

COMPREHENSION:

C1. Read the lesson silently and answer the following questions.

1) **Where is Mauritius?**

Ans: Mauritius is a tiny island located in the Indian Ocean. It is situated below the Equator on the twentieth parallel some 4,500 km south west of Mumbai.

2) **Name the people of different origins found in Mauritius.**

Ans: The people found in Mauritius are Africans, Chinese, Biharis, Dutch, Persians, Tamils, Arabs, French and English.

3) **Who are referred to as the 'buccaneering trinity' of those days? Why are they so called?**

Ans: The Dutch, the French and the English who constantly waged wars for colonizing of the island are referred to as the 'buccaneering trinity' of those days.

4) **List out some 'very musical but unpronounceable names' as found by the author.**

Ans: Some of the 'very musical but unpronounceable names' as found by the author are Trouaux Biches, Beau Bassin, Quarter Bornes, Curepipe, Ross Belle etc.

5) **What are the 'flora and fauna' found in Mauritius?**

Ans: The author noted that the trees in Mauritius are short and gnarled even in the interior of jungles. The jungles have no wild animals. A coral reef runs all round the island parallel to the shore.

6) **How is Nature cruel to the people of Mauritius?**

Ans: Mauritius is prone to cyclones. On February 6, 1975, the king cyclone struck them. It was a 320 km, broad howling wind which moved at about 255 km per hour. It churned the country for two days, relentlessly flattening everything that stood, smashing windows and doors, tearing up rooftops, uprooting the trees and bringing them down on building.

7) **Name some aquatic creatures sighted by the author.**

Ans: The author sighted some shapeless ugly creatures crawling in the dark depths of the sea. There were plenty of fishes in many colours like violet, yellow, pink green, post box red with hideous spikes all over their body. There were fishes with ling tails, fishes with battered faces.

C2. In groups of 3 or 4, discuss the answers for the following questions and then present your answers before the other group.

1) **Why was it difficult for the author to locate Mauritius in his Atlas?**

Ans: It was difficult for the author to locate Mauritius in his atlas because the Atlas he had was an old one with many little dots and specks which have really nothing to do with the world of geography because those dots were made by weathering and cockroaches. Mauritius is also a tiny island that looks like a dot on the map.

2) **What is the reason for the people of different countries to settle in Mauritius?**

Ans: The people who have settled down in Mauritius are the successors of their ancestors who were brought to the island as

slaves or later as indentured labourers to do physical labour in sugarcane fields and factories. Their roots in their original countries withered and disappeared with passage of time. Therefore they accepted this country as theirs and settled there in harmony with others.

- 3) **How does the author explain the absence of protocol among the government officials and ministers in Mauritius.**

Ans: The cabinet Ministers and others in high positions in Port Louis, the seat of Government, are friendly and are just like ordinary people one bumps into an airport lounge or in a hotel lobby. They are unassuming, accessible, communicative and above all, go about without a protective shield of hangers on and security men to repel casual approaches.

- 4) **Give the description of mountains as given by the author.**

Ans: The mountains in Mauritius do not have the traditional monotonous pyramidal shapes. Their outlines are freakish and whimsical with unexpected sweeps and perpendicular drops and pin-pointed peaks precariously doing a balancing act with boulders as big as a skyscraper.

- 5) **How are the people of Mauritius described fighting against the cruel jaws of Nature?**

Ans: Mauritius is a cyclone prone island. Cyclones storm the island almost every year and bring in devastation. The sad part of it is by the time the next one is due, the memory of the previous disaster fades or nearly comes to be believed as a myth. So again, trees are planted in congested areas, tall buildings are constructed, plateglass picture windows are fixed and rooftops are put up with an eye on elegance. But sure enough, at the end of the 15-year period, the King cyclone appears promptly on the horizon to surprise the people of Mauritius.

6) **What would be the future of Mauritius as opined by the author?**

Ans: The author is of the opinion that with the industrial growth in Mauritius, the living space will shrink. Cars and trucks will increase. Their roads will have to be widened to take the load. The price of land will go up and flats will appear. Cost of living, pollution, unemployment, slums, taxation, controls the country. An enlightened people can of course guide themselves away from all such evils and still preserve this paradise on earth.

C3. Compare and contrast the arriving and departing experience of the author during his flight. Does it suggest you anything?

Ans: The author took his journey to Mauritius with his wife for sightseeing. He says he could not help drawing a comparison although ridiculous and rather far-fetched, between his vague observations at 10,000 metres watching the clouds and what he learned of Mauritius later. It was surprising for him to see people of different origins living together with a peculiar sense of oneness. He was very much impressed upon the warmth and friendly nature of not only ordinary citizen but also of the government officials of high profile. He was very much impressed by the strength of people to fight against all the odds of nature and yet live with it. At end of the journey the author was forced to think about the future of that tiny island.