

TEXT 2:

Strangers

Mary, in her teens, and her younger brother, Peter, come from a comfortable home in Charleston, South Carolina, U.S.A. After a visit to their Uncle Keith in Adelaide, Australia, their plane crashes in the Australian desert, leaving them the only survivors. All they can do is walk back to civilization, back to Uncle Keith's, fourteen hundred miles away. One day, starving and alone, they suddenly come face to face with another human being, an Aboriginal boy of about Mary's age. In his hand he's holding a dead rock wallaby. The boy „is ebony black and quite naked“.

The desert sun streamed down. The children stared and stared. Mary had decided not to move. To move would be a sign of weakness. She remembers being told about the man who'd come face to face with a lion, and had stared it out, and caused it to slink away. That was what she'd do to the black boy; she'd stare at him until he left the shame of his nakedness and slunk away. She thrust out the chin and glared. Peter stood waiting, waiting for something to happen.

The Aboriginal was in no hurry. Time had little value to him. His next meal_ the rock wallaby_ was assured. Water was near. Tomorrow was also a day. For the moment he was content he was content to examine these strange creatures at his leisure. Their clumsy movements intrigued him; their lack of weapons indicated their harmlessness. His eyes moved slowly, methodically, from one to another, examining them from head to foot. They were the first white people a member of his tribe had ever seen. Mary intensified her glare. But the bush boy seemed in no way perturbed.

After a while, Peter started to fidget. He wished someone would do something, wished something would happen. Then, quite involuntarily, he himself started a new train of events. He sneezed. It was a mighty sneeze for such a little fellow. To his sister the sneeze was calamity. She had just intensified her stare to the_ she left sure_ of irresistibility, when the spell was shattered. The bush boy's attention shifted from her to Peter. A second sneeze, even mightier than the first, shattered the silence of the bush.

Mary raises her eyes to heaven. Then a new sound made her whirl round. A gust of laughter, melodious laughter, low at first, then becoming louder, unrestrained, disproportionate, uncontrolled. She looked at the bush boy in amazement. He was doubled up with spasms of mirth.

Peter's sneeze had touched off one of his people's most highly-developed traits: a sense of the ridiculous. The bush boy laughed with complete abandon. He flung himself to the ground in unrestrained delight. His mirth was infectious. It woke in Peter an instant response. The guilt that the little boy had started to feel melted away. A first apologetically; then whole-heartedly, he too started to laugh. The barrier of twenty thousand years vanished in the twinkling of an eye.

(In *Imagine You'Are English* by Gibb et al , 1978.p.123).

Reading Assignments

- **Read the text carefully then do the following:**
 - a) What happened to Mary and Peter?
 - b) What is an aboriginal?
 - c) Suggest another plot to the story.
 - d) Give your personal opinion about the story.
 - e) Give the main idea of the last paragraph of the text.