

My Best Friend



Norella is my best friend in school. She is a fair, pretty girl with dimpled cheeks. She and I first met at **kindergarten** and we became great friends. She is kind, jolly and helpful. We are classmates again this year and we go to school together each morning.

Norella likes to joke and play games. She lives near my house. In the evenings, we usually meet at my house. We sit in the garden and read story books. She is good at Mathematics. So, whenever I find difficulties in my Mathematics homework, I would ask her to help me. Sometimes, when my parents go out in the evening, she comes over to **keep me company** and we watch television together. That way I do not feel lonely.

I hope Norella and I will be in the same class again next year. I like her very much and she is my best friend.

Our School Exhibition



Our school held a very interesting exhibition of students' art and craft work last year. It was surprising to see the various pieces of handwork of such high standards. These exhibits were attractive and colourful for they had been prepared and designed well by the students with guidance from the Art teachers. The students were obviously enthusiastic about their work; for each item was rendered carefully and lovingly without the slightest trace of **sloppiness**.

There were many sections to interest parents and friends who came to see the work of their children. The painting of nature, Malaysian scenes, flowers and fruits was of an exceptionally high standard. Other items such as puppets, dolls and articles of **embroidery** were admired, too. In the geography section, there were clay models of physical features like hills, mountains and plateaus set in a natural environment of green landscape with rivers **meandering** through the land.

Some articles like flowers made from silk were for sale and ladies readily bought these items. Our school exhibition was appreciated by all.

Cameron Highlands - a Malaysian Hill Resort



After living in the busy city of Kuala Lumpur with its noise and bustling traffic, it is a pleasure to go up to Cameron Highlands, a cool mountain resort, for relaxation.

Enroute you will enjoy the scenic countryside as you drive up hilly roads amidst jungle trees, waterfalls and small villages. Then, you feast your eyes each time you pass a flower nursery or a vegetable farm. The cool, crisp air at Tanah Rata makes you feel invigorated. At the same time, you are able to admire the **quaint**-looking English-style cottages along the way. Roses creeping up and clinging to the walls of the cottages remind you of England and the scenery is **enchanting** if you happen to be a nature-lover. Usually, a visitor gets quite hungry as he goes up the highlands and he is able to enjoy the piping hot meals served in the restaurants.

As the sun goes down, temperature drops and it becomes quite chilly. You can then sit by the fireside with your favourite story book and laze around in a sweater or a jacket as it is quite a contrast to the warm and sunny weather on the plains in your hometown.

A visit to the famous Boh Tea plantation is interesting and worthwhile for have you ever wondered how you get your cup of tea? It comes mainly from the tea plantations on Cameron Highlands. Jungle walks are also a good way of spending your time while you are there. Cameron is indeed an ideal holiday resort.

A Busy Street Scene



In a large capital city like Kuala Lumpur, there are several busy streets, but the busiest of all is Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman. From early morning, traffic starts building up. Crowds of pedestrians, shoppers and others can be seen walking along the pavements outside the shops or trying to cross the road.

The noise of cars and taxis hooting, or of scooters, flying past is deafening. Anyone who stops by to watch the scene is amazed at the number of vehicles zooming past or crawling along when caught at the traffic lights.

The people, mainly lady shoppers with children, line the street as they await an opportunity to cross the road. It is a bright and gay scene. The main attraction is the variety of textile shops, departmental stores, the Selangor Emporium, carpet shops, restaurants, jewellers or electrical goods shops, pavement stalls with small items like costume jewellery, toys and aluminium cooking utensils and vendors attracting customers to buy their wares.

In the **hustle and bustle**, one can savour the delicious aroma of Oriental delicacies floating in the air. It comes from 'Nasi Beriyani', 'Satay', **pungent** curries, fried chicken and sweet meats, tempting passers-by to stop for some refreshment.

In the afternoon, the crowds grow bigger as office workers join the **throng**s of people. Now it is also time to go home. Taxis are in great demand while shoppers queue up to get one. Most of the taxis have already been hired and so they do not stop to pick up passengers, much to the frustration of the shoppers.

The crowds gradually disappear as evening approaches and darkness begins to creep in but they grow steadily again as the night market starts operating. Crowds swarm around for night snacks at the various food stalls and restaurants near the theatre or to pick up some good bargains. Now Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman is a sea of lights. It is indeed the liveliest street, busy all day long and into the night, in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, the nation's capital.

My Country - Malaysia



My country, Malaysia, is a small independent country. Many races of people live harmoniously together. There are Malays, Chinese, Indians and a **sprinkling** of foreigners from Europe, America, Japan, Korea and the surrounding South East Asian countries. Malaysians are **noted** for their friendliness and warm hospitality. Each race carries on with its own way of life. Most of the people in large towns work in banks, offices, government departments and firms. The young attend schools, colleges or universities. Those in the rural areas work in **paddy fields**, vegetable plots, poultry farms, rubber, coconut and oil palm estates or tin-mines and factories.

Malaysians, being of different races, can be seen on the streets in their various costumes, adding color to the scene. The warm, sunny and wet climate throughout the year makes Malaysia a tropical paradise. Visitors admire the green forested hills, the golden beaches with graceful coconut palms fringing them, the blue sea and, of course, the local cuisine. Foreign tourists find these places ideal for a holiday, as they get away from their cold countries.

Besides, Malaysia's cool hill-resorts like Cameron Highlands, Fraser's Hill and Genting Highlands make the day pleasant and refreshing, away from the hot lowlands.

Lastly, Malaysia is a rich country, famous the world over for its tin, rubber and palm oil exports. Kuala Lumpur, the capital city, is the largest in Malaysia, with many modern buildings. The international airport at Subang is always busy. I am proud of my country which I love dearly.

Kelantan



I am sure many of us living on the west coast have not visited the beautiful east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. If one does have a chance, he will find it a different kind of holiday experience, a holiday spent among the beauties of nature.

First, there are the hundreds of miles of unspoilt sandy beaches, white and clean with the open blue sea greeting the visitors. Then, there is the lush, tropical greenery, the tall coconut palms swaying gracefully in the breeze and charming rural villages where life is unhurried, leisurely and peaceful. One is attracted by the riot of the brilliant colors of the fruits and other foodstuffs at the market place, with busy Kelantanese selling their wares. 'Batik' and 'songket' are famous local products and tourists will not leave the place without buying a few of these pieces as souvenirs.

Kelantanese cottage industries are of great variety. You can find **silversmiths** at work on beautiful Kelantan jewellery or skilful craftsmen and womenfolk producing 'batik sarungs' and the brilliant eye-catching 'kain songket'. Some men are busy engaged in the making of giant kites or 'wau' which are of various shapes and colors. Kite-flying is an important pastime in Kelantan, apart from top-spinning.

Lastly, the beautiful beach of Pantai Cinta Berahi is worth a visit, for you will see the beach fringed with **groves** of casuarina trees. A trip to Pasir Putih, a scenic spot that **abounds with** waterfalls and fresh water springs is an unforgettable experience. Life here is totally unhurried and relaxing, making it a memorable holiday for you.

Teachers' Day



Every year, all schools throughout Malaysia celebrate Teachers' Day - a day to honour and remember our teachers who are our leaders and who guide us in our education during our youthful days.

Teachers are very much a part of a student's life as they influence a child, right from Kindergarten days to Upper Secondary days; and perhaps beyond. It is they who prepare the child for his or her life in society.

Teachers' Day is held to show our appreciation to our teachers who work hard and bear patiently with us. In most schools, pupils bring gifts of flowers, presents and other **tokens**, which are sometimes hand-made, to show that they care for their teachers. A party is held where tasty refreshments and drinks are served in the classroom for both the teachers and the students. Everyone has a good time and the day ends earlier than usual.

Teachers play a very important role in the development of a child. However, their efforts are seldom appreciated. That is why Teachers' Day is so significant to teachers; it is only on this day that they are appreciated and honoured for their deeds.

The Beruk Monkey

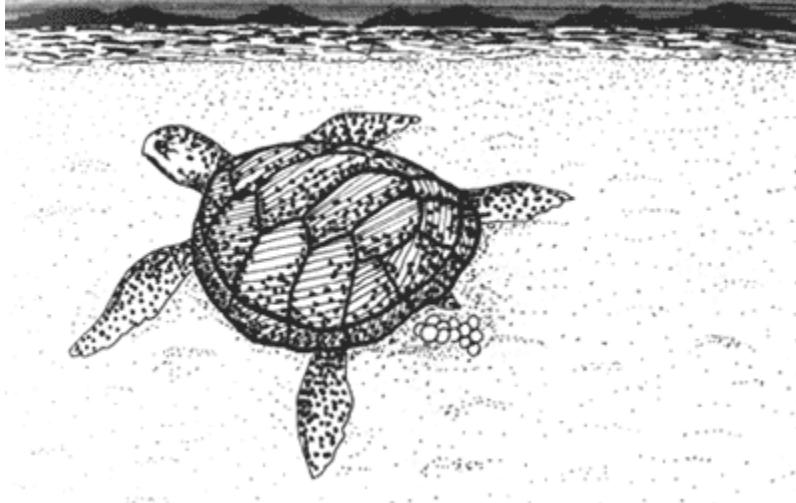


This monkey is **peculiar** in Malaysia as it is used by the local **inhabitants** to pick coconuts from tall, **slippery** trees. The plantation owner treats this monkey with care and fondness, for it helps him to earn a living.

Coconut trees are valued, among other things, for their fruits which are often used to make coconut oil. These trees grow quite tall: often from 2-3 storeys high. Moreover, the fruits grow at the very top, making the picking of fruits difficult for the average farmer. This is where the monkey comes in.

The Beruk monkey is a pig-tailed monkey which is specially-trained to pick coconuts. It selects the nuts in response to the signals and instructions given by its master. Once it is up on the coconut tree, it uses its legs to get a grip on a palm leaf, then, hanging upside down, it twists the nut with its hands until the coconut drops. The monkey accompanies its master from one coconut estate to another and does its job remarkably well. In this way it helps its master earn a good sum of money from the sale of coconuts. It is an intelligent and a skilled worker.

Turtles in Terengganu



The biggest tourist attraction on the East coast is the turtles of Terengganu. Both foreigners and Malaysian feel curious to see these sea-creatures which live in the deep South China Sea but emerge and crawl up to the white, sandy beaches of Terengganu which are the **spawning grounds** for these turtles.

The turtles crawl to the beach when it is quiet and dark at night to lay their eggs. So a visitor has to wait patiently at night to see the turtles. The turtle eggs are white and are like ping-pong balls both in size and in shape and are enclosed in a soft skin. The female turtles **scoop** hollows in the sand before laying their eggs and cover them with the sand using their flippers. Finally, they crawl slowly back to the sea and wait for another year when they crawl back again to lay their eggs, on the Terengganu beaches.

Sadly, the turtles are increasingly becoming a rare sight. This is due to various acts by man, namely the **mistreatment** of the turtles and the theft of eggs. It is up to the government, therefore, to ensure that these creatures do not disappear completely from the beaches of Terengganu.

Recess Time in Our School



R-r-ring! This goes the daily bell at 10.30 a.m. for **recess**. An **audible** sigh of relief can be heard in each classroom as the students immediately rush to the school tuck-shop. Hungry and thirsty students make straight for the mee-man, the iced-drinks seller or the curry and rice stall, for many have come to school early in the morning without any breakfast as there is hardly any time to eat.

I find the stall-holders busy serving food to the students, who are impatient and sometimes downright rude if the stall-holder is slow in serving them. The chatter of students, the noise of frying noodles, the chopping up of ingredients and the delicious smell of food floating in the air contribute to the typical **tuck-shop** environment which makes one hungry and eager to eat the daily snack.

R-r-ring! The unwelcome bell goes at 10.50 a.m. for the students to get back to class. It is another rush, this time for lessons which begin promptly and late-comers will be punished. Recess time is a welcome break, for hungry stomachs are filled and dry throats are refreshed with iced drinks.

Now the tuck-shop is quiet except for the clatter of plates, glasses and cups being washed by the stall-holders, who then rest till the next session.

The Parks of West Malaysia



Malaysian jungles remained undisturbed by man for about 100 million years, thus making them many centuries old.

Amongst the many splendid **gorges**, magnificent rivers and towering hills, Malaysia's National Parks provide one with an adventure tour of **exotic** locations. Boating through swirling rapids, hunting big game and stalking animals with a camera, bird-watching, mountain-climbing, exploring limestone caves, swimming in cool streams and camping amidst giant tropical trees while listening to jungle noises of cicadas and other insects is a rare experience.

If you love the great outdoors, a visit to the Parks would be ideal. There is Taman Negara situated in Pahang/Kelantan/Terengganu in West Malaysia. Its headquarters is at Kuala Tahan for visitors. There are several salt lakes to which wild life come for the drinking water and the mineral-enriched soil. At Jemut Belau, deers, wild pigs and tapirs as well as elephants, seladangs, tigers and panthers are frequent visitors.

Templer Park, thirteen miles from Kuala Lumpur, is a famous spot for relaxation. Friendly monkeys await to welcome visitors. The freshness and tranquility amidst cool streams, **tree ferns** and colorful birds make it a popular picnic ground.

A Wallflower

It was very frustrating to see other girls and boys having a wonderful time at social gatherings and not being able to be part of the merriment. I was born with silky jet black hair and a flawless porcelain complexion. I could have been quite attractive if not for my two front teeth. Chipped and jagged due to a fall when I was a little girl, I would not parade them for a million dollars.

Once I met a good-looking boy on a packed bus. He smiled and asked if I was from the same college. Before I could finish my sentence, he interrupted to ask how I chipped my teeth ! Passengers standing nearby seemed equally curious to have a glimpse of my disfigured teeth. I was most embarrassed. I wished I could have jumped off the bus there and then.

I disliked face-to-face encounters. To avoid inspection of my unpresentable teeth, I would cover my mouth, look elsewhere and do anything to **camouflage** them. I often wished I was flawlessly beautiful like my cousin, Josephine. At every social occasion, there would always be a crowd of admirers around her.

Once evening, at Josephine's wedding reception, I was standing as usual in a quiet corner of the banqueting hall watching other people enjoying themselves. when i went to the "Ladies", I was shocked to hear relatives commenting about me. "Stuck-up!" "Peacock!" "Rude!" were some of the harsh words I heard before I dashed out of the room crying.

Just then, I saw a group of the wedding guests across the hall crowding around a plain looking girl. Suddenly, she caught sight of me. Smiling broadly, she called out. "Mary! It's me, Jane.

Come. Let me have a closer look at this much talked about pretty cousin of mine." As I went closer, I noticed that she had a very uneven set of yellow teeth.

Out of habit, my hand went automatically up to cover my mouth when I greeted Jane whom I had not seen for years. Jane smiled at me warmly and the understanding look in her eyes put me completely at ease. "Care for a walk ? It's pretty stuffy in here," said Jane as she gently led me out of the banqueting hall.

"Why is a sweet-looking girl like you playing wallflower on such a happy occasion " Don't just stand around. Greet the aunts and uncles. talk to the cousins, and stop letting everyone think you're proud or rude!"

Jane was right. i had unconsciously offended many people by being too conscious of my teeth. I also realized that in trying to hide my teeth, I drew more attention to them. I **dawned on** me that during our conversation I stopped noticing Jane's teeth. what I saw was a very pleasant and friendly person.

Acting on Jane's advice, I have learnt to mix more freely on social occasions now. As my social skills improve I seem to receive more compliments about my hair and my

complexion. It is interesting that people no longer notice my two front teeth. these days, I look forward to social gatherings. I am no longer a wallflower on such occasions any more.

A Squatter Fire

I had never seen a house on fire before, only filmed reports of it on the television. So, one evening when I heard the siren screams of a few fire-engines rushing past my house, I dashed into the street and joined a growing crowd of curious people. We could see the fire only from a safe distance as the police had **cordoned off** the place for security reasons. even at a distance, I could recognize that the affected houses were in a squatter area where my part-time maid, Mani, lived.

What a terrible scene greeted my eyes ! The fire was raging through the shabbily built houses. Flames leaped up hungrily to devour the wooden sheds. every now and then tongues of fire would shoot up almost skyhigh, sprinkling bright red sparks of fire about. Fiery wooden beams crashed and glowed brightly. Thick black smoke spread all around.

Dozens of firemen from the four fire-engines were busily engaged in putting out the fire. The rushing water from several hoses soaked the houses but it did not seem to have any effect on the flames. Soon, a few firemen with hoses in their hands were seen climbing up tall red ladders of the fire-engines. The continuous flooding from the top finally brought the fire under control. Where it had been red there was only black -- the charred remains of ruined houses.

While all eyes were **transfixed** on the inferno, the plight of the victims did not escape the eyes of the spectators. Firemen were seen dragging wailing women away from the burning houses to a safe area. Frightened children clutched to their mothers. Some of the men simply stared speechlessly as they witnessed their homes reduced to ashes.

It took only 30 minutes before the whole squatter area, comprising mainly wooden houses, was razed to the ground. No one could salvage anything. According to a reporter, the estimated loss was around 1 million dollars. Although the amount may seem insignificant to some, for the victims it was all they had. Their only consolation was the fact that no lives were sacrificed

Though I watched with great sympathy for the other victims of the fire, my real fear the concern were for Mani. All this while, I was straining my eyes to catch a glimpse of her. What a relief when I finally saw her standing with downcast eyes in the midst of other fire victims. My heart **went out to** her.

The Leopard

The leopard is a member of the cat family. Like all cats, it is a carnivorous or meat-eating animal. Its sharp, scissor-like back teeth and retractable claws are the leopard's principal weapons, used for catching its prey. These together with its powerful body, strong legs, its acute sense of hearing and a pair of large eyes with excellent vision, make the leopard an efficient hunter.

Like human fingerprints, the spots on a leopard's coat are unique, and each cat may be recognized by its individual markings. The thickness of a leopard's coat, the degree of spotting and the variations in coat color are indications of its particular habitat and the climate it inhabits. For example, leopards found in cold, mountainous areas of northern China, have long thick coats. The Middle East leopards have light coats with large spots while the Malay Peninsular leopards are mostly black, providing excellent camouflage in the thick tropical rain forests.

Except for brief periods of courtship, mating and motherhood, the leopard is nearly always solitary. When a leopard reaches adulthood, it shuns companionship; doing everything on its own. It also spends much of its days resting alone in trees, climbing down only at twilight to hunt.

Leopards are remarkably adaptable to all kinds of environment and climate. They are found in Africa, southern Asia, the Middle East and the Far East. Their willingness to eat protein in almost any form, ranging from tiny beetles to wildebeests several times their own size, accounts for their remarkable ability to survive and even thrive. Water is surprisingly not a necessity for the survival of the leopard. It is able to obtain sufficient moisture from the blood of its victims.

Despite its great adaptability, the number of leopards in the wild has fallen dramatically since the turn of the century. The **encroachment** of humans into leopard habitat reduces the population of its usual prey. Inevitably, the leopards turn their attention to domestic animals. Thus, they are shot and poisoned in great numbers by farmers.

Leopards are also hunted down for their highly prized skin. During the 1960s and 1970s, 60,000 skins were sold annually. Recent estimates put the total number of leopards deliberately killed each year in Africa alone at around 6,000; 4,000 of which are killed illegally. In the Far East they are hunted for use in traditional medicine.

Measures to protect and to check the decline of the leopard population have been taken by a number of African nations. They include the creation of game reserves and fur farms. These reserves not only safeguard the natural habitat of leopards, but they also generate funds from eco-tourism. The Amboseli National Park of Kenya alone generated US\$40 million in 1990. Fur farms where leopards are reared for their skin is another revenue earner and option to reduce **poaching**.

According to analysts, the future of leopards remains bright as the protection of these cats proves useful to people and their government.

Caning

The rise in discipline problems among students has been related to the lack of respect students have for teachers. This disrespect appears to be linked to the ban on caning by class teachers. Hence, there has been a call to put the cane back in the teacher's hand to **instill** discipline.

Is it through the fear of caning that students will learn discipline ? can the cane create a sense of respect for the teacher and the school authority ?

Caning can be a powerful deterrent to misbehavior. Contrary to popular belief, caning does not scar a child or youngster psychologically unless the punishment **meted out** is unjust or too severe. However, would teachers who are confronted by an onslaught of disobedience, rudeness and disrespect still be able to act rationally ? The number of cases in which teachers misused their power have caught much attention. These are teachers who resort to caning as a way to control students. No improvement in the student's behavior results in increased and more severe punishment until the punishment can rightfully be termed child abuse. it is often the teachers' mood that determines the severity of the caning. Caning in other words has become a means to release the teachers' frustration and anger. This is an abuse of power.

Teachers cannot expect to be respected by their students just because they have been given the power to cane. Respect is not gained through the power of the cane, but by a mutual understanding through a close student-teacher relationship. If a teacher carries out his responsibility well and fairly, and is able to show love and concern, he will be admired and respected. When such a teacher canes a student, the student will realize that it is because the teacher cares. Not only will he regret his misbehavior, but he will respect the teacher.

The role of parents in training their children to be courteous and to respect adults, must not be overlooked. How many parents these days respect their children's teachers ? On top of that, many parents have become overprotective. Under such circumstances, how then do we expect students to respect their teachers ?

There is no doubt that caning is useful in changing behavior if it is properly implemented. However, it should not be seen as panacea for disrespect for teachers and indiscipline in schools. Misbehavior of students is not solely caused by the fact that teachers are banned from using the cane. Therefore empowering teachers to cane naughty children will not solve the problems. Parents, teachers and those in authority should look at the root the problems and work from there.

