Part 3

Questions 19 to 26

You are going to read an extract from an article. For **questions 19 to 26**, *choose the correct answer* **(A, B, C or D)** *and mark the correct letter* **A, B, C** *or* **D** *on your answer sheet.*

My father never told us when we would visit my grandfather (Tata) because he knew that all of us would protest his decision to make us go there for the school holidays. We children considered it backward and just boring to hang out with Tata. He was extremely strict and never communicated much since my grandmother passed away unless he needed to. Coincidentally, all of my other cousins were also sent by their parents to Tata's house. It was a disciplinary boot camp and Tata's role was to instil religion and responsibility into all our mischievous lives.

Most mornings after breakfast, my grandfather who had since retired, would thump his walking stick on to the wooden planks of our kampong veranda. That was a signal for us all to gather around in a circle and recite holy hymns in Sanskrit. We sang along like parrots, not understanding any of the words of the various recitals. He used the handle of the walking stick to pull at our necks if we so much as drifted off daydreaming after hours of blind singing.

The smoke from his wooden tobacco pipe and sometimes cigars made us all drowsy. Restless to get away, some of us would end up pulling weeds from the overgrown garden as a result of being rebellious. All we ever wanted to do was play outdoor games of marbles, catch colourful butterflies and go fishing in the river. Sometimes we would use Tata's cane as a fishing rod and got reprimanded when he discovered our dangerous antics. Most breezy evenings, my siblings and cousins would climb up fruit trees planted around the perimeter of the kampong house. Yet again, Tata's precious cane came in handy when we wanted to pluck and eat those juicy mangosteens and rambutans.

On Fridays, we would all be ready and waiting in our finest for Tata to take us to temple for our evening prayers. This was the highlight of our stay with my grandfather. Tata would accompany us, supported by his shiny walking bamboo stick, while dressed in his dhoti and white manila shirt. He was a lanky man, his grey hair combed straight back and he wore silver-rimmed glasses. We would skip and run to the thud of his cane on the orange glazed hard pitch road leading up to the location. At the temple, he would drop his chin and peer at all of us over his glasses if we so much as fidgeted and did not place our palm upright in prayers. After prayers, we all got to enjoy sweet rice mixed with raisins and bananas, sour spice doughnuts with yoghurt and semolina porridge cooked with cashew nuts prepared by the temple cook. On our way back, we would stop over at Uncle Muthu's sundry shop where Tata would treat us all to twisted sugar candy. We journeyed back to our kampong by foot, which took us all over a bridge, up a hill and across a river before we ended up home.

On many occasions, Tata warned us about grass snakes, centipedes and black bats that often glided and flew aimlessly at sunset. However, he said that his bamboo cane was a gift from God and possessed spiritual powers. True to his word, that walking stick actually managed to protect us from a black cobra that fell from a branch on to the grassy path we were walking through. I remember screaming in terror as my grandfather used his walking stick to fling the ugly creature away into the jungle.

We were so excited that none of us could stop bragging about Tata's courage to our parents, and our escapade that day. We celebrated the event with a vegetarian dinner that was prepared by Tata. He generously shared his homemade pickled mangoes with saffron rice. But that did not stop us from sneaking into his storeroom occasionally when he was asleep, to steal those marinated spicy lime or mango pickles soaked in brown sugar, apple cider vinegar and raw garlic. When he did find out how greedy we were and what we had done, Tata made all of us peel baskets of garlic until our eyes and nose teared and our fingers were numb.

Without the distraction of PlayStation, television and computers, we could all concentrate on the harmonious sounds of chicken scratching, pigeons flapping and squirrels jumping from tree

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to tree, which mesmerised our imagination. My grandfather encouraged us to listen, observe and become silent explorers. We grew more aware of our peaceful surroundings and less aware of quiet and boredom. He continuously impressed all of us with his knowledge, wisdom and creative talents. Tata was never too tired to answer our questions and his stamina — after acquiring that bamboo walking stick — surprised even my parents. I learnt from my mother years later, that my father's childhood was **deprived and strained**. My late father had confided in my mum that he was glad that my grandfather had managed to finally heal his resentments about the past by generously nurturing his children, nephews and nieces.

Despite Tata's age and ill health, he was no longer depressed and his eyes shone with pride whenever he held on to his walking stick. As the years passed, we had renewed respect for our grandfather and look forward to seeing him whenever we could. He was a man of few words, yet all his generous deed spoke volumes. Mostly he had spent quality time with us while using positive reinforcement to build self-esteem and fostering love and togetherness.

Adapted from: *Heart and Soul: Someone to Talk with Me*

19 What do we learn about the writer in the first paragraph?
- **A** He was afraid of his grandfather.
- **B** He felt reluctant to pay his grandfather a visit.
- **C** He felt a little stressed to meet his grandfather.
- **D** He was looking forward to joining the boot camp.

20 In the mornings, the writer and his cousins had
- **A** vocal lessons.
- **B** Tamil lessons.
- **C** meditation classes.
- **D** devotional music lessons.

21 What did the writer and the rest of the children enjoy most during their stay in the village?
- **A** Climbing up fruit trees.
- **B** Playing outdoor games.
- **C** Catching colourful butterflies.
- **D** Walking with their grandfather to the temple.

22 Why was the walking cane considered a gift from God?
- **A** It can be used for fishing.
- **B** It can be used for picking fruit.
- **C** It can be used for self-protection.
- **D** It can be used as a disciplinary tool.

23 Why did the writer's grandfather force the children to peel baskets of garlic?
- **A** They stole his mango pickles.
- **B** They sold his marinated mango pickles.
- **C** He wanted to make more homemade pickles.
- **D** He wanted them to learn the art of making pickles.

24 The phrase **deprived and strained** shows that the writer's father
- **A** had a pleasant childhood.
- **B** endured hardship during his childhood.
- **C** suffered from an illness in his childhood.
- **D** had freedom to do things on his own during his childhood.

25 What does the writer say about his grandfather in the last paragraph?
- **A** He was timid and humble.
- **B** He was quiet and reserved.
- **C** He was a highly disciplined person.
- **D** He was a person of action rather than words.

26 What is the writer's purpose of writing this article?
- **A** To share precious memories of his grandfather.
- **B** To describe his childhood days spent in the village.
- **C** To describe the bond of friendship between him and his grandfather.
- **D** To show the difference between the older generation and the present generation.

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