



# How Daddy Decided What He Wanted to Be

by Alexander Raskin

## Pre-reading Task

1. What is your father's profession?
2. What profession would you like to choose?
3. What is the reason for your choice?

**Read the following story and find out how the narrator's Daddy decided what he wanted to be.**

When Daddy was little he was often asked: 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' Daddy always had an answer ready. But each time his answer was different. At first, Daddy wanted to be a nightwatchman. He liked to think that while the whole town was asleep, the nightwatchman was up. And he liked to think that he could make a noise when everyone was sleeping. He was quite certain he wanted to be a nightwatchman when he grew up. But then the ice-cream man came along with his bright green cart. Why, he could push a cart, he could eat all the ice-cream he wanted to!



'I'll eat a stick of ice-cream for everyone I sell!' Daddy thought. 'And I'll treat little children to free ice-cream.'

Little Daddy's parents were very surprised when they heard that their son wanted to be an ice-cream man. It was quite funny for them. But he thought it would be a very tasty way of being grown-up.

Then one day little Daddy saw a man at the railway station. The man kept playing with the cars and **locomotives**. But these were real cars and real locomotives! He'd jump on to the platforms and crawl under the cars, playing a strange and wonderful game.

**locomotives:** railway engines

'Who's that man?' Daddy asked.

'He's the shunter,' he was told.

Now little Daddy knew what he wanted to be! Just think! He would **shunt** railway cars! What in the world could be more interesting? Nothing, obviously. When Daddy said that he would be a shunter, someone asked him:

'But what about the ice-cream?'

This was a problem. Daddy had decided to become a shunter, but he did not want to give up the bright green ice-cream cart. At last, he found a way out.

'I'll be a shunter and an ice-cream man!'

Everyone was very surprised. But little Daddy explained it all quite clearly: 'That's not hard at all. I'll sell ice-cream in the morning. After selling it for a while, I'll go to the station. There I'll shunt some cars and go back to sell some more ice-cream. Then I'll go back to the station and shunt the cars again, and then I'll sell some more ice-cream. It won't be hard, because I'll park my cart near the station and I won't have far to go to the trains.'

Everyone laughed again. Then little Daddy got angry and said:

'If you're going to laugh at me, I'll be a nightwatchman, besides. After all, there's nothing to do at night.'

It was all settled. But then Daddy wanted to be a pilot. Then he wanted to be an actor. But after Grandpa took him to a factory

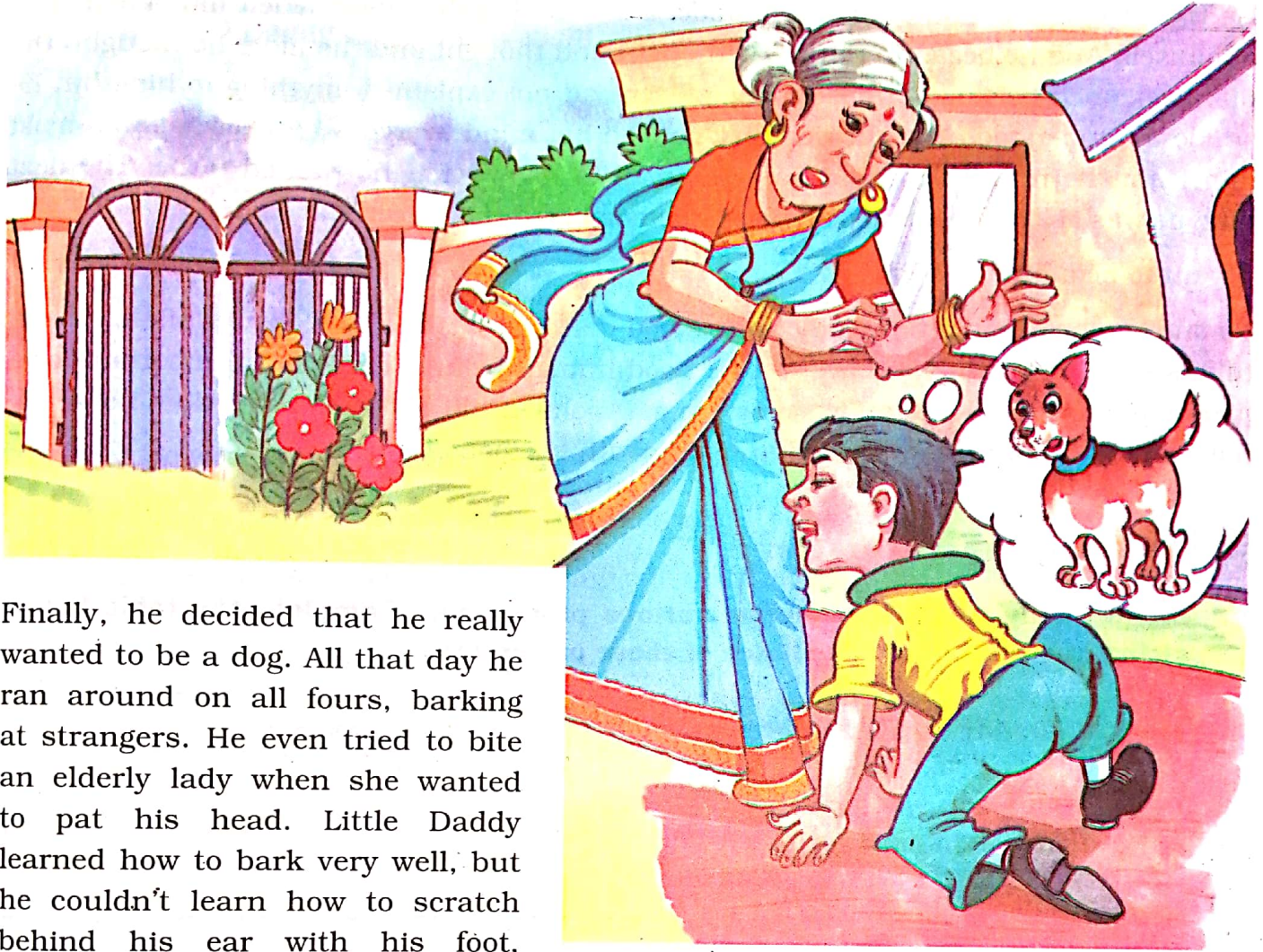
he decided to be a **turner**. Besides, he wanted to be a sailor. Or at least a shepherd and spend his days walking about with the cows, **cracking** his whip loudly.



**shunt:** to move a carriage from one track to another  
**cracking:** making a sharp noise with a whip

**turner:** a person who operates a lathe





Finally, he decided that he really wanted to be a dog. All that day he ran around on all fours, barking at strangers. He even tried to bite an elderly lady when she wanted to pat his head. Little Daddy learned how to bark very well, but he couldn't learn how to scratch behind his ear with his foot, though he tried very hard. He thought that if he went outside and sat next to Rover he'd learn more quickly. That's exactly what he did.

Just then an officer came walking down the street. He stopped and looked at Daddy. He watched him for a while and then he asked:

'What are you doing?'

'I want to be a dog,' little Daddy said.

'Don't you want to remain human?'

'I've been a human being for a long time,' Daddy said.

'What sort of a human being are you, if you can't even be a dog? Is that what a human being is like?'

'Well, what is he like?' Daddy asked.

'You think about it yourself,' the officer said and walked away.

He wasn't laughing and didn't even smile. But little Daddy suddenly felt much ashamed of himself. And he began to think. He thought and thought and the more he thought, the more ashamed he was of himself. The officer had not explained anything to him, but he suddenly understood that he couldn't change his mind everyday. And, what was most important, he realised that he was too small to know what he wanted to be. The next time he was asked the same question he remembered the officer and said:

'I want to be a human being!'

No one laughed. And little Daddy understood that this was the best answer of all. He still thinks so. First of all, you have to be a good human being. This is most important for a pilot and a shepherd and an ice-cream man. And after all, a human being does not really have to know how to scratch behind his ear with his foot.

## I Understanding the Story

A. Little Daddy wanted to pursue various professions. Complete the table below citing one reason for his choice of these professions:

	Daddy wanted to be a/an	Reason
1.	nightwatchman	
2.	ice-cream man	
3.	shunter	
4.	shepherd	
5.	dog	



**B. Answer the following questions briefly:**

1. Why did Daddy want to be a nightwatchman?
2. What was Daddy's plea in favour of being an ice-cream seller? How did his parents react to it?
3. What efforts did Daddy put in to be a dog?
4. Why was Daddy ashamed of himself after meeting the officer?
5. What did Daddy finally decide to be when he grew up?

**C. Little Daddy thought—**

- ☀ if he were a nightwatchman, he would keep awake all night and make a noise.
- ☀ if he were an ice-cream seller, he would eat all the ice-cream he wanted to.
- ☀ if he were a shunter, he would jump on to the platforms and crawl under the cars.

**Think about yourself.**

1. If you were an architect, you would \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. If \_\_\_\_\_ detective, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. If \_\_\_\_\_ cricketer, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. If \_\_\_\_\_ mariner, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. If \_\_\_\_\_ dress designer, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## II HOTS

Why do little children keep changing their mind every now and then?

## III Life Skills

- A. Discuss with your partner what is the right age to decide what you wish to be when you grow up. What are the advantages of making an early decision?
- B. Is it practically possible (or even desirable) to practise two or three professions simultaneously? Discuss.

## IV Values

'First of all, you should be a good human being.' What according to you should be the traits of a good human being?

## V Writing Skills

After meeting the officer, Daddy feels ashamed of himself. He makes a resolution. Imagine yourself to be Daddy and write a dairy entry expressing your feelings.

### About the Author

Alexander Raskin is a famous Russian writer. The story *How Daddy Decided What He Wanted to Be* is taken from a book of the same title. Raskin used to narrate his stories to his daughter Sasha when she was sick. The stories are interesting, realistic and funny. They contain every day scenes from Raskin's childhood.