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### Comprehension story 30

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow, using your own words wherever possible.

My private feelings towards the bee are a mixture of contempt and fear. People have died from bee stings before now, and to a hasty temper and the habit of carrying poisoned weapons, the bee adds a combination of miserliness and black-legging which is plainly immoral in the extreme. Without fee or reward it – or must one say she? – is alleged to pile up wealth for its employer in a manner plainly subversive to trade union principles, and its warmest admirers confess that it shortens its life by almost a third through persistent overwork. 05

There is no sense of proportion about a bee. I suppose the idiot has never learned that other people will gather its honey, and believes that it is laying up stores for the hive alone. But when it has accumulated investments sufficient for twenty generations of bees to live upon without doing another stroke of work, it goes on collecting honey and manufacturing wax as though starvation were starting it in the face. 10 15

Consider further the matrimonial customs of those fraudulent insects. The main population of the hive is composed of unhappy spinsters whose natural destiny has been deliberately thwarted by their nurses and who can never reproduce their kind. Only one bee, yet more unhappy, is reserved for that purpose and is not allowed to do anything 20

else, except to slaughter possible rivals in the business. For her is reserved a peculiarly horrible form of death, that suffocation.

When the nuptial flight takes place she is followed by scores of drones, no doubt thinking it a splendid challenge. It is a tremendous business, in which every drone strives to outstrip every other, and in which drones from other hives, though it no affairs of theirs, have no more sense than to join. What do you suppose awaits the victor in this contest of lunatics? Why, to be slaughtered in mid-air by his abominable spouse?

What prompts the drone, who is otherwise by far the most intelligent creature in the community, and who does seem to have some rational notion of the meaning of life, to enter for this mad race, in which the price is death. I cannot imagine. Despite his magnanimous resolve to do nothing useful, but to live like a gentleman upon other people's earning, he must at bottom nearly as big a fool as his sister who might live to be eighty days old, but whom almost dies at sixty from over-work.

People make a great fuss over the bee because it is supposed to have solved some intricate mathematical problem in the construction of its cell. Some mathematicians, d'Alembert, I think, with nothing better to do, spent laborious hours over the bee's cell, and showed that on mathematical principles it was quite nearly right. Then somebody else came along to prove that the bee was quite right, and from that day to this, bee-lover have never ceased from jubilating over the insect's vindication.

But is it anything to make a song and dance about? At what period bees were converted to socialism and went into hive, nobody knows, but it must have been a good many thousand years ago. In all that time the bee could not help hitting on the shape by accident, and I don't believe mathematics had anything to do with it.

There are bees whom one can respect, but they are not the sort that live in hives and pile up treasure for other people. Bumble-bees, nice, fat, blundering good tempered bumble-bees, appeal to me. They know a thing or two. Just examine the flowers of the snapdragon, with their lips so delicately adjusted that nothing of the insect sort except the bumble –bee will pull them down. It is odds that you will find a tiny hole at the base of some of the flowers. That is where some bumble-bee, who did not see why he should work for the snapdragon as well as himself, has bitten through to get nectar, and has dodged all the careful devices to make him dust himself with pollen grain in the process. You may call it cheating. I do myself. But you cannot deny that it shows enterprise; also, also since the trick has been learned in the last few years' progressive intelligence, a honey bee would never think of a thing like that.

Until recently, my wife and I never had any need to keep bees. A neighbor kept all that our garden really needed. But then came a day when these noxious insects took sudden offence at his wife, enveloped her in an angry cloud and stung her with such energy and unanimity that the poor lady when black all over. Our neighbor, not unnaturally, gave his bees the sack-or rather the sulphur- and we, finding we could get no fruit, were obliged to get our own bees.

## Questions

- (a) Suggest a suitable title for the passage (02marks)
- (b) Why does the author consider the bees to be plainly subversive to trade union principles? (06marks)
- (c) In not more than 100 words, describe the author's view about the different types of bees. (12marks)
- (d) Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the passage, using your own words wherever possible
- (i) contempt (line 01) (02 marks)
- (ii) black-legging (line 04) (02marks)
- (iii) natural destiny (line 18) (02 marks)
- (iv) nuptial flight (line 23) (02marks)
- (v) contest of lunatics (line 29) (02marks)
- (vi) magnanimous resolve (lines 34-35) (02 marks)
- (vii) fuss over (line 39) (02marks)
- (viii) intricate (line 40) (02 marks)
- (ix) progressive intelligence (lines 62-63) (02 marks)  
pertaining to gradual improvement in reasoning
- (x) unanimity(line 66) (02 marks)
- (20 marks)
- Spellings, Punctuation and Grammatical Expression (SPGE) (10 marks)

## Suggested answers

(a) Suggest a suitable title for the passage (02marks)

The bee

Types of bees

The value of the bee

Strange nature of the bee

Etc.

(b) Why does the author consider the bees to be plainly subversive to trade union principles? (06marks)

The bees especially worker bees get no reward/pay for their work or worker bees work for free unlike most employees

(c) In not more than 100 words, describe the author's view about the different types of bees. (12marks)

### THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF BEES ACCORDING TO AUTHOR'S VIEW

The worker bees are unhappy spinsters that build and protect the hive, pollinate flowers, collect honey, manufacture bee wax and nurse young ones at no cost. They do not reproduce and their persistent hard work shortens their life span. The queen lays eggs and slaughters its rivals. The drones with no role in hive compete in nuptial flight to fertilize the queen and killed in the process. The bumble-bee is free, with good temper and does not live in hives. It cheats flowers of their nectar since it dodges pollinating them.

(d) Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the passage, using your own words wherever possible

(i) contempt (line 01) (02 marks)

disrespect/displeasure/disregard

(ii) black-legging (line 04) (02marks)

discontentment/disapproval

(iii) natural destiny (line 18) (02 marks)

fate

(iv) nuptial flight (line 23) (02marks)

- a flight/trip in which virgin queens mate with males  
to start a new colony
- (v) contest of lunatics (line 29) (02marks)  
crazy/stupid competition
- (vi) magnanimous resolve (lines 34-35) (02 marks)  
noble determination
- (vii) fuss over (line 39) (02marks)  
pay a lot of attention to
- (viii) intricate (line 40) (02 marks)  
complex/completed
- (ix) progressive intelligence (lines 62-63) (02 marks)
- (x) unanimity(line 66) (02 marks)  
by consensus/ agreement by all people in a given situation  
(20 marks)

Spellings, Punctuation and Grammatical Expression (SPGE) (10 marks)

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**Thanks**

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