

SIMPLIFIED READERS

**B1<sup>+</sup>**  
LEVEL 5

# Three Men in a Boat

JEROME K. JEROME



# WORKSHEETS

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## ABOUT THE NOVEL

*Three Men in a Boat* was written by the English author Jerome K. Jerome. The first edition of the book was published in August 1889, and it rapidly sold 202,000 copies. It also became a serial in a popular magazine in the same year. The second edition was issued in March 1909. In his introduction to the second edition, the writer says that a million copies of the first edition were sold in America by pirate printers. Since its publication, *Three Men in a Boat* has never been out of print and has been translated into many languages. It still continues to be popular, and the jokes in it still appeal to readers today. It has been in top-book lists such as "The 100 Greatest Novels of All Time" in 2003, and "50 Funniest Books Ever" in 2009. At first, Jerome

K. Jerome intended the book to be a travel guide for a tour up the river Thames from Kingston to Oxford. This is why it includes information about the historical places along the route. Jerome wrote the book a year after he got married. He was inspired by his honeymoon trip in a little boat on the Thames. In the book, one of the men who tells the story is based on Jerome himself and shares similar characteristics with the writer. The other two men are Jerome's real-life friends. The only fictional character in the book is the dog.

After the success of *Three Men in a Boat*, Jerome later published a similar book about a cycling tour in Germany, entitled *Three Men on the Bummel*, which is also known as *Three Men on Wheels*.

## SUMMARY

One evening in late spring, the three men are sitting and chatting in Jerome's room. They talk about the illnesses which they think they are suffering from. They decide that they have all been working too hard and that they need a holiday. They first consider two options for the holiday: either staying in the country for some time or going on a sea trip. Finally, they agree to rent a boat and have a fortnight trip on the river Thames, from Kingston to Oxford. The next evening, they come together again and talk about the details of the trip, including what they will take with them and where they will spend the nights. They decide to take only what they will basically need and nothing more. They also agree to spend the nights outside when the weather is good but stay at an inn when it rains. Before reaching these decisions, though, they discuss problems with tents and camping stoves and tell each other funny anecdotes about camping. The next day, which is Friday, they buy the foods they need for the trip and get everything ready to pack. While they are packing that evening, they have a series of problems which are very funny. They make plans on how to wake up on time and set off in the morning. One of the men has to go to work on Saturday, so he says he will join the other two in the afternoon.

Two of the men set off on Saturday morning. First, they have problems finding the right train to Kingston, where they will rent a small boat. After some difficulty finding the right train, they leave for Kingston, where they get on the rented boat and start the trip. In the afternoon, the third man joins them further up the river, at Weybridge. As they pass each town and village along the way, Jerome talks about its history and tells anecdotes about the kings and queens as well as the important events related to the area. And he often imagines these kinds of scenes as they pass along the river, which distracts him from watching the way ahead or steering the boat. This causes some problems for them all and even Jerome's dog, who is also on board with them.

The three men get on very well although they sometimes argue and quarrel. They enjoy being together; however, sometimes they make each other furious. They are often confused about and sometimes irritated by tasks such as setting up a tent or cooking on a camp stove. Although the three men imagined the trip to be a return to nature and a time for relaxation, it turns out to be a complicated and tiring activity. However, in general, it is interesting and full of amusing incidents. When they reach the final destination of their trip, Oxford, they spend two pleasant days, but while they are on the way back to the boat, it starts raining and does not stop. Getting very wet on the boat, they spend the rest of the trip at an inn where they eat a good supper for the first time ever since they set off. As the rain doesn't seem to stop, they decide to leave the boat behind and take a train back to London. They lie to the boatman that they will return in the morning.

When they arrive in London, they feel comfortable at last. They leave the dog at Jerome's favourite restaurant and go to a ballet at the theatre. Afterwards, they go back to the restaurant where they left the dog and have a decent dinner before going home. The rain has not stopped, and they are relieved to be back in London.

## Discuss before you begin reading:

1 Have you ever ridden a boat on the river or been on a sea trip? Have you ever gone canoeing/kayaking/rafting on a river? Do you like such activities? Why / Why not?

- 2 a What is enjoyable about a boat trip on a river / in the sea? What are some of the difficulties / potential dangers?  
b What is enjoyable/unpleasant about camping?

## A Word Search

Find the words that refer to eight different types of novels. Then, match the words with the descriptions given below the puzzle (1-8).

T	H	I	S	T	O	R	I	C	A	L	H	O	D
Q	W	T	P	Q	X	V	L	A	O	N	S	A	E
X	P	X	G	A	R	H	A	C	B	H	F	J	G
D	Q	U	L	N	M	U	R	D	U	S	U	Q	W
L	J	Y	B	Q	E	M	Y	S	T	E	R	Y	I
W	J	Q	E	B	D	P	N	L	E	E	I	U	B
F	O	A	C	O	M	I	C	O	A	P	S	B	O
F	A	N	T	A	S	Y	I	V	H	E	O	Z	A
N	N	V	T	H	R	I	L	L	E	R	L	Q	S
S	C	I	E	N	C	E	F	I	C	T	I	O	N
X	G	I	N	T	I	E	N	M	O	C	P	E	P
X	N	L	H	O	R	R	O	R	I	Q	K	M	K
R	O	M	A	N	C	E	T	L	H	Y	H	J	M
J	I	S	Q	R	G	B	C	D	E	V	P	B	E
T	K	W	V	V	Y	U	K	S	D	V	U	Z	A

- \_\_\_\_\_ novels are about love. The focus is on two characters who fall in love and struggle with problems that keep them apart. The ending is often a happy one.
- \_\_\_\_\_ novels are about a crime, usually a murder, and the process of discovering who did it. The hero(ine) is usually a detective or someone doing detective work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ novels are about things that are impossible, including magic and magical creatures like elves or dragons. They are based on myths, legends, and folklore.
- \_\_\_\_\_ books frighten readers by producing feelings of fear and terror, usually about supernatural things but sometimes non-supernatural things too.
- \_\_\_\_\_ are about a crime or disaster that is about to happen and is known to everyone. Only the hero can prevent it from happening.
- \_\_\_\_\_ novels are set in the past, at least fifty years before they were written. They have realistic details of the time period presented in a made-up story.
- \_\_\_\_\_ novels deal with imaginative and futuristic concepts, such as robotic technology, space exploration, time travel, and extra-terrestrial life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ novels are funny or ironic although the topics are serious. They are humorous in tone and are intended to make readers laugh.

## B What do you think? Put (✓) in the box that you think is the answer to the questions in the first column.

<b>What kind of novel is this?</b>	adventure	historical	horror	comic
<b>Why are the men in a boat?</b>	for a trip	for a picnic	for fishing	for a survey
<b>Who are they?</b>	strangers to each other	friends	fishermen	sailors of a ship
<b>Where are they sailing?</b>	on a river	in the sea	on a lake	in the ocean
<b>What happens in the novel?</b>	a disaster	an accident	a surprising event	funny incidents

**A** When you finish reading **Chapter 1**, look at the chart below and put (✓) next to the information that applies to the names at the top. Then, skim through the chapter and check.

Who Are They?	George	Harris	Jerome	Montmorency	Mr Podger	Ms Poppets	Bigg's boy
objects to having a sea trip							
suggests a river trip							
sleeps a lot (His friends say he sleeps at work too.)							
worries about getting seasick							
prefers camping to sleeping at inns							
is worried about getting wet in a tent in rainy weather							
does not like going to the river							
packs the bags for the trip							
agrees to wake everyone up at 6:30 am on Saturday							
has to go to work on Saturday							
makes fun of the men for having too many bags and things							
wakes one of the men up on Saturday							
thinks he killed three rats							
reminds one of the men of his uncle							
will come to the boat later in the day							
is the uncle of one of the three men							

**B** When you finish **Chapter 2**, decide if these sentences are true or not? Put (✓) or (X).

1 The three men go to the train station in London together.	
2 Jerome doesn't take his dog to the river trip.	
3 Jerome and his nephew once got lost in the maze at Hampton Court.	
4 As Harris and Jerome eat lunch at Kempton Park, they offer jam.	
5 Harris is very good at singing comic songs.	
6 George brings his guitar to the boat.	
7 Harris and George make Jerome tow the boat first.	
8 The three men feel too tired to camp in a tiny bay on Magna Carta Island.	
9 They decide to sleep in the tent on the first night.	
10 As Harris and George are trying to put up the tent, they get rolled up in it.	

**A Decide who says the following, to whom, and when. Write your answers in the blanks.**

- 1 'Leave him alone. He can't help howling. He's got a musical ear, and your playing makes him howl.'  
who \_\_\_\_\_ to whom \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 'You know, we must not think of the things we could do with, but only of the things we could do without.'  
who \_\_\_\_\_ to whom \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 'Now you go and get my hammer, Will. And you bring me the ruler, Tim. And I'll need the stepladder, and I should have a kitchen chair, too.'  
who \_\_\_\_\_ to whom \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 'What! You silly donkey! Why can't you be more careful? Why don't you go and dress on the bank? You shouldn't be on a boat.'  
who \_\_\_\_\_ to whom \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 'Give us a hand here, can't you fathead? Don't just stand there like a stuffed mummy when you see we are both struggling for air'.  
who \_\_\_\_\_ to whom \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 'You spit at me! I'll teach you not to be rude to a respectable dog, you long-nosed dirty-looking devil. Come on!'  
who \_\_\_\_\_ to whom \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 'Speak!' And tell us if you are alive or dead. And where is the rest of you?'  
who \_\_\_\_\_ to whom \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_

**B Below are some of the things Jerome tells us. Match them with the items in the box (a-i). One is extra.**

a eggs	b the men's clothes	c a black cat	d the butter	e the river
f a rotten tomato	g pineapple tin	h the canvas	i Irish stew	

- \_\_\_1 After they had got it off George's slipper, they tried to put it in the kettle. It wouldn't go in and later, it wouldn't come out. Harris then sat on it, and it got stuck to him. They looked for it all over the room.
- \_\_\_2 He was so tightly wrapped up in it that he could not get out. He tried desperately to get free, and as he was struggling, (I learned this afterwards), he knocked George over.
- \_\_\_3 He had some trouble, not breaking them, but getting them into the pan and not on his trousers. At last he got half a dozen in the pan.
- \_\_\_4 I can say that the river between Reading and Henley was much cleaner after we washed them in it. All the dirt in the water was now collected in them.
- \_\_\_5 We had a discussion on whether the rat should go in it or not. Harris said it should be all right, but George said no. He said he never heard of rats in it.
- \_\_\_6 It was bent into the shape of a mocking smile, and it drove us furious. Harris took the thing and threw it far into the middle of the river, and as it sank, we cursed it.
- \_\_\_7 He did not seem to understand that his life was in danger. He walked quietly on until the dog was within a yard of him, and then he turned around and looked at Montmorency with a gentle, questioning expression.
- \_\_\_8 'Certainly,' replied the old lock-keeper. 'Take as much as you want and leave the rest.' 'Thank you so much,' said George. 'Where do you keep it?' 'It's always the same place, my boy. Just behind you.'



## TEST YOURSELF

TOTAL

.....

THREE MEN IN A BOAT by Jerome K. Jerome

B1+ - Level 5

### A Choose the words/phrases in the box (a-h) that complete the sentences. (8x2=16 pts)

- |                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| a scrambled eggs         | e a frying pan       |
| b mustard                | f the stuffed trout  |
| c his trousers and socks | g a can of pineapple |
| d swans                  | h his toothbrush     |

- \_\_\_1 George and Jerome were amazed at the size of \_\_\_\_\_ in a glass case at the bar of the inn.
- \_\_\_2 Jerome says \_\_\_\_\_ is a thing that makes his life a misery when he is travelling.
- \_\_\_3 When George appears carrying a strange parcel, Harris thinks it is \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_4 Harris offers to make \_\_\_\_\_, but he can't succeed in making it.
- \_\_\_5 \_\_\_\_\_ that George takes out from the basket makes the other two think that life is worth living.
- \_\_\_6 When Harris doesn't come to pick up the other two men, his excuse is that the boat was attacked by \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_7 Jerome can't sleep when Harris is looking for \_\_\_\_\_ in the middle of the night.
- \_\_\_8 Jerome would do anything just to have \_\_\_\_\_ then, although normally he doesn't care for it much.

### B Write short answers. (7x2=14 pts)

- 1 Who narrates the story? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Which of the three men often daydreams and imagines things of the past? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Who is proud of his packing skills? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Why don't they want an oil stove on the boat? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Where does the three men's trip start from? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 What does the man at Kempton Park try to do to Harris and Jerome? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 How long do the men stay in Oxford? \_\_\_\_\_

### C Mark the sentences as True (T) or False (F). (9x2=18 pts)

- \_\_\_1 The three men are all single.
- \_\_\_2 They all work in the same place.
- \_\_\_3 Jerome's doctor prescribes a lot of medicine for his illness.
- \_\_\_4 The three men all oversleep on Saturday morning although they wanted an early start for the trip.
- \_\_\_5 Mrs Poppets thinks the men are moving out when she sees their luggage.
- \_\_\_6 The three men catch some fish while they are riding up the river Thames.
- \_\_\_7 The three men have so much fun during the trip that food is never their concern.
- \_\_\_8 Harris falls into a ditch and disappears while he is eating a meat pie.
- \_\_\_9 It is Jerome who suggests returning earlier.

### D Mark the correct answers. (8x4=32 pts)

- 1 Jerome, Harris and George - - - .
  - a share the same room in a youth hostel
  - b live in different houses on the same street
  - c are tenants of Mrs Poppets
- 2 What problem do Jerome and Harris have at the train station?
  - a They lose Montmorency and look for him.
  - b They can't find out which platform the train will leave from.
  - c They have an argument with someone.
- 3 What usually happens when Harris tries to sing at a party?
  - a People applaud him.
  - b Everyone cries.
  - c He forgets the words.
- 4 What is the first task that Jerome and Harris make George do when he joins them on the boat?
  - a clean the boat
  - b pull the tow line
  - c cook breakfast
- 5 Who often does odd things and makes the other two men either laugh or get angry?
  - a George
  - b Harris
  - c Jerome
- 6 Why do Jerome's clothes get wet one morning?
  - a He jumps into the river.
  - b He falls into the river.
  - c His dog jumps into the river, splashing water.
- 7 What does Montmorency enjoy doing?
  - a fighting and hunting
  - b barking at strangers
  - c playing with Jerome
- 8 George is the only one of the three men - - - .
  - a whose job we know about
  - b who has a job
  - c makes the most money

### E Match the two halves of the sentences and put the letters in the blanks. (5x4=20 pts)

1 \_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_

- 1 Harris and George do not quarrel and are very polite to each other
  - 2 Jerome does not blame fox-terriers for their fighting
  - 3 The three men try to do their cooking and washing themselves,
  - 4 George shouts at the four old fishermen for losing their temper
  - 5 Jerome is angry at the people who own property alongside the river
- a but it turns out to be a failure each time  
 b because it is in their nature  
 c thinking that they are very selfish  
 d whereas he is supposed to apologize  
 e as they are in a good mood having eaten supper and their hunger being satisfied

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