

Collegedunia NCERT Notes

NCERT Notes for Class 8 English (Poorvi) (2026-27 Syllabus)

Chapter 3: Mystery and Magic

These Class 8 English (Poorvi) Notes for Chapter 3 Mystery and Magic cover the main unit readings: the detective story “The Case of the Fifth Word”, the poem “The Magic Brush of Dreams”, and the prose piece “Spectacular Wonders”. They also revise the high-yield vocabulary, grammar, speaking, writing, listening and explore strands needed for school tests.

Also see for this chapter: [NCERT Solutions](#)

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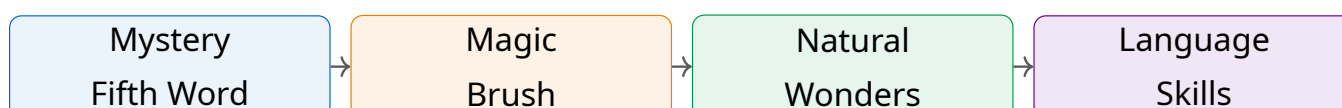
1 Chapter Snapshot

Mystery and Magic is a unit about close observation, imagination, kindness, and wonder. The first text turns language into a detective clue. The second text turns art into help for

poor people. The third text shows that nature itself can feel magical when we observe it carefully.

1.1 What the Unit Contains

The unit has three main reading passages and a large language-work section. Students should revise the three texts together because they share one idea: things that look strange become meaningful when we think clearly.



Central Idea

The chapter trains students to observe clues, understand imagination responsibly, and describe wonder in clear language.

1.2 Quick Unit Table

Text	Main Focus	Exam Point
The Case of the Fifth Word	Logic, code, inference and detective thinking	Explain how the four-word code leads to the fifth word.
The Magic Brush of Dreams	Kindness, greed, courage and imagination	Compare Gopi's use of the brush with the Zamindar's demand.
Spectacular Wonders	Natural phenomena across India	Name each wonder, location and unique feature.
Language Work	Phrasal verbs, homophones, reported speech, participles and gerunds	Use rules with examples from the chapter.

First Reading Tip

Read the unit in three passes: first for story, second for words, and third for question frames.

1.3 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- identify facts and opinions in a detective story;
- explain character traits using textual evidence;
- decode wordplay such as anagrams, puzzles and spoonerisms;
- convert direct questions into reported speech;
- describe natural phenomena using precise adjectives;
- write a report, an imaginative essay and a descriptive essay.

MAMI

Use **MAMI**: **M**ystery, **A**rt, **M**iracles of nature, **I**mproved language skills.

2 The Case of the Fifth Word

This story is adapted from Donald J. Sobol's Encyclopedia Brown series. It presents a mystery that looks difficult because the clue is written as four ordinary-looking words.

2.1 Main Characters and Setting

Leroy Brown is called Encyclopedia because his mind is full of facts. His father is Chief Brown, the Chief of Police in Idaville. The dinner table becomes the place where hard cases are quietly discussed.

Character	Role in the Story
Leroy Brown, or Encyclopedia	Eighth grader who solves the coded clue with knowledge and reasoning.
Chief Brown	Police chief and Leroy's father. He brings the case home for discussion.
Mrs Brown	Leroy's mother. She reads the words literally and shows why the code is tricky.
Tim Nolan	Suspected robber who leaves the coded message before death.
Daniel Davenport	Nolan's friend, missing after the jewellery robbery. The message is meant for him.

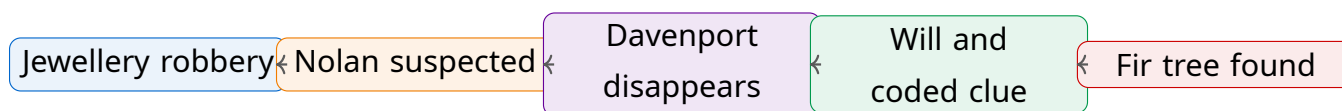
Why This Story Matters

The story shows that observation is not only seeing. A good observer also asks why a detail was placed there.

2.2 Plot Summary

Five years before the dinner-table scene, two masked men robbed the Diamond Mart on Sixth Avenue. Tim Nolan was suspected because a clerk thought she recognised him, but there was no proof. Daniel Davenport, Nolan's friend, disappeared after the hold-up.

Nolan later died after a stroke. Before dying, he put his will on the kitchen table. A sheet from his desk calendar was clipped to the will. On it, he wrote Davenport's name, address and four strange words: Nom Utes Sweden Hurts.



2.3 How the Code Works

The clue works because the words are linked with the days of the week. Nolan dropped the letters d, a and y from the day names, then rearranged the remaining letters.

Day	After dropping day	Coded word
Monday	Mon	Nom
Tuesday	Tues	Utes
Wednesday	Wednes	Sweden
Thursday	Thurs	Hurts
Friday	Fri	Fir, the missing fifth word

Code Pattern

Day name – d, a, y → rearranged clue

So Friday becomes Fir. The jewellery is found inside a twenty-gallon jug of earth from which the young fir tree grows.

Common Mistake

Do not explain Nom, Utes, Sweden and Hurts by their dictionary meanings. In the story they are code words, not normal vocabulary clues.

2.4 Character Sketch of Leroy

Leroy is knowledgeable because he reads widely and remembers facts. He is humble because he never boasts about helping his father. He is a keen listener because he sits quietly while adults discuss the case. He is clever because he solves the code with one key question.

Answer Frame

Write the trait first, then support it with a line from the story. Example: Leroy is humble because he never speaks about the help he gives his father.

3 The Magic Brush of Dreams

This narrative poem is adapted from a folk tale. It tells the story of Gopi, a girl who receives a magic brush and chooses kindness over greed.

3.1 Poem Summary

Gopi is asked to gather wild beans, rice and mangoes, but she sits under a banyan tree and draws pictures in the sand. A mysterious man gives her a magic brush and tells her to paint only for the poor.

Gopi paints a bowl of khichdi, and it becomes real. She paints useful things for villagers: a muffler, a plough, a shawl and a fan. News of the brush reaches the Zamindar. He orders her to paint treasures and a grand fortress. Gopi refuses, so he imprisons her.

At night, Gopi paints a winding road and a horse. She escapes. When the Zamindar's men chase her, she paints a mighty river. She threatens to paint a beast, and the Zamindar runs away. The poem ends with the villagers celebrating.

Gopi draws
in sand

← Magic brush
is given

← Villagers
are helped

← Zamindar
tries greed

← Gopi escapes

3.2 Themes and Tone

The poem begins with a playful tone because Gopi is drawing in the sand. It then becomes tense when the Zamindar appears. The ending is triumphant and celebratory because Gopi returns safely and the villagers rejoice.

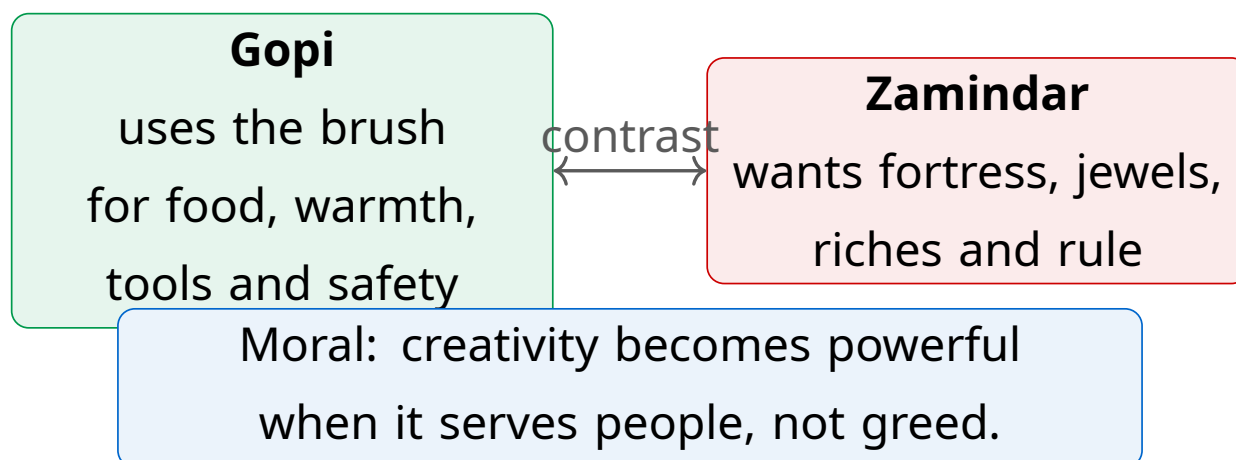
Stage	Tone	Reason
Beginning	Playful and innocent	Gopi draws and experiments with imagination.
Middle	Tension and suspense	Zamindar imprisons her and demands wealth.
End	Triumphant and celebratory	Gopi escapes and protects the village.

Poetry Answer Tip

For a poem answer, mention both event and effect. Do not only retell what happened.

3.3 Gopi and the Zamindar

The poem works through contrast. Gopi sees magic as a responsibility. The Zamindar sees magic as a way to get power, treasure and control.



Everyday Connection

A talent is like Gopi's brush. It becomes meaningful when it helps others and

is not used only for personal gain.

3.4 Imagery, Symbolism and Rhyme

The poem creates clear pictures: the banyan tree, the brush, khichdi, the cell, the horse, the river and the celebration. The magic brush symbolises the power of art and imagination. The grand fortress symbolises greed. The river and possible beast symbolise protection.

- The poem mostly follows a simple ABCB rhyme pattern.
- It belongs to the narrative or ballad poetry genre.
- Repetition in "On you, and you and you" increases fear and urgency.
- Words such as roars, stamps, bellows and thunders make the Zamindar sound violent.

Brush Moral

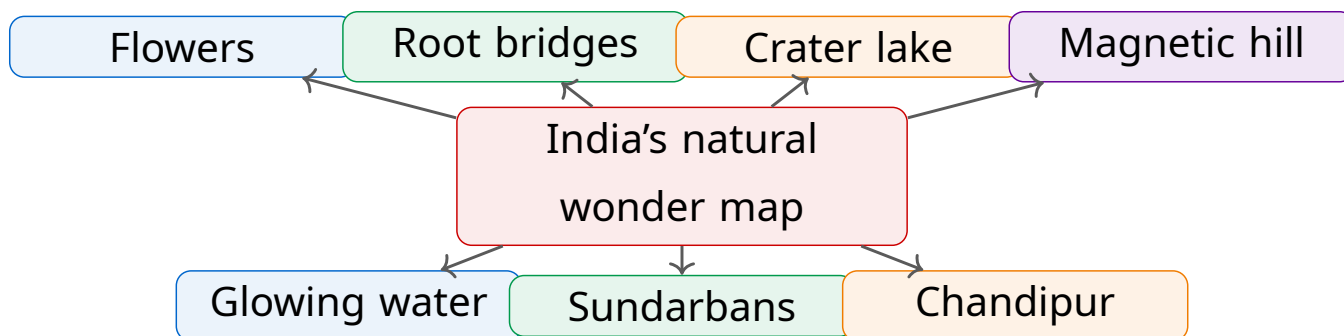
Remember **ACT**: **A**rt, **C**ompassion, **T**ruth. Gopi keeps all three.

4 Spectacular Wonders

This prose piece describes seven natural phenomena in India. It uses descriptive language and scientific explanation together, so the wonders feel magical but are still real.

4.1 Seven Wonders at a Glance

Natural Phenomenon	Location	Unique Feature
Valley of Flowers	Chamoli district, Uttarakhand	Around 600 species of exotic flowers.
Living Root Bridges	Meghalaya	Bridges made from intertwined living roots.
Lonar Crater Lake	Buldhana district, Maharashtra	Meteorite impact crater in basaltic rock.
Magnetic Hill	Leh district, Ladakh	Optical illusion makes vehicles seem to roll uphill.
Glowing Waters	Kumbalangi, Kerala	Bioluminescence caused by micro-planktons.
Sundarbans	West Bengal	Mangrove forest in the delta of major rivers.
Chandipur Beach	Balasore district, Odisha	Sea retreats and reappears with tides.



4.2 Science Behind the Wonder

The text balances imagination and explanation. The Magnetic Hill is not actual anti-gravity. It is an optical illusion. Kumbalangi's glow is not fantasy. It is bioluminescence. Chandipur's disappearing sea is due to tidal movement.

Important Reading Skill

When the writer uses a magical-sounding opening, look for the scientific explanation in the next lines.

Common Mistake

Do not write that Magnetic Hill cancels gravity. NCERT explains it as an optical illusion caused by slope and horizon alignment.

4.3 Vocabulary from Spectacular Wonders

Word	Meaning	Memory Cue
Mystifying	Strange or hard to explain	Mystery plus feeling.
Spectacle	Unusual sight that attracts interest	Something worth seeing.
Indigenous	Native to a place	Local origin.
Colossal	Extremely large	Huge impact.
Serene	Calm and peaceful	Still water.
Enigmatic	Puzzling	Like a riddle.

Vocabulary Tip

Learn the word with its context. For example, serene appears with backwaters, so think of calm water.

5 Language Work and Grammar

The language section is long in this unit. It connects mystery, magic and wonder with wordplay and sentence transformation.

5.1 Phrasal Verbs and Homophones

The story teaches phrasal verbs such as put on, cooled down, turned up, make of, figure out and got away with. These are tested through fill-in-the-blank sentences.

The unit also revises homophones such as week and weak, dying and dyeing, fore and four, peace and piece, break and brake.

Phrasal verbs
meaning changes

Homophones
same sound

Spoonerisms
sound swap

5.2 Reported Speech in Questions

The chapter explains how direct speech changes into reported speech. For questions, the reporting verb often becomes asked, inquired, questioned or interrogated. The question form becomes a statement form.

Rule	Example Cue
Use if or whether for yes-or-no questions	She asked whether he had searched the house.
Keep the wh-word for wh-questions	She asked what he made of the four words.
Change tense when required	will becomes would, present becomes past.
Remove quotation marks and question mark	The final reported sentence ends with a full stop.

Reported Question Pattern

Speaker asked + if / wh-word + subject + verb in shifted tense

Example: "Did you search?" becomes "She asked whether he had searched."

Reported Speech Mistake

Do not keep the helping verb before the subject in reported speech. Write "where he was going", not "where was he going".

5.3 Participles and Gerunds

Spectacular Wonders introduces verbs used as adjectives and nouns. A participle works like an adjective. A gerund works like a noun.

Form	Use	Example
Present participle	Adjective showing ongoing action	living root bridges, glowing waters
Past participle	Adjective showing completed state	carved stone, scattered islands
Gerund	Verb form used as noun	Swimming is healthy.

Gerund Check

If the -ing word names an activity and can act as a subject or object, it is likely a gerund.

5.4 Writing and Speaking Tasks

The unit has three major writing tasks: report writing, imaginative essay and descriptive essay. It also asks students to conduct group discussion, make requests, and give a presentation on a place of interest.

- A report uses past tense, sequence markers and factual details.
- An imaginative essay uses setting, characters, sensory details and a clear resolution.
- A descriptive essay uses vivid details about an object, place or natural event.
- A group discussion needs turn-taking, agreement and polite disagreement.

Communication Skill

The speaking tasks matter because mystery stories and presentations both need clear listening. You cannot solve or explain what you have not heard carefully.

5.5 Other NCERT Activities to Remember

The chapter also includes short activity strands that may appear in notebook work or oral assessment. Revise them as quick cues rather than long answers.

Activity Strand	Revision Cue
Observation podcast	Slow down, use all senses, ask questions, take notes and practise mindfulness.
Pronunciation and intonation	Practise words such as jewellery, clerk, dessert, Wednesday and pronunciation; use falling tone for commands and requests.
Word play	Revise anagrams, spoonerisms, riddles, puzzle pictures, binomials and the different meanings of draw.
Reference tools	Know how an encyclopedia differs from a dictionary, and use a thesaurus to find alternative words.
Explore tasks	Recall optical illusions, P. C. Sorcar Sr., man-made wonders, firefly-like bioluminescence and magical-object drawing tasks.
Listening transcripts	The listening tasks support observation skills, magical powers and the Rainbow Mountain conversation.

6 NCERT Question Frames

Use these answer frames for school tests. They are short, direct and based on the textbook questions.

6.1 Short Answer Frames

1. **Why was Leroy called Encyclopedia?**

Leroy was called Encyclopedia because he read many books, remembered facts and seemed like a library and computer together.

2. **Why did Nolan leave a coded message?**

Nolan probably wanted Davenport to find the hidden jewellery after his death without making the clue clear to others.

3. **Why did Gopi refuse the Zamindar?**

Gopi refused because she had promised to use the brush only for poor people, not for a greedy ruler's wealth.

4. **Why are living root bridges useful?**

They help people cross waterways during heavy rains, and they last longer than

bamboo or wooden bridges.

Evidence Habit

Every literature answer should carry one detail from the text: name, object, event, line idea or action.

6.2 Comparison Answers

Question Type	Point 1	Point 2
Fact vs opinion	Fact can be proven true or false.	Opinion is a belief or judgement.
Gopi vs Zamindar	Gopi helps needy people.	Zamindar wants power and wealth.
Magic vs nature	Magic changes imagined things into real things in the poem.	Nature appears magical through real phenomena in the prose.

Answer Writing Mistake

Do not write only "good" and "bad" for character contrast. Name the action that proves the trait.

6.3 Extract-Based Questions

For extracts, read the speaker, situation and hidden meaning before answering. Many questions ask for inference, not direct copying.

Speaker

Context

Key words

Inference

Extract Tip

If the question asks what a reaction suggests, write the feeling behind the action.

7 Quick Revision Sheets

This section condenses the chapter into fast revision material for the day before a test.

7.1 One-Page Theme Chart

Theme	Where It Appears	How to Use in Answers
Observation	Encyclopedia reads the code through calendar logic.	Mention close attention to context.
Kindness	Gopi paints for the poor.	Mention responsibility and social good.
Greed	Zamindar demands fortress and jewels.	Mention misuse of power.
Wonder	India's natural phenomena surprise visitors.	Mention science and imagination together.
Communication	Reported speech, discussion and presentation tasks.	Mention clear language and listening.

7.2 Important Word Bank

- **Mystery:** case, clue, hunch, code, loot, testify, foreseen.
- **Magic Brush:** twig, fortress, feast, comply, seize, triumphant.
- **Wonders:** mystifying, exotic, indigenous, colossal, serene, bioluminescence, estuarine.
- **Grammar:** reported speech, wh-question, yes-or-no question, participle, gerund, binomial.

Revision Method

Make three columns in your notebook: story facts, poem symbols and wonder locations. This prevents mixing the texts.

7.3 Last-Minute Checklist

1. Explain the fifth-word code without looking at the book.

2. Write four traits of Leroy with evidence.
3. Put the Magic Brush events in correct order.
4. Learn the seven wonders with locations.
5. Revise reported-speech rules for questions.
6. Practise one report, one imaginative essay and one descriptive essay outline.

Final Memory Line

The chapter moves from **clue** to **kindness** to **curiosity**. Keep these three words in mind.

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8 Practice and Exam-Ready Notes

This final practice section gives extra revision frames for class tests. Use it after reading the chapter once from the NCERT book and once from the summary pages above.

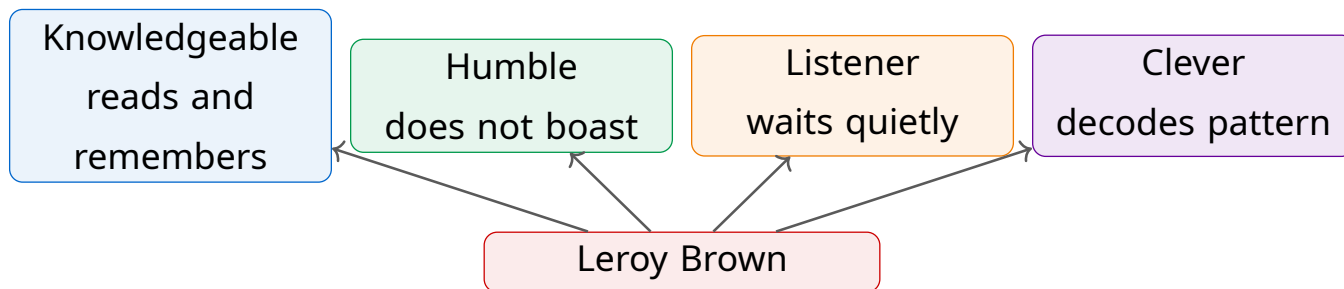
8.1 Fact and Opinion Practice

The detective story asks students to separate facts from opinions. A fact can be checked. An opinion is a belief, judgement or feeling. This distinction matters because mystery stories depend on evidence.

Statement Type	Label	Reason
Encyclopedia's father was the Chief of Police.	Fact	It is directly stated and can be verified within the story.
Everyone thought Chief Brown was the smartest police chief.	Opinion	It reports what people believed about him.
Two masked men robbed the Diamond Mart.	Fact	It is part of the case record in the story.
Chief Brown's hunch was that Nolan and Davenport hid the loot.	Opinion	A hunch is a strong feeling, not proof.

8.2 Character Trait Evidence Bank

When a question asks for a character sketch, do not list traits alone. Pair each trait with a clear action.



Trait	Evidence to Use
Knowledgeable	He reads more books than anyone in Idaville and never forgets a fact.
Humble	He never speaks about the help he gives his father.
Keen listener	He sits quietly because he knows the case is being discussed for him.
Clever	He solves the calendar code through one key question about a fir tree.

8.3 Magic Brush Long-Answer Frame

A long answer on Gopi should show her courage and moral clarity. Start with her promise, then move to the pressure from the Zamindar, then explain her escape.

1. Gopi receives the brush with a clear instruction to help poor people.
2. She paints useful things for villagers, so her imagination becomes service.
3. The Zamindar demands a fortress and jewels, showing greed and misuse of power.
4. Gopi refuses because she respects the purpose of the brush.
5. Her escape shows quick thinking, courage and loyalty to the villagers.

Symbol	Meaning	Use in Answer
Magic brush	Creative power and imagination	It can help society when guided by kindness.
Fortress	Greed, control and selfish desire	The Zamindar wants protection for his own wealth.
River	Barrier against oppression	Gopi uses imagination to stop violence.
Feast	Joy and shared victory	The village celebrates freedom and kindness.

8.4 Spectacular Wonders Revision Grid

The prose passage is easy to revise if you group the wonders by the force that shapes them.

Group	Wonders	Main Force
Plant life	Valley of Flowers, Living Root Bridges	Biodiversity, roots and local knowledge.
Earth and rock	Lonar Crater Lake, Magnetic Hill	Meteorite impact and optical illusion.
Water and coast	Glowing Waters, Sundarbans, Chandipur Beach	Bioluminescence, tides, delta and mangroves.

For descriptive answers, use exact adjectives from the chapter: mystifying, spectacular, exotic, colossal, serene, enigmatic and awe-inspiring. Then add the cause behind the wonder. This gives both literary effect and factual clarity.

8.5 Reported Speech Drill

Use these examples as quick models before solving the NCERT exercise.

Direct Question	Reported Form
"What do you make of the four words?"	Mrs Brown asked Leroy what he made of the four words.
"Did you search Nolan's house?"	Mrs Brown asked Chief Brown whether he had searched Nolan's house.
"Where is the jewellery hidden?"	She asked where the jewellery was hidden.
"Will you come with me tomorrow?"	Madavi asked Ravi whether he would go with her the following day.

8.6 Writing Task Blueprints

The writing tasks in this chapter test organisation. Use these blueprints to avoid missing a paragraph.

Task	Blueprint
Report on art exhibition	Title, byline, what happened, who attended, sequence of events, prize distribution and closing remark.
Imaginative essay	Title, narrator, setting, magical element, conflict, turning point, learning and reflective ending.
Descriptive essay	Title, opening impression, sensory details, special features, personal response and conclusion.
Presentation on place of interest	Location, route, attractions, weather, food, customs, language and best time to visit.

8.7 Common Errors to Avoid

- Do not call the four words random. They follow a calendar pattern.
- Do not say Gopi paints for everyone. She is instructed to paint for poor people.
- Do not describe Magnetic Hill as real anti-gravity.
- Do not mix participles and gerunds only because both may end in ing.
- Do not write a report like a story. A report needs factual sequence and past tense.

8.8 Extra Extract Practice

Extract questions usually test a small piece of text, but the answer often depends on context. Practise these model frames.

Extract Cue	Likely Skill Tested	How to Answer
Chief Brown shakes his head	Inference from action	Say he is confused by the four words.
The man whispers to Gopi	Character and secrecy	Say he is careful because the brush is powerful.
Chandipur plays hide-and-seek	Figurative language	Explain that the sea retreats and returns with tides.
Nature's unusual side	Theme and description	Mention rare phenomena that surprise people.

8.9 Answer Starters

These starters help students begin answers without wasting time.

- **For inference:** This suggests that the character is...
- **For contrast:** The difference between the two characters is clear because...
- **For title:** The title is appropriate because...
- **For theme:** The main idea of the passage is...
- **For descriptive prose:** The writer creates wonder by using...

8.10 Mini Glossary for Fast Recall

Word	Simple Meaning	Use in Chapter
Hunch	Strong feeling without full proof	Chief Brown's belief about Nolan and Davenport.
Loot	Stolen goods	The jewellery from Diamond Mart.
Comply	Obey or agree to a demand	Gopi refuses to comply with the Zamindar.
Triumphant	Joyful after victory	The mood after Gopi defeats the chase.
Bioluminescence	Light produced by living organisms	Glowing waters of Kumbalangi.
Ebb tide	Time when sea water moves away from shore	Chandipur Beach becomes visible during ebb tide.

8.11 Two-Minute Oral Revision

Ask yourself these questions aloud. If you can answer them without opening the book, the chapter is ready for school revision.

1. What was the robbery case that troubled Chief Brown?
2. How did Encyclopedia connect the four words with calendar days?
3. Why did Gopi refuse the Zamindar's order?
4. What do the river and beast threat do in the poem?
5. Which natural wonder is linked with micro-planktons?
6. Which grammar topic changes a direct question into a statement form?
7. How is a gerund different from a participle?
8. What structure should a descriptive essay follow?

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