



Attila

by R.K. Narayan

Pre-reading Task

1. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16
G A R N B S O T V I E L D K C H

The five sets of figures given below are actually some words which are considered to be the qualities of a good watchdog. Write the letters corresponding to the figures and then unjumble them as done in Set 1.

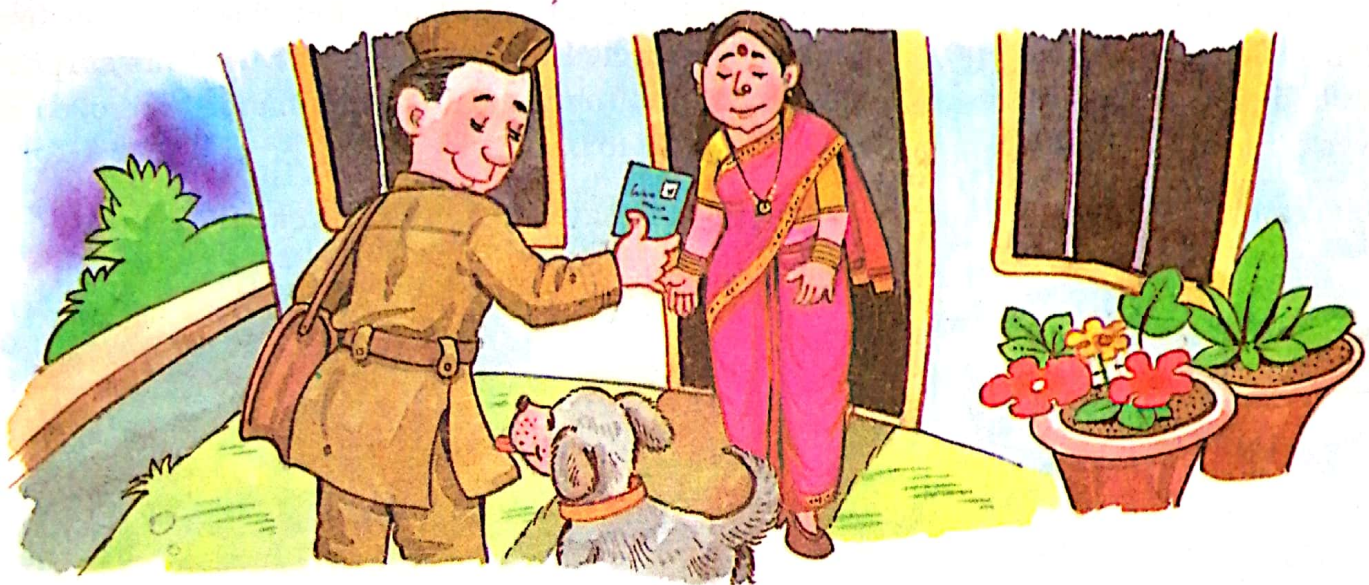
	Figures	Jumbled letters	Unjumbled words
1.	7, 16, 8, 10, 6, 11, 12	o h t i s e l	hostile
2.	8, 2, 8, 15, 2, 10, 1, 14, 4		
3.	7, 15, 13, 12		
4.	3, 6, 7, 1, 8, 4		
5.	1, 1, 2, 6, 6, 11, 3, 11, 9, 10		

2. Have you ever seen a watchdog which behaves exactly opposite to the above given qualities? Would you like a fearful dog or friendly dog? Why?

Now read the story of a watchdog 'Attila' who is anything but dangerous.

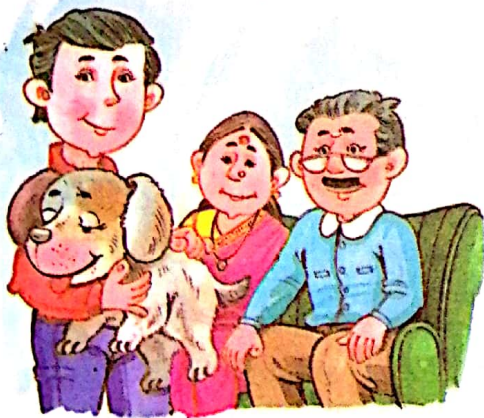
In a mood of **optimism** they named their dog 'Attila'. What they wanted of a dog was strength and fight. The immediate reason for buying him was a series of house-breakings and thefts in the neighbourhood, and our householders decided to put more trust in a dog than in the police. The puppy was only a couple of months old and they were sure in six months he would be something to be feared and respected.

optimism: belief that good things will happen



But as time passed Attila showed a love of humanity and a gentle behaviour that was something unexpected. He stood up twenty inches high and had a large frame—but that was not all. A variety of people entered the gates of the house every day—postmen, bill-collectors, vendors and friends. All of them were warmly received by Attila. They only had to stop and smile, and Attila would melt and become best of friends. The people at home did not like this attitude very much. They thought it rather a shame. 'Somebody comes and steals the flowers in the garden and Attila won't do anything about it,' complained the mother. 'He has better business to do than catch flower thieves,' replied the youngest boy, always the defender of the dog. 'Well, what

is that better business?' 'He doesn't sleep all night, mother. I have often seen him going round the house and watching all night.'



'Oh really! I am quite alarmed to hear that,' said the mother. Please lock him up in a room at night, otherwise he may call in a burglar and show him around.'

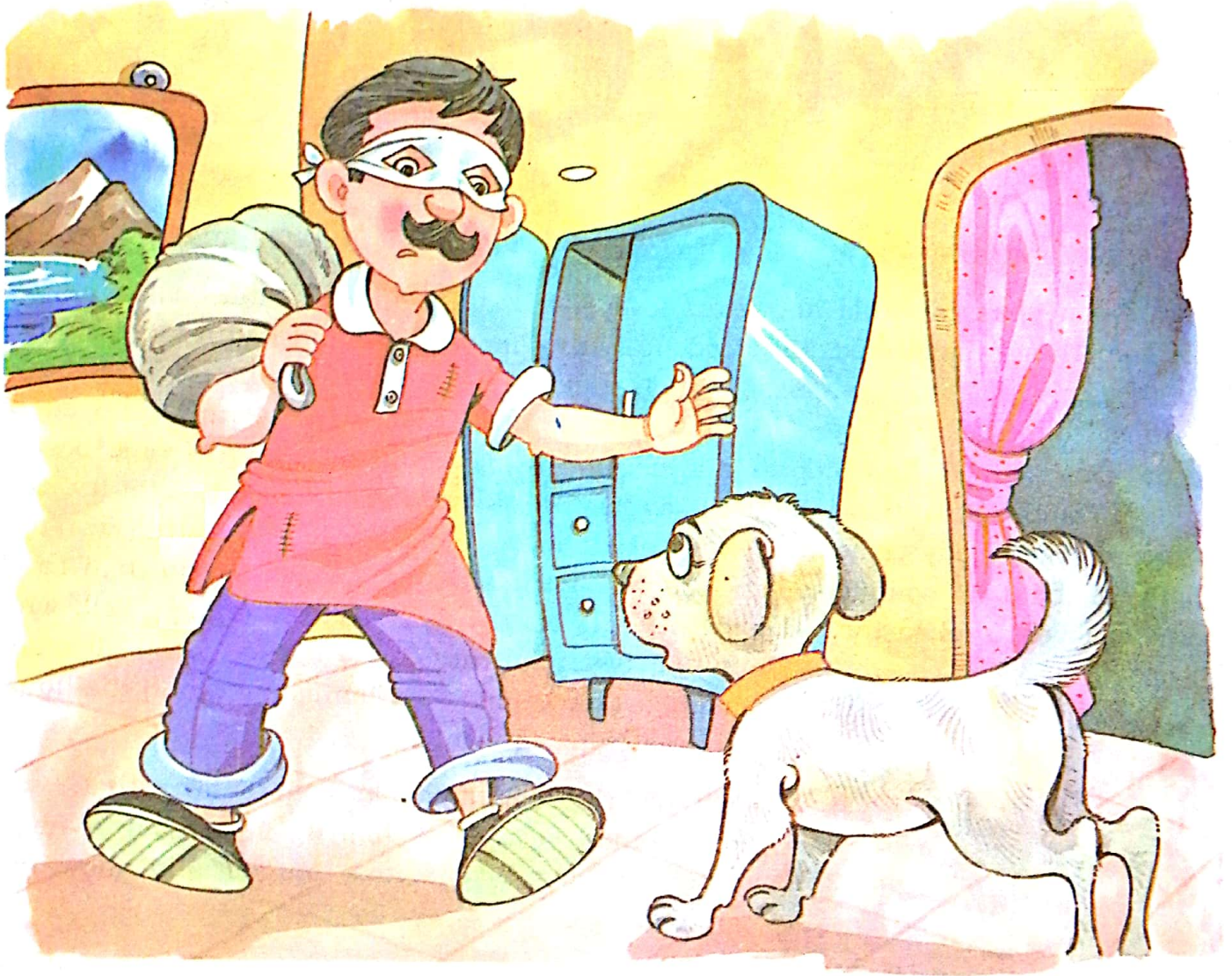
'He is the most noiseless dog I've ever seen in my life,' said the father. The youngest boy at home did not like this, but the dog justified its **criticism** that very night.

Ranga, a thief, lived in a hut three miles from the town. At nights, he visited the town and broke into houses to steal valuables. That night, Ranga broke into Attila's house. He searched all the trunks and almirahs in the house and made a neat bundle of all jewellery and other valuables he could pick up.

criticism: good or bad opinion

He was about to go out when he saw Attila standing in front and looking up at him. Ranga thought that his end had come. He expected the dog to bark. But to his surprise, Attila did not bark. He waited for a moment and then licked Ranga's hands and rolled his eyes. Ranga whispered, 'I hope you aren't going to bark...'

'Don't worry. I am not that sort,' the dog tried to say. The burglar stroked his head.



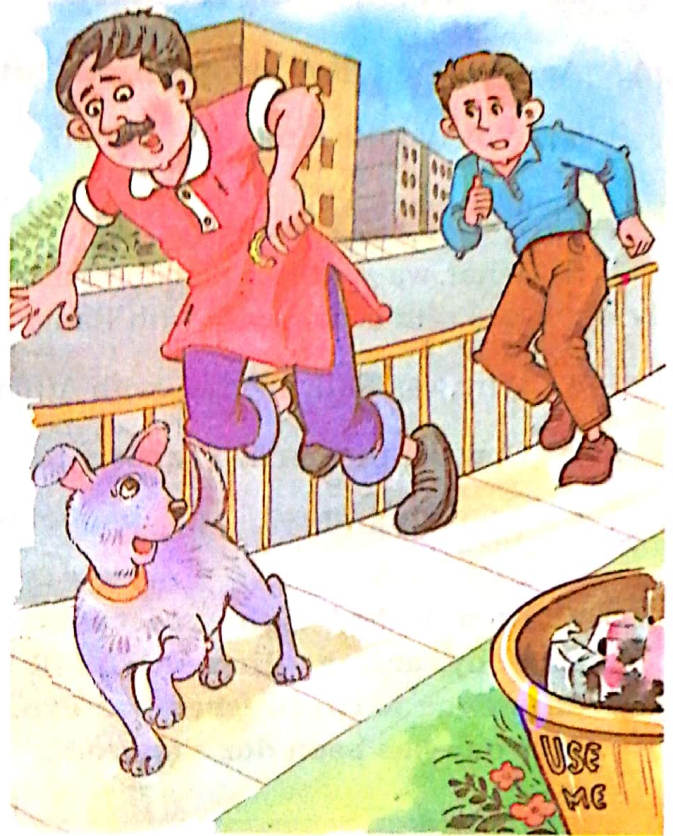
He opened the gate and went out. To his surprise, the dog followed him. Attila's greatest ambition in life was to wander in the streets freely. Now, he had a good opportunity to fulfil his greatest desire. Attila liked Ranga so much that he wouldn't leave him alone even for a moment. This sort of companionship got on Ranga's nerves. He requested the dog to leave him but the dog, unmoved, sat before him with his eyes glued on Ranga.

Meanwhile, in the bungalow Attila's disappearance created a sensation. 'Didn't I tell you,' said the mother, 'to lock him up? Now some burglar has gone away with him. What a shame! We can hardly tell this to anyone.'

'I think we should after all thank that thief for taking away that dog,' said the father. 'He may keep the jewels as a reward for taking him away.'

A week after the disappearance of Attila, the eldest son of the family was **strolling** in the lanes of the city. There, he saw Attila **trotting** behind Ranga on the road.

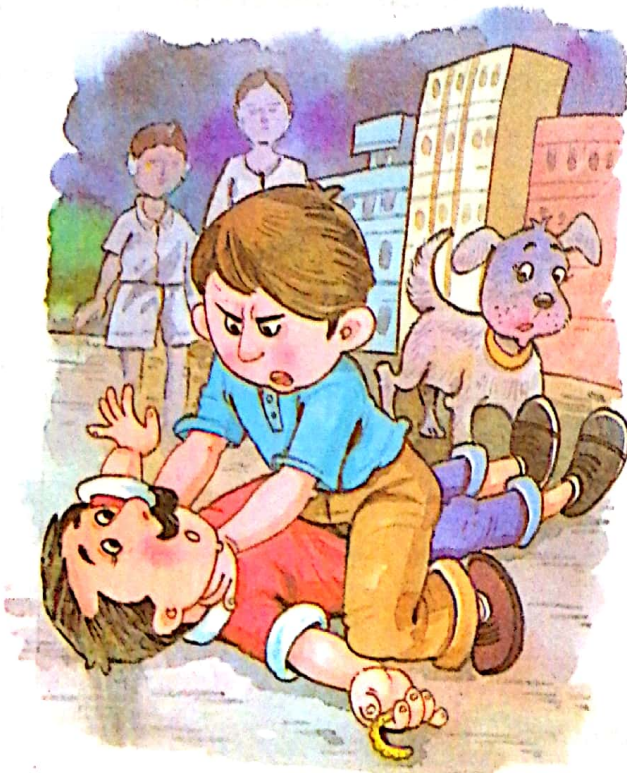
'Hey,' shouted the young man, at which Ranga turned and thought that the man was shouting at him and broke into a run. Attila, who knew that Ranga wanted to desert him, ran after him. He did not want to lose his friend's company at any cost. As a result, he ran so fast that he overtook Ranga and blocked his way. Ranga stumbled over him and fell.



As he rolled on the ground, a piece of jewellery flew from his hand (which he was going to sell). The young man recognised the jewels and pounced on Ranga and sat down on him. A crowd collected and the police appeared on the scene.

Attila was the hero of the day. Even the lady of the house softened towards him. 'Whatever one might say of Attila, one has to admit that he is a very cunning detective. He is too deep for words.'

It was good that Attila had no power of speech. Otherwise, he would have told the truth and lost the position of a hero.



strolling: walking in a slow way

trotting: running fairly fast, taking small quick steps

I Understanding the Story

A. Answer the following questions briefly:

1. Why did the family buy Attila?
2. What was Attila's attitude towards strangers?
3. What was Attila's reaction when he saw Ranga stealing the valuables? How far was it in accordance with Ranga's expectations?
4. Why was Ranga fed up with Attila?
5. How did the family members react to Attila's disappearance?
6. Why did Attila run after Ranga? What did others conclude from his chase?

B. The family had high expectations from Attila but he disappointed them every time by acting differently. Fill in the chart given below highlighting the difference between what was expected of Attila and what he actually did. The first one has been done for you.

Expectations of the family	Attila's behaviour
strong and aggressive	gentle and friendly
catch the flower thief	
scare away strangers	
bark at the thief	
chase and catch the thief, Ranga	

II HOTS

- A. Is Attila really a hero? Give reasons for your answer.
- B. All said and done, Attila was a bad watchdog. Do you agree?

III Life Skills

As the youngest son, who always favoured Attila. What would you do to help the family come out of the shock? (Plan a strategy to bring back Attila and the jewellery stolen).

IV Values

'We should judge people by what they actually are and not by what they help to achieve.'
Discuss with reference to Attila.

V Writing Skills

- A. Imagine yourself to be a newspaper reporter who witnessed Attila blocking the way of Ranga and helping the police catch the thief. Write a newspaper report describing the brave act of Attila.
- B. Imagine yourself to be Attila. Write a letter to one of your friends showing your displeasure over your friend Ranga's imprisonment.

About the Author

R.K. Narayan is an Indian novelist and short story writer best known for his *Malgudi Days* and *Swami and Friends*. His award-winning novel *The Guide* has turned into an acclaimed movie.

Ruskin Bond and R.K. Narayan are two writers you cannot afford to miss. The more you read their stories, the more you will fall in love with them.

