

# MAHESH PUBLIC SCHOOL

## STUDY MATERIAL

Subject- English Language & Literature (184)

Book – Footprints without Feet

Chapter -1 A Triumph of Surgery

**About the Author:** - James Alfred ‘Alf ‘Wight, known by the pen name James Herriot, was born on 3 October 1916 in Sunderland, United Kingdom. He was a British veterinary surgeon and writer. He used his many years of experience as a veterinary surgeon to write a series of books, each consisting of stories about animals and their owners.

**Theme:** - The story recounts the episode where the narrator who is a veterinary surgeon, saves the life of a dog, Tricki by hospitalizing him to prevent him from being overfed by his wealthy owner, Mrs. Pumphrey, who was simply worsening his condition by giving him excessive food.

**Summary:** - The story starts when Mrs. Pumphrey, a rich lady takes her dog out for a walk. A nearby veterinary doctor who knows the lady sees the dog and is shocked as he sees that the dog looks like a bloated sausage with a leg at each end.



He advises her to stop giving him unhealthy things to eat but Mrs. Pumphrey is not able to refuse him. Soon he falls sick and the doctor is called. The narrator, Mr. Herriot then somehow takes Tricki, the dog to the hospital even though he knows that Mrs. Pumphrey is not ready to leave her dog and nearly fainted just by hearing these words. Then he takes the dog along and puts a bed for him in his surgery. The dog doesn't move much nor eats anything for the first two days. On the second

day he looks around and whimpers a bit. He wanted to go out on the third day and started playing with the bigger dogs when he was taken out. He also licked the bowls of other dogs clean on the third day.

Then his condition started improving very fast. He started fighting for his meals with other dogs. Then when this news reached Mrs. Pumphrey, she started sending him eggs as she thought that Tricki was recovering from an illness and needed energy foods. Mr. Herriot and his partners started eating those eggs for morning breakfast. Then for improving Tricki's blood, Mrs. Pumphrey started sending in bottles of wine which was again consumed by Mr. Herriot. He used to take two glasses before lunch and some more glasses while having his lunch. Then when she started sending in bottles of brandy for Tricki that was the time when Mr. Herriot thought that he would really like to keep Tricki as a permanent guest in the



surgery. Mr. Herriot used to be really happy someday by having two extra eggs every morning. Then having few glasses of wine in the afternoon and closing the day by having brandy at night. But then he took a wise decision and called up Mrs. Pumphrey as she was really worried and on this side Tricki was ready to be taken back home. Tricki was really happy to see his mistress and jumped into the car. Mrs. Pumphrey said that she won't be able to ever thank him for what he had done and also, that his surgery had been successful as Tricki was now cured.

**A Triumph of Surgery: an irony:** - Mrs. Pumphrey was one of those kindest beings in earth who loved dogs and treated them as her own baby! So, as a sign of her infinite love and affection she always overfed Tricki failing to realise that it only ended up making Tricki gain a lot of surplus fat and turn him into a bloated sausage. As soon as, Mr. Herriot, the author and also a veterinary doctor glanced at Tricki; his mouth fell open and he knew Tricki couldn't hold it for long! As expected he received a call from Mrs. Pumphrey stating Tricki's strange and unacceptable behavior where it even refused its favorite meal the author took Tricki out of the box and brought him to provide an environment which he naturally should have had a long ago! He introduced Tricki to the pack of wild

dogs. For the first two days, Tricki wasn't served with anything except plenty of water and then on the third day Tricki began showing some interest in his surroundings. And then, it was all very sure that he was getting cured. He fought like a brave one for his share of food, ended up hunting for rats in the old hem house and got crushed upon, trampled and bashed like an object of silk among the shaggy crew. These exercises indeed proved to be helpful and Tricki lost all his harmful fat. Being called by the doctor Mrs. Pumphrey barged into the hospital and when she saw Tricki all playful and fit, she believed that it was a Triumph of surgery whereas it actually was THE TRIUMPH OF THE DOCTOR'S GOOD WILL, HIS PRESENCE OF MIND, HIS LOVE FOR DOGS AND HIS DEDICATION.

### **Character sketch of Mrs. Pumphrey:-**

**Wealthy but lonely lady:** - Mrs. Pumphrey is a rich woman, who has all the luxuries of life. Her attendants stand on their toes to serve her. But she doesn't have any family member or relative. So she treats her dog as a baby. She pampers it.

**Pompous:** - Mrs. Pumphrey was full of vanity. She treats the dog as her baby. She has different kinds of expensive fur coats, bowls, and cushions for the dog which doesn't require these things. Even when the narrator is taking away Tricki, she sends many of these things with him. She sends two dozen eggs at a time and wine for him in the hospital for his quick recovery.

**Ignorant:** - Although Mrs. Pumphrey loves her dog but she doesn't know anything about his food requirements. Due to this ignorance she keeps on giving him excessive food. When the dog accumulates so much fat that it becomes difficult for him to walk, then too she feels that it is because of lack of nutrition, so she starts to give extra nutritious food this results into Tricki's illness.

**A loving and caring mistress:** - She love Tricki so much that she couldn't resist him giving food even after the warning of the vet. When the narrator tells her that Tricki needs to be hospitalized, she is shocked and is about to faint. The pain of separation is unbearable for her. She keeps calling the vet to know about the progress of his recovery. After 15 days when the narrator informs her about Tricki's recovery, she reaches the hospital immediately. She bursts into tears and abreast Tricki. She thanks the vet and his team for this triumph of surgery.

## **Tricki: The Dog**

Tricki was a small dog. He was pampered and overfed by his mistress. He was fed with excessive nutritious food. He was greedy enough to refuse food at any time. He liked eating cream cakes and chocolates. This made him hugely fat. He looked like 'a bloated sausage' with a leg at each end. He had bloodshot and rheumy eyes. He became dull, flabby, lazy and listless. He was seriously sick. He had bouts of vomiting. He was taken to Herriot's surgery. There he was given no food for two days. He was made to do a lot of exercises. This changed him and he became fit. He loved his mistress very much. His mistress remarked that Tricki would pine and die if he did not see her even for a single day.

## **James Herriot: The Narrator**

Dr. James Herriot is a competent veterinary surgeon. He is really worried about Tricki. He understands that the real fault of the dog is his greed for food. Dr. Herriot instructs Mrs. Pumphrey to keep Tricki on a very strict diet. Dr. James Herriot is practical and pragmatic. He doesn't give any medical treatment to the dog. He feeds the dog with only water. His method works. The grateful mistress thanks Dr. Herriot and calls his feat "A Triumph of Surgery!" Dr. James is clever enough to enjoy the best of both the worlds. He is tempted to keep Tricki as a permanent guest. It was a happy period for Dr. Herriot and his friends. He used to enjoy eggs for breakfast and wine and brandy for lunch.

## **SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS (30 - 40 words)**

1. What made Mrs. Pumphrey call the vet?
2. What was the cause of Tricki's ailment?
3. How does Dr. Herriot treat Tricki?
4. Why did Mr. Herriot ask Mrs. Pumphrey to admit Tricki in a hospital?
5. Why is Mr. Herriot tempted to keep Tricki as a permanent guest?