicycle.”  Looking towards the lawn, we saw an extremely old bicycle leaning against the guava tree. The handle was bent into an odd, twisted shape and the right pedal was nothing but an iron rod. It had been quite some time since anyone had used the bicycle and I wondered if it even worked. I told my Mother that the bicycle would be so slow that we would be old by the time we reached school. She told me not to get smart with her or she’d make my ears warm, tingling and nice to look at. I looked at Ayu for support. She declared that she would be ashamed forever if she went to school on that bicycle. Mother shot back that she didn’t remember adopting the prime minister’s daughter. “So you’re going to school on that bicycle today,” she said. End of argument. With hearts as heavy as the house, we got into our school uniforms with sour looks on our faces. Ayu stomped around to protest the dictatorship we lived under.  Mother didn’t say anything to her, instead she whispered to me, “If she doesn’t stop, the house will fall down and we have to live under a banana tree for the rest of our lives.” I knew she was trying to make me laugh. I tried to keep a straight face to show her I was still unhappy, but I couldn’t. By the time we had put on our shoes, Mother was waiting with the old bicycle by the front door. “Get on and make yourself comfortable!” she said merrily. We climbed up on the back carrier. It was too small for the both of us. As a result, half of my bottom hung in midair with no support. Off we went. The bicycle rattled terribly and everyone we passed turned to see where the noise was coming from. Ayu and I covered our faces with our hands in shame. The tyres were almost flat, which meant that the bicycle gave a great jolt every time it hit a rock or a hole in the road. I told Mother that we could end up constipated. “You could be sent to jail for ruining our digestive system,” Ayu added in a quivering voice. Mother chuckled and said she had never heard such a thing before. Besides, constipation was not so bad compared to all the other illnesses in the world.  **TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES LATER** we arrived at the school gates. Classes had already started. We jumped off the bicycle, rubbing our aching backs and our sore bottoms. We told Mother that this would be the last time we would have anything to do with that bicycle. We’d rather walk to school in future. She rubbed our backs and said, “I’m sorry for your trouble but I don’t want my children to skip classes, and I don’t want my children ending up like me, with almost no education. So get in there and study well for me, will you?”  She gave us money for lunch, and we kissed her right hand – in a sign of respect – just as we always did at home before Father took us to school. However, when I laid my lips on her hand, I tasted salt. It was wet with sweat. When I looked at her more closely, I saw that her face was glistening and flushed, and her white traditional *baju kurung* with the little blue flowers was drenched. Her nostrils were flaring painfully, and her chest was heaving. Then it struck me: while Ayu and I were busy complaining about the torturous ride on the killer bicycle, Mother struggled to keep going. I felt as if a rope was strangling my heart. I couldn’t understand why she chose the hard way instead of staying at home and resting her feet.  As I walked heavily towards the school gate that day, the words Mother often said to us played over and over in my head: “My reasons are stronger than yours and don’t you bother. I know, for I’m your mother.”  *[Adapted from: Reader’s Digest: My Story]* | | | **5**  **10**  **15**  **20**  **25**  **30**  **35**  **40**  **45**  **50**  **55**  **60** |
| **1** | **(a)** | Why did the author come to the conclusion that she would miss school? | **[1]** |
|  | **(b)** | From **Paragraph 2** give 2 phrases or words to show the author’s happiness. | **[2]** |
|  | **(c)** | What was the author’s plan for the day? | **[1]** |
|  | **(d)** | Give 3 instances to show Mother’s dictatorship. | **[3]** |
|  | **(e)** | What does the mother say to make the author laugh? | **[2]** |
|  | **(f)** | In line 44, why do you think the author uses a capital letter for “**TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES LATER**”? | **[2]** |
|  | **(g)**  **(h)** | Why does the mother say she does not want her children to end up like her?  Re-read **lines 19-29(from ‘Looking towards the lawn, we saw ................................under’)**. Choose 3 details which the writer uses to show the embarrassment and frustration of theirs. Explain how each of these details suggests this feeling. | **[2]**  **[6]** |
|  | **(i)** | What the author mean when she says “I felt as if a rope was strangling my heart”? | **[2]** |
|  | **(j)** | Re-read **lines 60-61(My reasons......................mother)**. Explain what does this suggest about the mother. | **[2]** |
|  | **(k)** | Re-read the passage and write a summary of what pains the mother in the passage takes to send her children to school and why does she do it? | **[7]** |
| **[Total for Question 1: 30 marks]** | | | |
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