

1.4 Journey to the West



Much of the world's literature has been translated into English. In this passage, we learn about an epic novel with the title 'Journey to the West' and its most popular character – Sun Wukong or 'Monkey King'. This novel is a classic of Chinese literature. It was written in the sixteenth century by Wu Cheng'en. Does the passage remind you of a few things you read in your history textbook last year?

- epic : a long poem that tells a story of a hero.

- classic : excellent example

- historical : based on history

- fictional : not real, belonging to an imaginary story

Warming up!



1. How do people find their way through deserts, forests, mountains, oceans, etc. today? How did they do it in the past? Discuss.
2. Read the following statements and say whether each one is historical or fictional.
 - * Indian merchants used to travel across the seas many centuries ago.
 - * Sindbad the sailor completed seven voyages.
 - * Neil Armstrong landed on the moon in the 20th century.
 - * Alladdin could fly on his magic carpet.
 - * Alexander the Great conquered a number of countries before he came to India.
 - * Gulliver met very tiny people in Lilliput and giants in the country of Brobdingnag.
 - * There's a man in the moon who watches what's going on on the earth.
 - * Emperor Ashoka's empire stretched from the modern day Afghanistan to Bangladesh.

The teacher should add other familiar examples to help the children decide what is real and what is imaginary.

JOURNEY TO THE WEST

Discuss the meaning of the following sentences :

- ✧ But 'west' is a relative term.
- ✧ Yuan Chwang undertook the long and difficult journey to follow his dream.

The teacher may allow the use of mother tongue during the discussion but later on, the meaning should be stated/ written in English.

Guess the meaning of :

- ✧ horseback
- ✧ snow-clad.
- scriptures : holy, sacred books or writings.
- ✧ What was Yuan Chwang's dream ?

Things to do :

Find / Prepare a map of Yuan Chwang's travel route -

- ✧ from China to India
- ✧ in India
- ✧ from India back to China.

When we read the words 'journey to the west', we naturally start thinking about a journey to western countries like England and America. But 'west' is a relative term. For countries to our east, WE are the west! This particular journey that we are going to read about was actually a journey from China to our own country! It was made by the famous seventh century traveller Yuan Chwang.

In those days, travelling from China to India was not an easy task – one had to travel thousands of miles on foot or horseback, crossing deserts, crossing snow-clad mountains, crossing strange, unfamiliar regions, using roads where bandits and robbers roamed – who would do it? But Yuan Chwang had a dream. He wanted to take Buddhist scriptures from India to his homeland in China. It was like a pilgrimage to him.

Yuan Chwang undertook the long and difficult journey to follow his dream. For seventeen long years, he kept on travelling, suffering many hardships on the way. He travelled across the Gobi Desert, then along the Tian Shan mountain range, and on and on along the Silk Road, through regions that are now Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan before he came to India. In India, he travelled to many parts and gathered many important manuscripts.

The way back home was also equally difficult. But Yuan Chwang managed to reach China safely along with the scriptures. This was a great achievement. It was almost unbelievable. So much so, that people thought that the gods and



supernatural powers had helped Yuan Chwang in his quest. This gave rise to many interesting folk tales. Centuries later, an epic novel called ‘Journey to the West’ was written about this famous pilgrimage. The novel made use of many of the folk tales. The novel and the stories in it are still very popular.

The novel tells us that there are many demons and evil powers who are eager to kill and gobble up the holy monk. Who would save him? Who would vanquish the demons? Well, the Guanyin deity, who is the goddess of mercy, has seen to that. She has assigned this task to three special people – Sun Wukong or the Monkey King, Zu Bajji or Pigsy, and Sha Wujing or Sand Priest.

Now, these three characters are no saints. In fact, though they all have supernatural powers, they are known trouble makers. So the gods have thrown them out of heaven. However, the kind deity Guanyin has offered each of them one

Listen and answer :

- ✧ Why did people think that gods and supernatural powers had helped Yuan Chwang?
- ✧ What is the novel about?
- ✧ Can you think of other pairs of words starting with ‘folk’?

- pilgrimage : a journey for a religious purpose.
- demons : evil spirits
- vanquish : conquer, defeat

Listen and answer :

- ✿ Why have the three characters agreed to help Yuan Chwang?
- ✿ Who's the most powerful among the three disciples?

- cudgel : a short heavy stick



- a somersault

- at will : whenever one wants or likes as one likes
- x-ray vision : the ability to see through something
- trickster : one who plays tricks.

Things to do :

If you were to undertake Yuan Chwang's journey today, how will you travel? Describe it using a map or 'Google map'. State which modes and means of transport you will use.

more chance. 'If you help the holy monk in his pilgrimage to India, if you use your powers for this good work, then you may return to heaven.' That is why the three characters have agreed to be Yuan Chwang's disciples and to help Yuan Chwang in his difficult journey. And sure enough, they have many thrilling, exciting and sometimes humorous adventures on the way to the holy land – India!

The most powerful among the three disciples is Sun Wukong. Everything about him is extraordinary. He was born when winds blew over a huge stone egg on the Flower Fruit Mountain. He is able to transform himself in 72 different ways. Not only that but he can also transform each of his hair strands into any living or non-living thing of his choice. His 'As-you-wish-gold-banded cudgel' is also magical. It can grow as big as a pillar supporting the sky, but at other times, it becomes as tiny as a needle. Then the Monkey King just tucks it away behind his ear. Sun Wukong can travel thousands of kilometres in just one somersault. He can walk through fire, travel under water and fly to any place at will. His body is as hard as a diamond. So no one and nothing can injure him. His 'golden-gaze-fiery eyes' have x-ray vision. No one can deceive him.

Sun Wukong is brave and intelligent but he is also a trickster. He loves to have fun. And some of his superpowers help him to just that. He has a vase which can suck in anything or anyone. He can simply point at a lock and open it. He is very very quick and can grow very big and very tiny at a blink. You can imagine how he must have teased his enemies using these tricks.

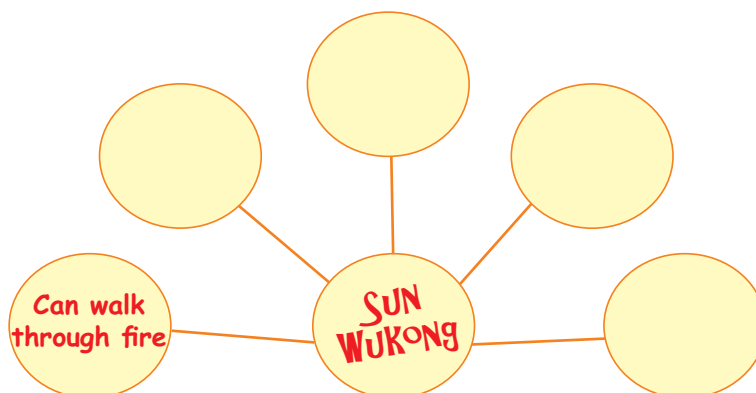
If you want to read about the adventures that Sun Wukong and his companions had on the way, you will find the stories in the English translation of 'Journey to the West'. Some of the stories have also been turned into films. What would you like better – to read the historical account of Yuan Chwang's travels, or to read the fantastic stories of Sun Wukong? Maybe you should read both to find out what you like better! Happy reading!

✿ Write other expressions like 'Happy reading!'



ENGLISH WORKSHOP

1. List all the persons and characters mentioned in the story.
Which of them are real? Which are imaginary?
2. Say whether the following sentences are right or wrong.
 - * The novel 'Journey to the West' is about a journey to western countries like England and America.
 - * In the days of Yuan Chwang travelling from China to India was not an easy task.
 - * Yuan Chwang travelled to many parts of India.
 - * Yuan Chwang's way back home was relatively easy.
 - * Gods and supernatural powers had helped Yuan Chwang in his quest.
 - * The three disciples of Yuan Chwang were three saints.
 - * The three disciples have supernatural powers.
3. Write any five features of Sun Wukong's character that you like best.



4. Read : ● As big as a pillar ● As tiny as a needle

Now write more such phrases using your imagination.

- As big as a ● As tiny as a ● As hard as a
 ● As soft as a ● As sweet as a ● As sharp as a

5. You know that many times a letter or a group of letters is added before or after a word to make new words. A letter/a group of letters that is added **before** a word is called a **prefix**. A letter/group of letters that is added after a word is called a **suffix**.

The word to which a prefix or suffix is added is called a **root** or **root word**.

Let us look at some examples of roots, prefixes and suffixes.

6. Guess the meaning of : unfamiliar, unbelievable.

Now write the opposites of the following :

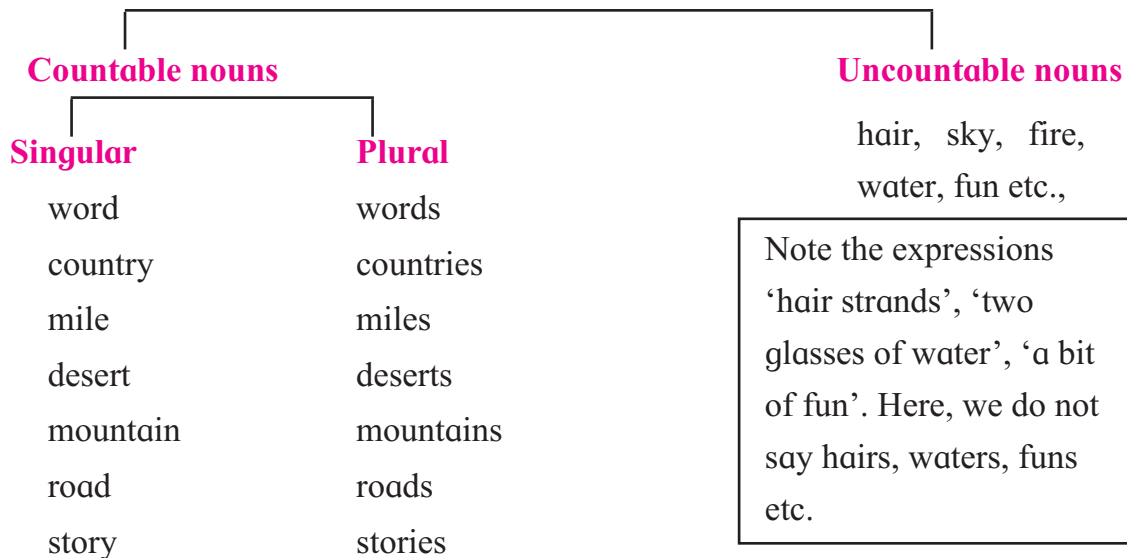
unsafe, unimportant, uninteresting, unknown, unkind, unintelligent

Language Study

Common Nouns - 1

You know that some things, animals etc., that is, some common nouns can be counted. They are countable nouns. Some common nouns stand for something that cannot be counted. They are uncountable nouns. Countable nouns have two forms – singular and plural. Let us look at some examples.

Common nouns



Note the expressions 'hair strands', 'two glasses of water', 'a bit of fun'. Here, we do not say hairs, waters, funs etc.

- * Find five countable nouns from the passage and write their singular and plural forms.
- * List the units that we use to measure the following :
 water, milk, distance, weight.

