**Тексты для чтения 5-9 кл**

**Ruskin Bond**

**Wild Fruit**

It was a long walk to school. Down the hill, through the rhododendron trees, across a small stream, around a bare, brown hill, and then through the narrow little bazaar, past fruit stalls piled high with oranges, guavas, bananas, and apples. The boy’s gaze often lingered on those heaps of golden oranges – oranges grown in the plains, now challenging the pale winter sunshine in the hills. His nose twitched at the sharp smell of melons in summer; his fingers would sometimes touch for a moment the soft down on the skin of a peach. But these were forbidden fruit. The boy hadn’t the money for them.

He took one meal at seven in the morning when he left home; another at seven in the evening when he returned from school. There were times – especially when he was at school, and his teacher droned on and on, lecturing on honesty, courage, duty, and self- sacrifice – when he felt very hungry; but on the way to school, or on the way home, there was nearly always the prospect of some wild fruit.

The boy’s name was Vijay, and he belonged to a village near Mussoorie. His parents

tilled a few narrow terraces on the hill slopes. They grew potatoes, onions, barley, maize; barely enough to feed themselves. When greens were scarce, they boiled the tops of the stinging-nettle and made them into a dish resembling spinach. Vijay’s parents realised the importance of sending him to school, and it didn’t cost them much, except for the books. But it was all of four miles to the town, and a long walk makes a boy hungry.

But there was nearly always the wild fruit. The purple berries of the thorny bilberry bushes, ripening in May and June. Wild strawberries, growing in shady places like spots of blood on the deep green monsoon grass. Small, sour cherries, and tough medlars. Vijay’s strong teeth and probing tongue extracted whatever tang or sweetness lay hidden in them. And in March there were the rhododendron flowers. His mother made them into jam. But Vijay liked them as they were. He placed the petals on his tongue and chewed them till the sweet juice trickled down his throat. But in November, there was no wild fruit. Only acorns on the oak trees, and they were bitter, fit only for the monkeys.

He walked confidently through the bazaar, strong in the legs. He looked a healthy boy, until you came up close and saw the patches on his skin and the dullness in his eyes. He passed the fruit stalls, wondering who ate all that fruit, and what happened to the

fruit that went bad; he passed the sweet shop, where hot, newly-fried jelabies lay protected like twisted orange jewels in a glass case, and where a fat, oily man raised a knife and plunged it deep into a thick slab of rich amber-coloured halwa.

The saliva built up in Vijay’s mouth; there was a dull ache in his stomach. But his eyes gave away nothing of the sharp pangs he felt. And now, a confectioner’s shop. Glass jars filled with chocolates, peppermints, toffees – sweets he didn’t know the names of, English sweets – wrapped in bits of coloured paper.

A boy had just bought a bag of sweets. He had one in his mouth. He was a well- dressed boy; coins jingled in his pocket. The sweet moved from one cheek to the other. He bit deep into it, and Vijay heard the crunch and looked up. The boy smiled at Vijay, but moved away.

They met again, further along the road. Once again the boy smiled, even looked as though he was about to offer Vijay a sweet; but this time, Vijay shyly looked away. He did not want it to appear that he had noticed the sweets, or that he hungered for one. But he kept meeting the boy, who always managed to reappear at some corner, sucking a sweet, moving it about in his mouth, letting it show between his wet lips – a sticky green thing, temptingly, lusciously beautiful. The bag of sweets was nearly empty.

Reluctantly, Vijay decided that he must overtake the boy, forget all about the sweets, and hurry home. Otherwise, he would be tempted to grab the bag and run! And then, he saw the boy leave the bag on a bench, look at him once, and smile – smile shyly and invitingly – before moving away. Was the bag empty? Vijay wondered with mounting excitement. It couldn’t be, or it would have blown away almost immediately. Obviously, there were still a few sweets in it. The boy had disappeared. He had gone for his tea, and Vijay could have the rest of the sweets.

Vijay took the bag and jammed it into a pocket of his shirt. Then he hurried homewards. It was getting late, and he wanted to be home before dark. As soon as he was out of the town, he opened the bag and shook the sweets out. Their red wrappers glowed like rubies in the palm of his hand. Carefully, he undid a wrapper.

There was no sweet inside, only a smooth, round stone. Vijay found stones in all the wrappers. In his mind’s eye, Vijay saw the smiling face of the boy in the bazaar: a boy who smiled sweetly but exchanged stones for sweets. Forcing back angry tears, Vijay flung the stones down the hillside. Then he shouldered his bag of books and began the long walk home. There were patches of snow on the ground. The grass was a dirty brown, the bushes

were bare. There is no wild fruit in November.

**Treasure In the Attic**

**by Margo Fallis**

Spider webs were strung across the window frames, hanging like sticky threads. A spider sat in the corner, waiting for some tiny insect to accidentally fly into the web.

The smell of mold was thick in the air, as well as the odor of mothballs. "Lauren, I don’t like it up here," said Kellen, holding onto the back of his big sister’s skirt. "There are spiders and probably mice, and it smells funny."

Don’t be such a baby," she chided. "It’s only a room. Everything in here is old. Mum never comes up here to dust. It does smell terrible," she added, sniffing the air. She reached over and flipped the light switch. A lone light bulb, with no cover over it, illuminated the small room. Kellen looked around. The light cast shadows on the slanted walls. "It’s still scary," he whined.

"Oh, Kellen, stop it. Now, come and help me look."

"What are we looking for?" he asked.

"Treasure. I heard Mum talking to Dad and they were saying there were some treasures in the attic," she told her brother. Her eyes were shiny with excitement.

"Treasure? Wow! I wonder if it’s gold, or big jewels. I’ll help," Kellen said.

They moved a few things around and found a large trunk. "Maybe the treasure is in here," Lauren said. "Come and help me lift the lid."

They had to use all their strength to lift it. Suddenly it fell back. Much to their dismay, the trunk was filled with old clothes. "Clothes? Ooooo, there is that horrible smell again. What is it?" Kellen asked, holding his nose shut with his fingers.

Lauren shut the lid quickly. "Mothballs. Let’s look around more."

For about half an hour they searched through boxes and behind piles of papers. "What’s this?" Kellen asked. "It looks like a musical instrument."

Lauren went to see. "Help me pick it up," she said. The two of them lifted it over their heads and moved it into the center of the room, where it was clear. "It’s a harp!" she said, amused. She plucked a few of the strings. "It’s an old Celtic harp. I remember Mum telling me grandpa MacEwen used to play one. Even his grandpa played it. This must be really old."

"Let me try," Kellen said. He plucked at the strings with his fingers. "It sounds pretty, but I want some treasure. Let’s put that harp back and find the gold."

Lauren plucked a few of the strings. She felt strange. It was as if the harp had some magical spell over her. She thought it sounded beautiful. She plucked it a few more times.

"Lauren!" Kellen called. "Let’s find the gold!"

"Forget the gold, Kellen. This is better than gold. This is music and it’s beautiful. Help me carry the harp downstairs," she commanded.

Kellen, disappointed at not finding any gold, helped his sister carry the harp into the living room. They sat it down in the middle of the room. Kellen ran outside to play. Lauren ran into the kitchen and brought back a cloth to wipe the dust. She spent an hour polishing it.

She pulled a chair from the table and sat next to the harp. She started to pluck the strings. They vibrated in her hand and sang a lovely song to her ears. Just then her mum and dad came home. When her mum saw the harp, she stopped and stared, her mouth agape. "My father’s harp. Where did this come from?" she asked Lauren.

"Kellen and I found it in the attic. It was covered with spider webs and dust. I cleaned it off. It’s beautiful, Mum. It’s like magic, isn’t it?" Lauren said.

Her mum sat down on the chair after Lauren got up. She reached for the strings and started to play the harp. Lauren whispered, "Mum, I didn’t know you could play the harp."

"I thought I’d forgotten, but when I sat down to play it, all the memories came back and here we are. It’s a magical instrument, so beautiful, so peaceful," she said.

Kellen came running in the house when he heard the music. He’d thought it was Lauren. "Mum? It’s you. When did you learn to play the harp?" he asked.

"This harp was my great, great grandfather’s. He made it. I had forgotten all about it. Now that its here, I’ll start practicing again," she told him.

"Mum, will you teach me to play?" asked Lauren.

"Sure, honey, any time you want," she replied.

"I know now what you and Dad meant when you talked about treasures up in the attic. This harp is a treasure, isn’t it, Mum?" Kellen asked, seeing a tear run down his mum’s face.

"Yes, Kellen. It’s a treasure."

From then on their house was filled with music and each time Lauren saw the harp, wooden, carved, with shiny strings, she thought about her great, great, great grandfather McEwen, and said a silent whisper to him for giving them the gift of music and beauty in their home.