

Comprehension

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

It was the night after. I dreamt that I was in The House. We were discussing foreign affairs and not only the country but the whole world was awaiting the discussion with serious interest. The occasion was historic. Of course The House was crowded. All the ministers of foreign countries were there. I had to make the most important speech of the evening. I had prepared it carefully. A man like me has enemies. A lot of people are jealousy because I have reached the position I have reached the position I have at an early age, and I was determined to speak well.

It excited me to think that the whole world was waiting for my words. I rose to my feet. If you have been in The House, you will know how members talk to one another and turn over their papers. When I began to talk, the silence was as the silence of a grave. Suddenly I saw that hateful little devil on one of the seats opposite, Griff, the Welsh member; he put out his tongue at me... I don't know whether you have ever heard a common song called *A bicycle made for two*.

It was very popular a great many years ago. To show Griff my scorn for him, I began to sing it. I sang the first verse right through. There was a moment's surprise and when I finished, they cried 'hear, hear', on the seats opposite to me. I put up my hand to silence them and sang the second verse. The members listened to me in absolute silence and I felt that the song wasn't being received very well. I was angry because I have a good voice, and I was determined that they should be fair. When I started the third verse, the members began to laugh; in a moment, the laughter spread.

Everyone in The House shook; they roared, they held their sides, they rolled on the seats. Everyone was overcome with laughter except the ministers just behind me. They sat as if turned to stone. I gave a look and suddenly understood the terrible thing I had done. The whole world would laugh at me. Miserably I realized that I must resign. I woke and knew it was only a dream.

Questions:

- 1) What kind of House was the writer in?
- 2) a. Why had the writer taken extra care to prepare the speech?
b. What prompted the writer to sing?
c. How was the song received by the members of the House?
- 3) Why did the writer want to resign?
- 4) What relieved the tension that had built within him?

5) Explain the following words/expressions as they are used in the passage.

a)...the occasion was historic.

b)...silence of a grave.

c)...overcome with laughter.

d) Resign.