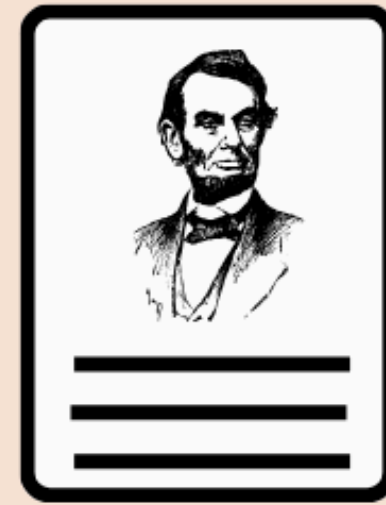


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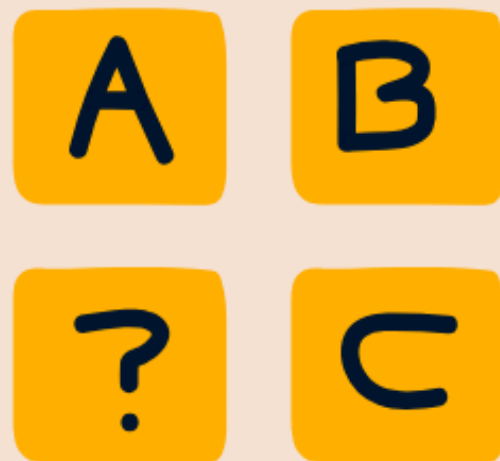
English Notes



**Full
Explanations**



**Character
Sketch**



**Word
Meanings**



**Tone, Central
idea, devices....**

Footprints without Feet

1. A Triumph of Surgery

Chapter Explanation

A Triumph of Surgery by James Herriot is a humorous yet meaningful story about Tricki, a small dog whose illness is not due to any disease but results from **overfeeding** and **excessive pampering**. The story opens when the narrator, Mr Herriot, a veterinary surgeon, notices Tricki walking along the street with Mrs Pumphrey, his wealthy and **overindulgent mistress**. Tricki's unhealthy condition is described using a striking simile: he is "like a **bloated sausage** with a leg at each corner," which clearly highlight his obesity and ridiculous appearance. His **bloodshot and rheumy eyes** along with his **hanging (lolling)** tongue creates vivid imagery, enabling the reader to imagine his miserable condition. Mrs Pumphrey, although loving, is foolishly blinded by affection; she assumes that Tricki is weak due to **malnutrition** and continues feeding him cream cakes, chocolates, malt, cod-liver oil, and Horlicks. Her behaviour reflect **emotional weakness** and **lack of practical sense**, while Mr Herriot appear **observant, experienced, and firm** in his judgement.

Herriot advises her to place Tricki on a strict diet and ensure proper exercise, but he is aware that she does not possess the willpower to follow such a routine. Soon, as expected, Mrs Pumphrey contacts him in distress because Tricki has stopped eating, is **vomiting, panting, and lying listlessly** on a rug. Realising that the actual cure lies in removing the dog from this unhealthy environment, Herriot decide to take Tricki to his surgery for about a fortnight. Mrs Pumphrey reacts in an exaggerated manner, almost fainting and fearing that Tricki will "**pine and die**," which is a clear example of hyperbole demonstrating her emotional excess. The comic scene in which maids rush out carrying Tricki's beds, cushions, toys, bowls, and coats add humour and highlights the absurd luxury in which the dog has been raised.

At the surgery, Tricki is not given any medicine. Herriot treat him through simple discipline, regular routine, fresh air, water, exercise, and interaction with other dogs. For the first two days, Tricki is kept without food but given plenty of water. Gradually, he begins to recover. By the later part of the second day, he show interest in his surroundings and the other dogs, and soon starts running, playing, and eating with them. The transformation is slow but significant. The narration uses lively imagery when Tricki becomes part of the group, described as "**an unlikely, silky little object among the shaggy crew**," which emphasize both his small size and increasing energy. He begin to enjoy natural activities—being **knocked over, trampled, squashed** in play, and even chasing rats. These experiences restore his health by bringing him back to a normal and active lifestyle. This part of the story also highlight Herriot's practical wisdom, as he understand that good health often depends more on balanced habits than on medication.

Meanwhile, Mrs Pumphrey continues to worry excessively, frequently telephoning for updates. When she hears that he is **“convalescing,”** Herriot tries to avoid questions about whether Tricki’s beds are being turned or his luxurious routine maintained, she begin sending **fresh eggs, wine, and later brandy** to “build up” his strength. This situation create irony, as the rich food meant for Tricki is actually consumed by Herriot and his partners, while Tricki recovers perfectly without it. Herriot humorously admit that he felt tempted to keep Tricki as a **“permanent guest,”** which add to the comic tone.

After two weeks, Tricki undergo a complete transformation from a fat, sluggish dog into a **“lithe, hard-muscled animal,”** reflecting his restored health and energy. When Mrs Pumphrey arrives in her luxurious car, filled with anxiety, Tricki jump into her lap, licking her face and barking happily. Overcome with gratitude, she exclaim, **“This is a triumph of surgery!”** The ending is highly ironic, as no surgery or medical treatment has actually been performed; Tricki is cured simply through **diet control, exercise, and freedom from overindulgence.** Through this irony, James Herriot convey that **affection without discipline can be harmful,** and that **practical care and common sense are often the real solutions.** The story effectively blends **humour, compassion, and satire** to expose the foolishness of excessive pampering while promoting natural living and sensible treatment.

character Sketch:

Mr Herriot:

Mr Herriot is a skilled, **practical, and compassionate** veterinary surgeon. He clearly understand that Tricki’s illness is caused by overfeeding and lack of exercise rather than any serious disease. Instead of unnecessary medicines, he adopt a simple and effective method—controlled diet, water, exercise, and a healthy environment. He is tactful in dealing with Mrs Pumphrey’s emotions while remaining **firm in his decisions.** His **affection for animals** is evident when he refer to Tricki as “Poor old lad,” yet he does not allow emotions to interfere with his judgement. His balanced personality, combined with **humour** and honesty, make him an admirable narrator.

Mrs Pumphrey:

Mrs Pumphrey is a **wealthy, loving, but overindulgent** woman who deeply care for Tricki yet harms him through **excessive pampering.** She cannot refuse him anything and continues feeding rich food like cream cakes and chocolates despite advice. She is emotional and dramatic, nearly fainting when Tricki is taken away and constantly seeking updates. Her act of sending eggs, wine, and brandy reflect both generosity and lack of practical understanding. She is not cruel, but her affection is misguided. Her final statement, “This is a triumph of surgery!” show her innocence and completes the irony.

Tricki:

Tricki is a small dog whose primary weakness is **greed**. He is affectionate and **overly pampered**, shaped entirely by Mrs Pumphrey's environment. Initially, he is unhealthy, lazy, and overfed, described as a "**bloated sausage**," highlighting his unnatural condition. However, he is not inherently weak. Once removed from luxury and allowed a natural lifestyle, he quickly regain strength and vitality. He become playful, competitive, and energetic, eventually transforming into a "**lithe, hard-muscled animal**." His change prove that proper habits and natural activity can restore health.

Central Message

The central idea of the story is that love without discipline can become harmful. Excessive pampering, overfeeding, and overprotection weaken rather than help. The chapter also emphasise that common sense, moderation, and natural living are often more effective than unnecessary medical treatment. Through humour and irony, it convey that true care involves doing what is beneficial, not merely what is pleasing.

Narrator's Tone

The narrator's tone is humorous, affectionate, observant, and gently satirical. He show sympathy towards Tricki and mild amusement towards Mrs Pumphrey rather than harsh criticism. The tone remain light and engaging while subtly exposing the foolishness of overindulgence and appreciating practical wisdom.

Word Meanings

1. Bloodshot – red and inflamed, especially of the eyes
2. Rheumy – watery, especially referring to the eyes
3. Listless – lacking energy and enthusiasm
4. Lumbago – pain in the lower back
5. Regime – a prescribed system, especially of diet and exercise
6. Distraught – extremely worried or upset
7. Surgery – a place where a doctor or veterinary surgeon treats patients
8. Swooned – nearly fainted
9. Pathetic – pitiful; causing sympathy
10. Loose box – a separate stall where an animal can move freely
11. Whimper – to make low, weak crying sounds
12. Engulfed – completely surrounded or swallowed
13. Jostling – pushing roughly in a crowd
14. Scrimmages – rough, playful struggles
15. Hovered – remained nearby in a watchful or anxious manner
16. Bulletins – official updates or reports
17. Convalescing – recovering from illness
18. Lithe – flexible, graceful, and active
19. Constitution – physical strength or health
20. Trembled – shook slightly due to emotion or weakness

Reference Information

1. **Narrator's identity:** The narrator is Mr Herriot, a veterinary surgeon, and the story is presented in the first person from his perspective.
2. **Reason for Tricky's illness:** Tricky's illness is not caused by any serious disease but by overeating, lack of exercise, and excessive pampering. His "only fault was greed."
3. **Mrs Pumphrey's feeding habits:** She provide Tricky with "little extras" such as malt, cod-liver oil, Horlicks, cream cakes, and chocolates, believing these will strengthen him. She interpret Tricky's listlessness as malnutrition.
4. **Lack of exercise:** Tricky receive only short walks. Even his playful exercise like ring-throwing has stopped because Hodgkin, the gardener, suffer from lumbago.
5. **Tricky's luxurious lifestyle:** He possess day beds, night beds, favourite cushions, toys, rubber rings, separate food bowls, and numerous coats, indicating that he is treated like a human child.
6. **Symptoms before hospitalisation:** Tricky stop eating, refuse even favourite food, suffer from vomiting, pant constantly, and lie listlessly on a rug.
7. **Real treatment at the surgery:** Herriot give no medicinal treatment. He provide only water, controlled diet, exercise, and healthy interaction with other dogs. He is given only water for two days, begins showing interest by the end of the second day, and is released from his shelter on the third day.
8. **Role of other dogs:** The other dogs help Tricky recover by involving him in play, movement, food competition, and active outdoor life. Initially, he only lick the empty bowls, but later actively compete for food, realising that he must earn it.
9. **Comic benefit to Herriot's household:** Mrs Pumphrey send eggs, wine, and brandy for Tricky, but these are consumed by Herriot and his partners, creating humour and irony.
10. **Change in Tricky's body and behaviour:** Within two weeks, Tricky transform into a lithe, energetic, and strong dog capable of running with the pack.
11. **Meaning of the title:** The title A Triumph of Surgery is ironic because no actual surgery take place. The "triumph" lie in Herriot's practical and natural treatment.
12. **Main contrast in the story:** The story contrast Mrs Pumphrey's emotional foolishness and overprotection with Herriot's practical common sense and professional firmness.

Important literary devices:

Simile: "like a bloated sausage"

Imagery: bloodshot eyes, dangling tongue, panting body, later a fit dog running with the pack

Hyperbole: fear that Tricky would "pine and die"

Irony: recovery without surgery despite the title

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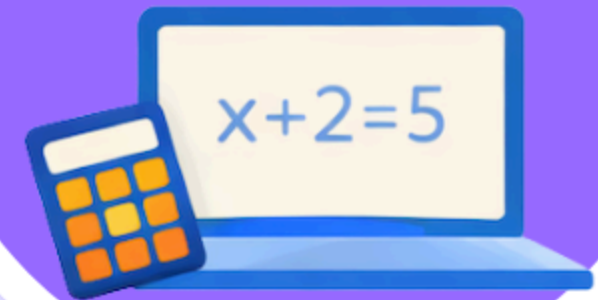
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