

## MY CHILDHOOD-



### Extra Questions and Notes

## INTRODUCTION

Prof A.P.J. Abdul Kalam is the former President of India. This chapter has been taken from his autobiography, 'Wings of Fire'. He is one of the world's greatest scientists. In this chapter, he tells u about his childhood. He talks about his parents, his childhood friends and his experiences at school. He grew up in a traditional society. People of different religions lived in that society. But in spite of different religions, people lived in peace and harmony. He was greatly influenced by his father who taught him honesty and self-discipline.

(प्रो.ए.पी.जे. अब्दुल कलाम भारत के पूर्व राष्ट्रपति हैं। यह पाठ उनकी आत्मकथा 'Wings of Fire' से लिया गया है। वे संसार के महानतम वैज्ञानिकों में से एक हैं। इस पाठ में वे, हमें अपने बचपन के बारे में बताते हैं। वे अपने माता-पिता, अपने बचपन के मित्रों और स्कूल के अपने अनुभवों के बारे में बात करते हैं। उनका विकास एक पारंपरिक समाज में हुआ। उस समाज में

अलग-अलग धर्मों के लोग रहते थे । मगर अलग -अलग धर्मों के बावजूद लोग शांति एवं मिलकर रहते थे । वे अपने पिता से बहुत अधिक प्रभावित हुए थे, जिन्होंने उन्हें ईमानदारी और आत्म-अनुशासन सिखाया ।)

## **THEME**

The theme of “My Childhood” is that our life is shaped by our experiences and the people around us. Kalam’s secure childhood, inspiring parents, supportive friends and honest teachers instilled great values in him that gave him ‘wings of fire’.

## **TITLE**

Abdul Kalam talks about his childhood days in this autobiographical account. In particular, he talks about some incidents that left an indelible impression on his

young mind. He describes his family, his house, his childhood experiences and his childhood friends. Therefore the title “My Childhood” is very apt.

## **CHARACTERS**

### Kalam’s parents

Kalam’s parents, Jainulabdeen and Ashiarruna, were tall and good looking. Though they did not have abundant resources, both of them were very generous and fed a lot of outsiders along with their own family members. Practising the values of honesty and self-discipline, they led a simple life which did not have any place for inessential comforts or luxuries. However, Kalam’s father made sure that all basic necessities were provided for. He was very liberal and didn’t believe in thrusting his thoughts on his children. He had a secular approach and contributed fully during the celebration of Hindu festivals like Shri Sita Rama’s Kalyanam ceremony. Kalam’s mother was ideal support to her husband. She had faith in goodness and was a very kindhearted woman.

### Abdul Kalam

A boy of ordinary looks, Abdul Kalam had many sterling qualities right from his childhood. He had immense affection and respect for his parents. He inherited the values of honesty and self-discipline from his father and faith in goodness and deep kindness from his mother. Kalam was an enterprising and a hard-working child. He collected tamarind seeds, when they were in demand, and sold them to earn small yet significant amounts. Very confident of himself, he did every piece of work assigned to him with full dedication. He helped his cousin to catch bundles from the running trains when the train-halt at Rameswaram was suspended during the Second World War. He was also a sensitive child and learnt valuable lessons from his experiences. He learnt early in life that caste-based segregation is a poison that must not be allowed to thrive. Kalam was also progressive and took the decision at the right time to leave his hometown to study further and grow in life.

#### Sivasubramania Iyer

An orthodox Brahmin, Sivasubramania Iyer, was Kalam's science teacher in school. He was a very tolerant and broad-minded person. He was a rebel who wished to bring about a transformation in society and was mentally prepared to confront hindrances during this process. He faced challenges even from his own family when his wife refused to serve food to Kalam who had been invited by Iyer himself. But, without losing faith in his belief that caste and religion do not segregate people, he served the child himself. Thus, he reformed his wife not by force but by setting an example.

Iyer was also a dedicated teacher who established a good rapport with his students. He encouraged and inspired them as he taught and spent long hours with them.

### **Summary:**

In this chapter, Prof. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam tells us about his childhood. He was born in the town of Rameswaram. His father's name was Jainulabdeen and his mother's name was Ashiamma. Kalam's father was neither educated nor rich. Yet he was wise and generous. His mother was also very kind. A number of outsiders daily ate with their family. Abdul Kalam had three brothers and one sister. They lived in their ancestral house in Mosque Street in Rameswaram. It was a large pucca house. His father avoided all luxuries. However, the house had all things of daily necessities.

Abdul Kalam was eight years old when the Second World War broke out. Suddenly, there was a great demand for tamarind seeds. He would collect those seeds and sell them in the market. He got one anna (about six paise) for a day's collection. It was a good amount in those days. His cousin, Samsuddin distributed papers in Rameswaram. He needed a helping hand and employed Abdul Kalam. Kalam still remembers the pride that he felt on earning his own money for the first time.

Abdul Kalam was greatly influenced by his parents. He learnt honesty and self-discipline from his father. He inherited goodness and kindness from his mother. He had three close friends in his childhood. They were Ramanadha Sastry, Aravindan and Sivaprakasan. All these boys belonged to orthodox Hindu Brahmin

families. As children, they never felt any religious differences among themselves. During the annual Shri Sita Rama Kalyanam ceremony. Kalam's family arranged boats for carrying idols of the Lord. At bey time, his father and grandmother told the children stories from the Ramayana.

Once when Abdul Kalam was in the fifth standard, a new teacher came. Abdul Kalam was sitting with his close friend Ramanadha Sastry in the first row. The new teacher could not tolerate a Muslim boy sitting with a Hindu priests son lic asked Abdul Kann to sit on the back bench. Both Abdul Kalam and Ramanadha Sastry became sad Later. Sastry's father rebuked the teacher and he realised his mistake.

Abdul Kalam's science teacher Sivasubramania Ayyyer was a high caste Brahmin. But he did not believe in social and religious barriers. One day, he invited Abdul Kalam to his home for a meal. ayer's wife was very conservative. She refused to serve a Muslim boy in her kitchen. But ayyyer served Abdul Kalam with his own hands and sat down beside him to eat his meal. After meals, his teacher invited him again for dinner the next week. When Kalam went to his teacher's house the next week, his wife took him inside her kitchen and served him food with her own hands.

Then the Second World War was over and India's freedom was imminent. The whole country was filled with a mood of joy. Abdul Kalam asked his father's permission to go and study at Ramanathapuram. His father gladly allowed him to go.

**MESSAGE**

“My Childhood” gives the message that tolerance, acceptance, broadmindedness and brotherhood are essential for an all-round growth. In order to reform social systems that are infected by prejudices of caste and status, one must be ready to confront obstacles without losing one’s cool. Mutual trust and ease of communication help resolve all the hindrances.

### SUMMARY IN HINDI

इस पाठ में, प्रो.ए.पी.जे. अब्दुल कलाम हमें अपने बचपन के बारे में बताते हैं। उनका जन्म रामेश्वरम् शहर में हुआ था। उनके पिता का नाम जैनुलाबद्दीन एवं उनकी माता का नाम आशियम्मा था। कलाम के पिता न तो शिक्षित थे और न ही अमीर। फिर भी वे अक्लमंद एवं दयालु थे। उनकी माता भी बहुत दयालु थी। बाहर के बहुत-से लोग प्रतिदिन उनके परिवार के साथ भोजन करते थे। अब्दुल कलाम के तीन भाई एवं एक बहन थी। वे रामेश्वरम् में मस्जिद वाली गली में अपने पुश्तैनी मकान में रहते थे। यह एक बड़ा पक्का मकान था। उनके पिता हर ऐश्वर्य से बचते थे। लेकिन घर में प्रतिदिन की अनावश्यकता की सब वस्तुएं थीं।

अब्दुल कलाम तब आठ वर्ष के थे जब दूसरा विश्वयुद्ध छिड़ गया। अचानक इमली की गुठलियों की माँग बहुत बहुत बढ़ गई। वे इन बीजों को इकट्ठा करके बाज़ार में बेचते थे। उन्हें दिन भर इकट्ठी की गई गुठलियों के लिए एक आना (लगभग छह पैसे) मिलता था। उन दिनों में यह एक अच्छी राशि थी। उनका चचेरा भाई शमसद्दीन रामेश्वरम् में अखबार बाँटता था। उसे एक सहायक की आवश्यकता थी और उसने अब्दुल कलाम को काम पर लगा लिया। कलाम को अभी तक गर्व की वह भावना याद है जो उन्होंने पहली बार स्वयं पैसा कमाने पर महसूस की थी।

अब्दुल कलाम अपने माता-पिता से बहुत प्रभावित हुए थे। उन्होंने अपने पिता से ईमानदारी एवं आत्म-अनुशासन सीखा। उन्हें अच्छाई एवं दयालुता अपनी माता से विरासत में मिली। बचपन में उनके तीन घनिष्ठ मित्र थे। वे थे-रामानंद शास्त्री, अरविंदन और शिवप्रकाशन। ये सब लड़के रूढिवादी हिंदूब्राह्मण परिवारों से संबंध रखते थे। बच्चों के रूप में उन्होंने कभी आपस में धार्मिक अंतरों को महसूस नहीं किया। वार्षिक श्री सीता राम कल्याणम् समारोह के दौरान, कलाम का परिवार भगवान् की मूर्तियों ले जाने के लिए किशतियों का इंतजाम करता था। सोते समय उनके पिता एवं दादी उन्हें रामायण की कहानियों सुनाया करते थे।

एक बार जब अब्दुल कलाम पांचवीं कक्षा में थे तो कक्षा में एक नया अध्यापक आया। अब्दुल कलाम अपने घनिष्ठ मित्र रामानंद शास्त्री के साथ आगे की लाइन में बैठे हुए थे। नया अध्यापक एक मुसलमान लड़के का हिंदू पुजारी के लड़के के साथ बैठना सहन नहीं कर सका था। उसने अब्दुल कलाम को पिछले बेंच पर बैठने को कहा। अब्दुल कलाम और रामानंद शास्त्री दोनों उदास हो गए। बाद में शास्त्री के पिता ने अध्यापक को डाँटा और उसने अपनी गलती महसूस की।

अब्दुल कलाम का विज्ञान अध्यापक शिवसुब्रामनिय अय्यर एक ऊँची जाति का ब्राह्मण था। मगर वह सामाजिक एवं धार्मिक बंधनों में विश्वास नहीं करता था। एक दिन उसने अब्दुल कलाम को अपने घर भोजन करने के लिए आमंत्रित किया। अय्यर की पत्नी बहुत रूढिवादी थी। उसने एक मुसलमान लड़के को अपनी रसोई में भोजन परोसने से इंकार कर दिया। मगर अय्यर ने अब्दुल कलाम को अपने हाथों से भोजन परोसा और भोजन करने उसके साथ बैठ गया। भोजन के बाद उनके अध्यापक ने उन्हें अगले सप्ताह भोजन के लिए फिर से जाने का निमंत्रण दिया। जब कलाम अगले सप्ताह अपने अध्यापक के घर गए तो उसकी पत्नी उन्हे रसोई में ले गई और उन्हें अपने हाथों से भोजन परोसा।



तब दूसरा विश्व-युद्ध समाप्त हो गया था और भारत की आज़ादी नजदीक आ गई । सारा देश खुशी के वातावरण से भर गया । अब्दुल कलाम ने अपने पिता से रामनाथपुरम् में जाकर पढ़ने की अनुमति माँगी । उनके पिता ने सहर्ष उन्हें जाने की इजाजत दे दी ।

## EXTRACTS

(I)

In fact, I would say mine was a very secure childhood, both materially and emotionally.

(a) In what way was Kalam's childhood 'secure'?

Ans: Kalam was provided with all the necessities in terms of food, medicine and clothes. Apart from it, his parents loved him a lot and took good care of him. They also encouraged him to grow in life.

(b) What does Kalam mean by 'material security'?

Ans: By material security, Kalam means all the necessities of life that one needs while growing up.

(c) What is 'emotional security', according to Kalam?

Ans: 'Emotional security', according to Kalam, is the love and care that one needs to lead a stress-free life.

(d) Who provided Kalam with material and emotional security?

Ans: Kalam's parents provided him with material and emotional security. They gave him a relaxed environment at home and arranged all the necessities of life for him.

**(II)**

I used to collect the seeds and sell them to a provision shop on Mosque Street.

(a) Who is 'I' in this extract? Which seeds did he collect?

Ans: 'I' here stands for Kalam. He collected the seeds of tamarind that were in great demand in the market during the Second World War.

(b) Why were these seeds collected?

Ans: These seeds were collected by Kalam as they could be sold easily and a good amount of money could be earned.

(c) What was done to the collected seeds?

Ans: Kalam would sell off the collected seeds to a provision shop on Mosque Street thus earning the princely sum of one anna.

(d) What light does the extract throw on the speaker?

Ans: The extract shows that the speaker, Kalam, was very enterprising and hard-working. His faith in the dignity of labour prompted him to collect the seeds and sell them off.

(III)

Samsuddin, helped me earn my first wages.

(a) Who was Samsuddin?

Ans: Samsuddin was Abdul Kalam's cousin. He used to distribute newspapers in Rameswaram.

(b) How did Samsuddin help Kalam to earn his first wages?

Ans: The train's halt at Rameswaram station was suspended during the Second World War. Hence the newspaper bundles had to be thrown off the moving trains. Samsuddin appointed Kalam as a helping hand to catch these bundles. Thus Kalam earned his first wages with the help of his cousin.

(c) What light does the extract throw on Kalam's character?

Ans: The extract shows that Kalam was grateful to Samsuddin for having helped him earn his first wages.

(d) How did Kalam feel on earning his first wages?

Ans: Kalam experienced a sense of pride in earning his own money for the first time.

**(IV)**

I felt very sad, and so did Ramanadha Sastry. He looked utterly downcast as I shifted to my seat in the last row.

(a) Who is 'I' in this extract? Why did he feel sad?

Ans: 'I' here is Kalam when he was in the fifth standard at the Rameswaram Elementary School. He felt sad because his new teacher did not let him sit with his Hindu friend in the front row of the class.

(b) Who looked utterly downcast?

Ans: It was Ramanadha Sastry, Kalam's close friend, who looked utterly downcast.

(c) Why did 'he' feel utterly downcast?

Ans: Ramanadha Sastry felt utterly downcast because he was separated from his dear friend Kalam. They always used to sit together and the difference in religion had never affected their friendship.

(d) Why was the seat shifted?

Ans: The new teacher had his own notion of social ranking. He could not tolerate seeing a Muslim boy sitting along with a Hindu Priest's son. So he shifted the seat of Kalam to the last row.

**(V)**

Sivasubramania Iyer was not perturbed, nor did he get angry with his wife, but instead, served me with his own hands and sat down beside me to eat his meal.

(a) What could have perturbed Sivasubramania Iyer?

Ans: His conservative wife's refusal to serve Kalam, a Muslim, could have perturbed Sivasubramania Iyer.

(b) Why did Sivasubramania Iyer not get angry with his wife?

Ans: Sivasubramania Iyer did not get angry with his wife because he knew that if he wished to change any system he would have to encounter problems.

(c) What light does the extract throw on Sivasubramania's character?

Ans: The extract shows that Sivasubramania was a very tolerant and a broadminded person who treated everybody as equal. He exercised tremendous self-control and calm. He didn't get angry with his wife for not serving his guest.

(d) Why do you think he sat with Kalam to eat his meal?

Ans: Sivasubramania wished to make his wife realize that irrespective of their religions all human beings are equal and they all deserve to be treated as we would like to be treated by them.

**(VI)**

“Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.”

(a) To whom do these words originally belong? Who quotes them in this extract?

Ans: These words originally belong to Khalil Gibran. Here they are quoted by Jainulabdeen, Kalam’s father.

(b) Whom are these lines addressed to?

Ans: These lines are addressed to Ashiamma, Kalam’s mother.

(c) In what context have these lines been spoken?

Ans: After finishing his elementary education, when Kalam sought his father’s permission to leave Rameswaram and stay at district headquarters in



Ramanathapuram, his father said these words to Kalam's mother who was a bit reluctant to send her young son away.

(d) What opinion do you form about Kalam's father from these lines?

Ans: These lines show that Kalam's father was a wise man. He didn't believe in obstructing his children's progress. He was of the view that children ought to be allowed to live life according to their own wishes.

## **CHARACTERS**

Kalam's parents

Kalam's parents, Jainulabdeen and Ashiarruna, were tall and good looking. Though they did not have abundant resources, both of them were very generous and fed a lot of outsiders along with their own family members. Practising the values of honesty and self-discipline, they led a simple life which did not have any place for inessential comforts or luxuries. However, Kalam's father made sure that all basic necessities were provided for. He was very liberal and didn't believe in thrusting his thoughts on his children. He had a secular approach and contributed fully during the celebration of Hindu festivals like Shri Sita Rama's Kalyanam ceremony. Kalam's mother was ideal support to her husband. She had faith in goodness and was a very kindhearted woman.

Abdul Kalam

A boy of ordinary looks, Abdul Kalam had many sterling qualities right from his childhood. He had immense affection and respect for his parents. He inherited the values of honesty and self-discipline from his father and faith in goodness and deep kindness from his mother. Kalam was an enterprising and a hard-working child. He collected tamarind seeds, when they were in demand, and sold them to earn small yet significant amounts. Very confident of himself, he did every piece of work assigned to him with full dedication. He helped his cousin to catch bundles from the running trains when the train-halt at Rameswaram was suspended during the Second World War. He was also a sensitive child and learnt valuable lessons from his experiences. He learnt early in life that caste-based segregation is a poison that must not be allowed to thrive. Kalam was also progressive and took the decision at the right time to leave his hometown to study further and grow in life.

### Sivasubramania Iyer

An orthodox Brahmin, Sivasubramania Iyer, was Kalam's science teacher in school. He was a very tolerant and broad-minded person. He was a rebel who wished to bring about a transformation in society and was mentally prepared to confront hindrances during this process. He faced challenges even from his own family when his wife refused to serve food to Kalam who had been invited by Iyer himself. But, without losing faith in his belief that caste and religion do not segregate people, he served the child himself. Thus, he reformed his wife not by force but by setting an example.

Iyer was also a dedicated teacher who established a good rapport with his students. He encouraged and inspired them as he taught and spent long hours with them.

## IMPORTANT PASSAGES

### PASSAGE 1

I was one of many children—a short boy with rather undistinguished looks, born to tall and handsome parents. We lived in our ancestral house, which was built in the middle of the 19th century. It was a fairly large pucca house, made of limestone and brick, on the Mosque Street in Rameswaram. My austere father used to avoid all inessential comforts and luxuries. However, all necessities were provided for, in terms of food, medicine or clothes: In fact, I would say mine was a very secure childhood, both materially and emotionally.

Questions :

(i) What does Abdul Kalam say about his parents?

(ii) Where was Abdul Kalam's house situated?

(iii) When was his ancestral house built?

(iv) Which words show that Abdul Kalam's father was an austere man?

(v) Which word in the passage means 'unnecessary'?

Answers :

(i) He says that his parents were tall and handsome.

(ii) His house was situated on Mosque Street.

(iii) His ancestral house was built in the middle of the 19th century.

(iv) He used to avoid all inessential comforts and luxuries.

(v) Inessential.

**PASSAGE 2**

The Second World War broke out in 1939 when I was eight years old. For reasons I have never been able to understand, a sudden demand for tamarind seeds erupted in the market. I used to collect the seeds and sell them to a provision shop on Mosque Street. A day's collection would fetch me the princely sum of one anna. My brother-in-law Jallaluddin would tell me stories about the War which I would later attempt to trace in the headlines in Dinamani. Our area, being isolated, was completely unaffected by the war. But soon India was forced to join the Allied Forces and something like a state of emergency was declared.

Questions :

(i) When did the Second World War break out?

(ii) How old was Abdul Kalam when the Second World War broke out?

(iii) What thing rose. in sudden demand after the Second World War broke out?

(iv) When was a state of emergency declared?

(v) Find words in the passage which mean the same as :

(a) exploded (b) bring.

Answers :

(i) The Second World War broke out in 1939.

(ii) He was eight years old.

(iii) It was the demand for tamarind seeds.

(iv) A state of emergency was declared when India was forced to join the Allied Forces.

(v) (a) erupted (h) fetch.

### PASSAGE 3

Every child is born, with some inherited characteristics, into a specific socio-economic and emotional environment, and trained in certain ways by figures of authority. I inherited honesty and self-discipline from my father; from my mother, I inherited faith in goodness and deep kindness and so did my three brothers and sister. I had three close friends in my childhood—Ramanadha Sastry, Aravindan and Sivaprakasan. All these boys were from orthodox Hindu Brahmin families. As

children, none of us ever felt any difference amongst ourselves because of our religious differences and upbringing.

Questions :

(i) Who is the writer of this passage?

(ii) What did the writer inherit from his father?

(iii) What did he inherit from his mother?

(iv) Who were the three friends of the writer?

(v) Find a word in the passage which means 'breeding'.

Answers :

(i) Sh. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam is the writer of this passage.

(ii) He inherited honesty and self-discipline from his father.

(iii) He inherited faith in goodness and kindness from his mother.

(iv) His three friends were: Ramanadha Sastry, Aravindan and Sivaprakasan.

(v) Upbringing.

#### PASSAGE 4

One day when I was in the fifth standard at Rameswaram Elementary School, a new teacher came to our class. I used to wear a cap which marked me as a Muslim, and I always sat in the front row next to Ramanandha Sastry, who wore a sacred thread. The new teacher could not stomach a Hindu priest's son sitting with a Muslim boy. In accordance with our social ranking as the new teacher saw it, I was asked to go and sit on the back bench. I felt very sad, and so did Ramanadha Sastry. He looked utterly downcast as I shifted to my seat in the last row. The image of him weeping when I shifted to the last row left a lasting impression on me.

Questions :



(i) How did the teachers know that the writer was a Muslim?

(ii) In which class was the writer studying at that time?

(iii) What did the teacher ask the writer to do?

(iv) What was its effect on Ramanadha Sastry?

(v) Find words from the passage which mean the same as :

(a) completely (b) line.

Answers :

(i) The writer was wearing a Muslim cap.

(ii) At that time he was studying in the fifth standard.

(iii) The teacher asked him to go to the last bench.

(iv) Ramanadha Sastry was disappointed and started weeping.

(v) (a) utterly (b) row.

#### PASSAGE 5

One day, he invited me to his home for a meal. His wife was horrified at the idea of a Muslim boy being invited iodine in her ritually pure kitchen. She refused to serve me in her kitchen. Sivasubramania Iyer was not perturbed, nor did he get angry with his wife, but instead, served me with his own hands and sat down beside me to eat his meal. His wife watched us from behind the kitchen door. I wondered whether she had observed any difference in the way I ate rice, drank water or cleaned the floor after the meal. When I was leaving his house, Sivasubramania Iyer invited me to join him from dinner again the next weekend.

Questions :

(i) Whose wife is referred to here?

(ii) Why was she horrified?

(iii) What did Sivasubramania Iyer do?

(iv) From where did Iyer's wife watch them?

(v) Find a word from the passage which means 'disturbed'.

Answers :

(i) The wife of Kalam's science teacher is referred to here.

(ii) She was horrified at the idea of a Muslim boy eating in her kitchen.

(iii) He served Abdul Kalam with his own hands.

(iv) She watched from behind the kitchen door.

(v) Perturbed.

## PASSAGE 6

The first casualty came in the form of the suspension of the train halt at Rameswaram station. The newspapers now had to be bundled and thrown out from the moving train on the Rameswaram Road between Rameswaram and Dhanuskodi. That forced my cousin Samsuddin, who distributed newspapers in Rameswaram, to look for a helping hand to catch the bundles and, as if naturally, I filled the slot. Samsuddin helped me earn my first wages. Half a century later, I can still feel the surge of pride in earning my own money for the first time.

Questions :

(i) What was the first casualty of war?

(ii) Who was Samsuddin?

(iii) What forced Samsuddin?

(iv) Why did the writer feel pride?

(v) Find a word from the passage which means 'stopping temporarily'.

### PASSAGE 7

On the whole, the small society of Rameswaram was very rigid in terms of the segregation of different social groups. However, my science teacher Sivasubramania Iyer, though an orthodox Brahmin with a from conservative wife, was something of a rebel. He did his best to break social barriers so that people from varying backgrounds could mingle easily. He used to spend hours with me and would say, "Kalam, I want you to develop so that you are on par with the highly educated people of the big cities."

Questions :

(i) What does the writer say about the society of Rameswaram?

(ii) What was the name of his science teacher?

(iii) In what way was his science teacher a rebel?

(iv) How did his science teacher want Kalam to develop in life?

(v) Find a word from the passage which means 'revolutionary'.

Go to the NCERT Solution “No Men Are Foreign”

Very Short Answer Type Important Questions

1. Where was Abdul Kalam born?

Ans. He was born in the town of Rameswaram.

2. Write the names of Abdul Kalam’s parents.

Ans. The name of his father was Jainulabdeen and his mother’s name was Ashiamma.

3. Where was Abdul Kalam’s house located in Rameswaram?

Ans. His house was located in the Mosque street in Rameswaram.

4. How old was Abdul Kalam when the Second World War broke out?

Ans. At that time he was just eight years old.

5. Name three close friends of Abdul Kalam.

Ans. Three close friends of Abdul Kalam were-Ramanadha Sastry, Aravindan and Sivaprakasan.

6. What could the new teacher not tolerate about Abdul Kalam?

Ans. The new teacher could not tolerate a Muslim boy sitting with a Hindu priest's son.

7. What was the name of Abdul Kalam's science teacher?

Ans. The name of Abdul Kalam's science teacher was Sivasubramania Iyer.

8. What did the science teacher's wife refuse?

Ans. The science teacher's wife refused to serve food to a Muslim boy in her kitchen.

9. When did the Second World War break out?

Ans. The Second World War broke out in 1939.

10. What did the new teacher in 5th standard ask Abdul Kalam to do?

Ans. The new teacher asked him to sit on the last bench.

Short Answer Type Questions (30 to 40 words)

Q.1. What kind of poison was the young teacher spreading in the class?

Ans. He did not like that a Muslim boy was sitting with a Hindu Brahmin boy. Thus the young teacher was spreading the poison of social inequality and communalism. He was poisoning the minds of children.



Q.2. What was the reaction of Abdul Kalam's father when he wanted to leave home? What was his mother's reaction

?

Ans. Abdul Kalam's father gave him his permission gladly. But his mother was a little worried. At this, his father told her that a child is like a seagull. One day, he has to learn to fly alone like the seagull. This cleared the doubts of his mother.

Q.3. What was Sivasubramania Iyer's wife reaction when she came to know that a Muslim boy was invited to have a meal with them by her husband?

Ans. Sivasubramania Iyer's wife was horrified to know this. She refused to serve food to a Muslim boy in her ritually pure kitchen. But the teacher was not perturbed at this. He served Kalam with his

Q.4. What made Sivasubramania Iyer's wife change his mind?

Ans. Sivasubramania Iyer's wife watched Kalam having his meal from behind the kitchen door. She did not find any difference in the way he took his meal. This made her change her mind. On his next visit to the teacher's house, she took Kalam inside the kitchen. She served him food with her own hands.

Q.5. How did Lakshmana Sastry reform the young teacher?

Ans. Lakshmana Sastry was Ramanadha Sastry's father. When he came to know that the young teacher had shifted Kahan to the last row he got very angry. He summoned the teacher. He told the teacher that he should not spread the poison of social inequality and communal intolerance in the minds of innocent children. He asked him either to apologize or quit school. Thus the teacher regretted and he was reformed.

Q6. What kind of a person was Kalam's father?

Ans: Tall and handsome, Kalam's father – Jainulabdeen, did not have much of formal education. He didn't even have much wealth. However, he was a very practical man with a vast store of wisdom. He was generous and never obstructed the progressive ways of his children. As a responsible head of the family, he provided both material and emotional security.

Q7. How was Kalam's mother ideal support to her husband?

Ans: Kalam's mother, Ashiamma, was ideal support to her husband. She was a picture of goodness and deep kindness. She was tall, good looking and very

attached to her children. Like her husband, she was very generous and fed a number of outsiders daily. Kalam inherited the values of kindness and generosity from her.

Q8. What did Kalam look like as a young child?

Ans: Kalam did not take after his tall and handsome parents. He was a rather short boy with average looks. With ordinary looks unlike that of his parents who had quite striking features, his appearance was undistinguished.

Q9. Where was Abdul Kalam's house situated?

(Textual)

Ans: Abdul Kalam's house was situated on Mosque Street in Rameswaram. This was his ancestral house and had been built in the middle of the nineteenth century. It was a fairly large, pucca house made of limestone and brick.

Q10. Why does Kalam say he had a secure childhood, both materially and emotionally?

Ans: Though not very well off, Kalam's father made sure that he provided his family with all the necessities in terms of food, medicine and clothes. Apart from this, Kalam got all the love and parental guidance from them during his childhood. That is why he says that he had a very secure childhood both materially and emotionally.

Q11. How did Abdul Kalam earn his first wages?

(Textual)

Ans: Abdul Kalam earned his first wages by catching bundles of newspapers from moving trains for his cousin Shamsuddin who used to distribute newspapers in Rameswaram. During the Second World War, the train halt at Rameswaram station was suspended, so bundles of newspapers were thrown off moving trains and had to be collected.

Q12. Why did the demand for tamarind seeds increase suddenly? How did it help Kalam?

Ans: When the Second World War broke out in 1939, there was a sudden demand for tamarind seeds in the market. Kalam collected these seeds and sold them to earn an anna which was a big amount in those days for a small boy like him.

Q 13. Right from his childhood Kalam was very enterprising. Discuss.

Ans: Kalam was an enterprising child who used to make full use of the opportunities that came his way. During the war, when there occurred a great demand for tamarind seeds in the market, he used to collect these seeds and sell them off to a provision shop. Thus, he was able to earn some money for himself. The incident shows that he was very enterprising.

Q14. What do you think Dinamani is the name of? Give a reason for your answer.  
(Textual)

Ans: Dinamani seems to be the name of a newspaper. Kalam mentions that he gathered information about the world war from his brother-in-law Jallaluddin. Later he tried to trace these stories in the headlines of Dinamani. Headlines are titles of news items, so Dinamani must be a newspaper.

Q15. What characteristics does Kalam say he inherited from his parents?  
(Textual)

Ans: Kalam inherited honesty and self-discipline from his father and faith in goodness and deep kindness from his mother. His socio-economic and emotional environment trained him as well as his three brothers and sister to acquire these characteristics.

Q16. Who were Kalam's school friends? What did they become later?  
(Textual)

Ans: Kalam's three close childhood friends were Ramanad Sastry, Aravindan and Sivaprakasan. All three of them settled well in life. Ramanadha inherited priesthood of Rameswaram temple from his father, Aravindan took up the business of arranging transport for visiting pilgrims and Sivaprakasan became a catering contractor for the Southern Railways.

Q17. What did Kalam's family do during the annual Shri Sita Rama Kalyanam ceremony?

Ans: During the annual Shri Sita Rama Kalyanam ceremony, Kalam's family used to arrange boats with a special platform for carrying idols of the Lord from the temple to the marriage site, situated in the middle of the pond called Rama Tirtha, which was near Kalam's house.

Q18. Who asked Kalam to sit on the back bench of his class? Why?

Ans: A new teacher at the Rameswaram Elementary School could not tolerate that Kalam, a Muslim, sat with Ramanadha Sastry, a sacred thread wearing Hindu. This was contrary to the teacher's notion of social ranking. So, he ordered Kalam to sit on the back bench.

Q19. What happened when the new teacher at the Rameswaram Elementary School ordered Kalam to go to the last row of the class?

Or

'I felt very sad and so did Ramanadha Sastry'. What made Kalam and his friend feel sad?

Ans: Kalam and his friend Ramanadha Sastry became very sad when the new teacher ordered Kalam to go and sit on the back bench of the class. Ramanadha was absolutely crestfallen. While Kalam shifted his seat to the last row, there were tears in his eyes. Kalam could never forget these tears all his life.

Q20. What did Ramanadha Sastry's father do when his son told him that the new teacher had sent Kalam to the last seat? Or

Why did Lakshmana Sastry summon the new school teacher?

Ans: Ratnanadha's father, Lakshmana Sastry was deeply distressed to learn that the new school teacher had shifted Kalam to the last bench. He did not approve of this disparity. So he summoned the teacher and told him not to spread the poison of social inequality and communal intolerance in young minds. He bluntly told him to either apologise or leave the school. The teacher not only regretted his action but also reformed himself.

Q21. Who was Sivasubramania Iyer? Or

In what sense was Sivasubramania Iyer 'something of a rebel'?

Ans: Sivasubramania Iyer was Kalam's science teacher. Though an orthodox Brahmin, he was something of a rebel. A man of liberal views, he wanted to change the society that was rigid in terms of segregation of different social groups. He knew that if one wished to change the system, one was bound to confront many problems.

Q22. Why did Sivasubramania's wife refuse to serve food to Kalam in her kitchen?

Ans: Sivasubramania Iyer's wife was an orthodox and conservative Brahmin. She had peculiar notions about the sanctity of her kitchen which she feared would be defiled if she served meals there to someone who belonged to a different faith. So, she refused to serve food to a Muslim boy in her kitchen.

Q23. How did Sivasubramania react to his wife's behaviour when she refused to serve Kalam (a Muslim boy) in her kitchen?

Ans: Sivasubramania was mentally prepared for such behaviour from his conservative wife. So, without getting angry or perturbed, he served Kalam with his own hands and sat beside him to eat his meal.

Q 24. Why did Sivasubramania invite Kalam for dinner again the next weekend?



Ans: Kalam was visibly upset by Sivasubramania Iyer's wife's refusal to serve him food in her kitchen. This must have pained Iyer. So, in order to make amends and to ensure that Kalam overcame his disappointment and hurt, Sivasubramania Iyer invited Kalam to another dinner the following weekend. During the intervening time, Iyer must have wanted to speak with his wife on the issue. Iyer wanted Kalam to brace up for such obstacles if he wanted to change the system.

Q25. While talking of segregation of the different social groups which social group does Kalam talk about? Were these groups easily identifiable?

(Textual)

Ans: Kalam talks about Muslims when mentioning the segregation of different social groups. These groups were easily identifiable by the distinct cap that they wore just as the Brahmins wore the sacred thread. This cap marked the group as a Muslim.

Q26. What thoughts crossed Kalam's mind when he was having food at Sivasubramania's house for the first time?

Ans: Kalam noticed that Sivasubramania's conservative wife was watching him from behind the kitchen door while he was having food. At this time he wondered whether she observed any difference in the way a Muslim ate rice, drank water or cleaned the floor after the meal.

Q27. What did the Indians feel when the nation's Independence was in full sight?

Ans: Indians were filled with unprecedented optimism when India's independence was in full sight at the end of the Second World War. Gandhiji's declaration that Indians would build their own India made everyone hopeful.

Q28. Why did Abdul Kalam want to leave Rameswaram?  
(Textual)

Ans: Kalam wanted to leave Rameswaram because this place did not offer any options for higher education. It just had an elementary school. An ambitious Kalam who was keen to study further wished to go to the district headquarters at Ramanathapuram that had many educational facilities.

Q29. Why did Kalam's father allow Kalam to leave Rameswaram and go to Ramanathapuram?

Ans: Though not educated himself, Kalam's father understood the significance of education. He did not want to hinder the growth of his children in any way. Since Rameswaram had nothing more than an elementary school, his father willingly allowed Kalam to go to Ramanathapuram to pursue higher studies.

Q30. What did Kalam's father say when Kalam sought his permission to leave Rameswaram and go to Ramanathapuram?

(Textual)

Ans: Without expressing his opinion in words,. Kalam's father told him that he trusted his son's decision to grow. Just like the birds leave their nests to fly across the sun, so must the children be allowed to leave home and gain knowledge in the big world outside.

Q31. What did Kalam's father mean to say when he quoted Khalil Gibran? Why do you think he spoke these words?

(Textual)

Ans: Kalam's father meant that every human being must be given the opportunity to build his life as per his wishes and parents should not hinder this effort. He spoke these words to convince Kalam's mother that her son's decision to leave home was right. She should allow him happily to shape his life according to his own ideas.

Go to the NCERT Solution "Packing"

Important Long/ Detailed Answer Type Questions- to be answered in about 100 - 150 words each

## ESSAY TYPE QUESTIONS

Q.1. How did Abdul Kalam earn his 'first wages'? How did he feel at that time?

Ans. Abdul Kalam's cousin, Samsuddin, used to distribute newspapers in Rameswaram. The Second World War broke out in 1939. Now the train's halt at Rameswaram was suspended. The bundles of newspapers were thrown out from the moving train on the Rameswaram road between Rameswaram and Dhanuskodi. Now Samsuddin needed a helping hand to catch the bundles which were thrown out of the moving train. He employed Abdul Kalam to do this job. Thus Abdul Kalam earned his first wages. This was a great moment for him. He felt a great wave of joy and pride in earning his own money for the first time. Even after tiny years Abdul Kalam clearly remembers that day

Q.2. "Once you decide to change the system, such problems have to be confronted." What 'system' is this sentence referring to? What are 'such problems'? Does the text suggest that the problems have been tackled?

Ans. The above sentence refers to religious differences between people. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam belonged to Rameswaram. At that time, the small society of that town was rigid in terms of the segregation of different social groups. This system was prevalent in the whole of the country. The high caste people did not like to eat or drink with the people of low castes. The new teacher in Abdul Kalam's class could not tolerate that a Muslim boy should sit with the son of a Hindu priest. He sent Abdul Kalam to the back bench. But some people have tried to fight these problems. Abdul Kalam's teacher, Sivasubramania Iyer's served Abdul Kalam with his own hands. He sat down beside him to eat. Later, his wife

realised her mistake. The next week, she served Abdul Kalam in her kitchen. Yet these problems are deep-rooted in India. These have not been tackled even now.

Q.3. What does Abdul Kalam say about his parents in the lesson 'My Childhood'?

Ans. Abdul Kalam is full of praise for his parents. He was born into a middle-class family of Rameswaram. His father was Jainulabdeen. He was neither educated nor rich. Yet he had plenty of natural wisdom. He was also very generous. Abdul Kalam's mother was Ashiarnma. She was a kind and helpful lady. Kalam's parents were generous. A number of outsiders daily ate with the family. Their number was more than all the members of Kalam's family put together. Abdul Kalam was greatly influenced by his parents. His father taught him the value of self-discipline and honesty. From his mother, he inherited faith in goodness and deep kindness. His parents were not rich but they provided their children all the basic necessities of life like food, clothes and medicines. Thus, Abdul Kalam's parents greatly influenced him.

Q.4 How does Abdul Kalam describe his three close friends?

Ans. Abdul Kalam says that in his childhood, he had three close friends. Their names were Ramanadha Sastry, Aravindan and Sivaprakasan. All these boys were from orthodox Hindu Brahmin families. Ramanadha Sastri was the son of Pakshi Lakshmana Sastry. He was the high priest of the Rameswaram temple. When Ramanadha grew up, he took over the priesthood of the temple from his father. Aravindan went into the business of arranging transport for the pilgrims who visited Rameswaram. The third friend, Sivaprakasan became a catering contractor

for the Southern Railways. Abdul Kalam says that although they were from different regions, none of them ever felt any difference among themselves because of different religious backgrounds. Their parents were also liberal and generous. Ramanathan's father rebuked the new teacher for spreading the poison of social inequality in the minds of innocent children.

Q.5. In this chapter, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam describes two of his teachers. What is the difference in the outlooks of these two teachers?

Ans. Abdul Kalam describes two teachers of his school days. When he was in the fifth standard, a new teacher came to the class. Abdul Kalam was sitting in the front row, next to his close friend Ramanadha Sastry. The teacher could not tolerate that a Muslim boy should sit with a Brahmin boy. He sent Abdul Kalam to the back bench. It made both Abdul Kalam and Ramanadha very sad. Later, however, the teacher realised his mistake.

The attitude of Abdul Kalam's science teacher was quite different. His name was Sivasubramania Iyer. He did not believe in social barriers and tried his best to break them. One day he invited Abdul Kalam home for a meal. His wife was a traditional lady. She refused to serve a Muslim boy into her kitchen. But Iyer served Abdul Kalam with his own hands. Then he sat down beside him to eat his meal. Thus we find that there is a lot of difference in the outlooks of the two teachers.

Q 6. Describe the incident at Kalam's school days when a new teacher shifted him to the back row. What followed this incident?

Or

What mistake did the new teacher in Kalam's elementary school commit one day?  
How was he reformed?

Ans: Abdul Kalam was in the fifth standard at the Rameswaram Elementary School when a new teacher came to their class. Kalam used to wear a cap which marked him as a Muslim. He always sat in the front row next to his Brahmin friend, Ramanadha Sastry. This new teacher could not tolerate a Muslim boy sitting with the son of a Hindu priest. So, he asked Kalam to go and sit on the back bench which, according to this new teacher, was in accordance with the social ranking. This incident made both the boys very sad and brought tears to Ramanadha's eyes. They reported this incident to their respective parents. Lakshmana Sastry, Ramanathan's father, sent for the teacher and reprimanded him for spreading the poison of social inequality and communal intolerance in the minds of innocent children. He asked him to either apologise or quit school. The teacher not only regretted his unbecoming behaviour but also reformed himself.

Q7. Kalam says, "On the whole, the small society of Rameswaram was very rigid in terms of segregations of different social groups". Were they aware of their differences only or did they also naturally share friendships and experiences?  
(Textual)

Ans: Although the small society of Rameswaram was very rigid in terms of segregations of different social groups still Kalam and his family were very broadminded as far as religious tolerance was concerned. His mother and grandmother used to tell him bedtime stories both from the life of the Prophet

and Ramayana. Kalam had three close friends and all of them were Hindu orthodox Brahmins. Besides, his family used to arrange boats with a special platform during the annual Shri Sita Rama Kalyanam ceremony. The platform was used to carry idols of the Lord from the temple to the marriage site, Ram Tiratha, which was in the middle of a pond close to Kalam's house. Hence, Kalam and his family did not let the difference in religious faith affect their behaviour. They were as much at ease with no- Muslims as with those from their own religion.

Q 8. The author speaks both of people who were very aware of the differences among them and those who tried to bridge these differences. Which incidents help us to identify such people in the text?

(Textual)

Ans: The incident when Kalam's new teacher shifted him from the first row, where he used to sit with the Hindu priest's so Ramanadha Sastry, to the last row helps to identify a person who was intolerant to differences.

The incident when the wife of Sivasubramania Iyer, Kalam's science teacher, refused to serve food to Kalam, a Muslim boy, in her ritually pure kitchen, helps to identify yet another person who was intolerant to differences.

However, the incident when Lakshmana Sastry, an orthodox Brahmin priest, reprimanded the new teacher for spreading the poison of social inequality and communal intolerance helps to identify a person who tried to bridge the differences. Also, when Sivasubramania Iyer, an orthodox Brahmin, set an example for his conservative wife by not only serving food to Kalam but also sitting beside him to have his meal helps to identify another person who tried to bridge differences.



Q9. Who was Sivasubramania Iyer? What sort of relationship did Kahn' share with him?

Ans: Sivasubramania Iyer was Kalam's science teacher. He wanted to break social barriers so that people of different background could live in harmony with each other. While trying to change the system, he was mentally prepared to confront many Problems. He was very fond of Kalam and used to guide and encourage to be on a par with the highly educated people of big cities.

Once he invited Kalam to his place to share food with him. When his conservative wife refused to serve food to Kalam, a Muslim boy in her ritually pure kitchen, Iyer not only served Kalam himself but also sat with him to have his meal. He again invited Kalam for dinner the following weekend. However, this time his wife served Kalam as she had been reformed by her husband's example. Thus, Sivasubramania Iyer and Kalam shared a strong bond of love which was nurtured by the teacher's progressive vision and his concern for his student.

Q10. Teachers can either 'make' or 'break' their students' lives. Cite two incidents from "My Childhood" to prove the truth of this statement.

Ans: Abdul Kalam's life was influenced in a major way by some experiences that he had during his school days. They were instrumental in shaping his character and later on his career.

Once, when he was in the fifth standard, a new teacher came to his class. He did not like Kalam, a Muslim boy, sitting next to Ramanadha Sastry, a Brahmin. So, he shifted Kalam to the back seat simply because it was in accordance with the social ranking of that time. This was a heart-breaking experience for Kalam. This poison of social inequality and communal intolerance could have demoralized the young Kalam if his friend's father, Lakshmana Sastry had not intervened. He ensured that the teacher not only regretted his action but also reformed himself.

Another experience that made Kalam a stronger and wiser person was when his science teacher Sivasubramania Iyer invited him to his house for a meal. During the meal Iyer noticed that Kalam was upset at his wife's attitude, so he invited Kalam to another dinner the following weekend saying, "Once you decide to change the system, such problems have to be confronted".

These two experiences could have had disastrous consequences for Kalam in particular and Rameswaram society in general, had they not been dealt with Farsight and wisdom by kalam's teachers. Thus, from these incidents, it is clear that teachers can 'make' or 'break' their students' lives.

Q11. Suppose you are the new teacher who had sent Kalam to the last row in the class. You realise your mistake after the Hindu priest Lakshmana Sastry

reprimanded you. Write a diary entry in about 150 words expressing your regret at your behaviour.

Ans:(Day and Date)  
(Time)

Dear Diary

My first day at Rameswaram Elementary School was very eventful. Although I was supposed to teach I actually learnt a valuable lesson myself.

On entering the fifth standard, I noticed a boy in a Muslim cap sitting in the front row next to a Brahmin boy wearing the sacred thread. I coup I do not tolerate this and I asked the Muslim boy, whose name was Abdul Kalam, to go to the last row. The boy and his friend both looked sad but my order was followed.

In the evening, Lakshmana Sastry, the high priest of the Rameswaram temple and the Brahmin boy's father sent for me. He reprimanded me for poisoning young and innocent minds about the differences based on class and community. He asked me to either apologise or to quit the school and the island. I was shaken as the warning had come from none other than the high priest himself.

I was totally ashamed of my mean behaviour. I regretted having victimized an innocent boy and belittling his religion. I offered my sincere regret and resolved never to let any such prejudice to influence my decisions. I am grateful to Lakshmana Sastry for showing me the right path.

Krishnan Iyenger

### QUICK REVIEW

1. Abdul Kalam was born at—

(A) Dhanuskodi

(B) Rameswaram

(C) New Delhi

(D) none of the above

Ans. (B) Rameswaram

2. The name of the book written by Abdul Kalam is—

(A) Wings of Fire

(B) My Childhood

(C) My Autobiography

(D) Wings of Science

Ans. (A) Wings of Fire

3. How old was Abdul Kalam when the Second World War broke out in 1939.

(A) eight years

(B) nine years

(C) ten years

(D) eleven years

Ans. (A) eight years

4. Who of the following was not Abdul Kalam's close friends At school?

(A) Ramanadha Sastry. (B) Aravindan

(C) Sivaprakasan (D) Samsuddin

Ans. (D) Samsuddin

5The first that earned money for Abdul Kalam was

(A) collecting and selling tamarind seeds      (B) collecting and selling newspapers

(C) Both (A) and (B)      (D) none of the above

Ans. (A) collecting and selling tamarind seeds

6. Who was Abdul Kalam sitting with when the new teacher asked him to sit on the last bench?

(A) Aravindan      (B) Ramanadha Sastry

(C) Sivaprakasan      (D) none of the above

Ans. (B) Ramanadha Sastry

7. Which symbol represented Abdul Kalam as a Muslim boy?

(A) 'he spoke Urdu

(B) he wore black clothes

(C) he wore a cap

(D) all of the above

Ans. (C) he wore a cap

8. What is Dinamani the name of

(A) a newspaper

(B) a book

(C) a train

(D) a friend of Abdul Kalam

Ans. (A) a newspaper

9. The name of Abdul Kalam's father was

(A) Jainulabdeen

(B) Samsuddin

(C) Rahimddin

(D) None of the above

Ans. (A) Jainulabdeen

10. Which religion did Abdul Kalam belong to?

(A) Muslim

(B) Hindu

(C) Christian

(D) Jewish

Ans. (A) Muslim

11. Abdul Kalam was born in a

(A) rich family

(B) poor family

(C) middle-class family

(D) political family



Ans. (C) middle-class family

12. Abdul Kalam became the 11th of India.

(A) President (B) Prime Minister

(C) Chief Justice (D) Army Chief

Ans. (A) President

13. Who was Sivasubramania Iyer ?

(A) Abdul Kalam's new teacher in 5th standard (B) Abdul Kalam's science teacher

(C) Both (A) and (B)  
above

(D) None of the

Ans. (B) Abdul Kalam's science teacher

14. In which state of India is Rameswaram?

(A) Andhra Pradesh (C) Tamilnadu

(B) Kerala (D) Karnatka

Ans. (C) Tamilnadu