

The Curious Case of Mr Septimus Scribble and the Sentient Scone



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1. Have you ever eaten a food that looked, smelled, or behaved in a way you didn't expect? What happened?
2. If you could give a food or drink a personality, what would it be like? Friendly? Shy? Mischievous? Why?
3. In your culture, are there any stories, legends, or jokes about food having magical or unusual qualities?
4. If one of your meals could talk to you, what advice or secrets might it share?

The Curious Case of Mr Septimus Scribble and the Sentient Scone

Mr Septimus Scribble was a man of meticulous habits and a profound love of afternoon tea.

Every day, precisely at four o'clock, he settled into his favourite armchair by the window with a freshly baked scone, a dollop of strawberry jam and a generous spoonful of clotted cream.

There were two armchairs by the window, although only one was ever used.

Mr Scribble had lived alone for many years and had become quite accustomed to it.

At least, that was what he told himself.

He had his books, his crossword puzzles and the view of the village green. A man could ask for very little more.

His scones came from Mrs Higgins' Heavenly Humbles, a bakery renowned throughout the village for producing exceptionally light and fluffy creations.

Mrs Higgins herself was considerably less light and fluffy.

She was a formidable woman with powerful arms, a booming voice and the suspicious nature of a customs officer.

"You do like your scones, Mr Scribble," she remarked one Tuesday morning as she placed one into a paper bag.

"I have always believed in maintaining standards," said Mr Scribble.

Mrs Higgins narrowed her eyes.

"You buy one every day."

"Consistency, Mrs Higgins, is the foundation of all civilisation."

He tucked the bag under his arm and left.

That afternoon, something peculiar happened.

As Mr Scribble reached for the jam pot, the scone moved.

Not much. Just a tiny wobble.

Mr Scribble stopped.

He peered at it.

The scone remained perfectly still.

Mr Scribble was a retired lexicographer, a profession which had left him with two permanent characteristics: a distrust of imprecise language and an equally profound distrust of his own imagination.

"Movement," he said aloud, "is the act of changing position."

The scone did not respond.

"Perhaps I was mistaken."

He reached for the jam again.

The scone wobbled.

Mr Scribble slowly withdrew his hand.

Then he leaned closer.

The scone appeared to be breathing.

Very faintly, almost imperceptibly, but breathing nonetheless.

Mr Scribble sat back.

"Good Lord."

For several minutes, neither man nor scone moved.

Mr Scribble eventually decided that the sherry in his lunchtime trifle had perhaps been more generous than usual.

The following afternoon, however, it happened again.

When he tried to butter the scone, he felt a slight resistance, as though it were tensing itself.

Mr Scribble put down his knife.

"This is most irregular."

He decided to conduct an experiment.

The next day, instead of strawberry jam, he placed a small piece of Stilton beside the scone.

The scone recoiled.

Mr Scribble stared.

He replaced the Stilton with a sliver of smoked salmon.

The scone gave a tiny quiver.

"Interesting."

He tried a pickled onion.

Nothing.

Finally, he fetched a garden slug he had discovered near the back door.

The scone shuddered violently.

"My apologies," said Mr Scribble, returning the slug to the garden.

That evening, he visited his neighbour, Mrs Periwinkle.

Mrs Periwinkle was a cheerful widow whose imagination grew as wildly as the prize-winning roses in her front garden.

"My scone appears to be alive," Mr Scribble told her.

Mrs Periwinkle considered this.

"How lovely."

Mr Scribble frowned.

"I don't think 'lovely' is quite the appropriate word."

"Have you spoken to it?"

"Certainly not."

"Why not?"

"It's a scone."

"So?"

Mr Scribble discovered that he had no satisfactory answer to this.

The following afternoon, he sat down for tea and looked at the scone.

"Good afternoon," he said.

Nothing happened.

He felt ridiculous.

He opened The Times and attempted the crossword.

Seven across proved particularly irritating.

After several minutes, he threw down his pencil.

"Absurd. Nine letters. 'A person who interferes unnecessarily.' They appear to think 'busybody' has nine letters."

The scone tilted very slightly towards him.

Mr Scribble froze.

Then he smiled.

It was the first time he had smiled at four o'clock in a very long while.

After that, conversation became part of afternoon tea.

Mr Scribble talked about the weather, the village and the decline in standards at the Post Office. He complained

about his knees. He discussed words he believed were being misused by television presenters.

The scone never spoke, of course.

But it listened.

When Mr Scribble became excited, it seemed to grow plumper. When he was gloomy, it sagged slightly. And whenever he raised his voice, it tilted towards him with what Mr Scribble came to regard as concern.

He named it Sidney.

He also stopped eating scones.

This did not escape the attention of Mrs Higgins.

Every morning, Mr Scribble entered Heavenly Humbles and bought another scone.

Every afternoon, however, Sidney remained uneaten.

By the end of the week, Mr Scribble had seven scones in his kitchen and was beginning to encounter serious storage difficulties.

"You're looking thinner," Mrs Higgins observed suspiciously one morning.

"Am I?"

"Yet you're buying more scones than ever."

"I fail to see the connection."

Mrs Higgins leaned across the counter.

"What are you doing with them?"

Mr Scribble adjusted his spectacles.

"That, Mrs Higgins, is a private matter."

Her eyes narrowed.

The following Sunday, there was a thunderous knock at his door.

Mrs Higgins stood outside.

"Mr Scribble," she boomed, "I understand you have been fraternising with my baked goods."

Mr Scribble nearly dropped his teacup.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Mrs Periwinkle told me everything."

"Ah."

Mrs Higgins marched into the sitting room.

Sidney was resting peacefully on a plate beside the window.

Mrs Higgins stared at him.

Mr Scribble explained the wobbling, the breathing, the Stilton, the smoked salmon and Sidney's remarkable ability to listen.

Mrs Higgins's expression did not change.

"Nonsense."

"I assure you-"

"Scones are for eating, not conversing with."

She reached for Sidney.

Sidney recoiled.

Mrs Higgins stopped.

For the briefest moment, uncertainty crossed her face.

"You saw that," whispered Mr Scribble.

"I saw nothing."

"You most certainly did."

Mrs Higgins snatched Sidney from the plate.

"I shall take this scone back to the bakery for quality control."

"Put him down!"

Mrs Higgins turned.

Him.

The word seemed to hang in the room.

Mr Scribble looked at Sidney in her enormous hand.

"Please," he said quietly.

Mrs Higgins hesitated.

Then her expression hardened.

"It's a scone, Mr Scribble."

She marched out.

The following afternoon, Mr Scribble went to Heavenly Humbles.

Mrs Higgins stood behind the counter, polishing a tray with unusual vigour.

"Where is Sidney?"

"Who?"

"My scone."

"Oh. That."

She put down the cloth.

"I conducted a thorough quality inspection."

Mr Scribble waited.

"Perfectly ordinary," she said. "I ate it myself with a cup of Earl Grey."

Mr Scribble said nothing.

For several seconds, he simply stood there.

Then he nodded.

"I see."

Perhaps he had imagined everything.

The breathing. The wobbling. The listening.

Perhaps a lonely man could persuade himself of almost anything if he wanted company badly enough.

"I'll have a plain biscuit," he said.

Mrs Higgins reached for the biscuit tin.

Mr Scribble noticed something on the counter.

A crumb.

Golden brown.

Exceptionally light and fluffy.

As he watched, it moved.

Just a tiny tremor.

Mr Scribble stared at it.

Behind the counter, Mrs Higgins sighed.

"Are you quite all right?" he asked.

She looked at him.

"Perfectly."

Mr Scribble glanced at the crumb again.

It was still.

"I've been rather lonely myself lately," Mrs Higgins said.

Mr Scribble looked up.

The formidable baker seemed surprised by her own words.

Then Mr Scribble noticed something else.

As he spoke, Mrs Higgins tilted her head very slightly towards him.

Exactly as Sidney used to do.

Mr Scribble raised a quizzical eyebrow.

Mrs Higgins frowned.

"What?"

"Nothing."

A smile appeared at the corner of Mr Scribble's mouth.

"Nothing at all."

He picked up his biscuit.

"Four o'clock tomorrow, Mrs Higgins?"

She stared at him.

"For what?"

"Tea."

Mrs Higgins hesitated.

Then, very faintly, she smiled.

"Four o'clock."

On the counter between them, the little golden-brown crumb gave one final, contented wobble.

The Curious Case of Mr Septimus Scribble and the Sentient Scone — story and reading comprehension questions

Introduction for Teachers

The following pages contain the complete short story The Curious Case of Mr. Septimus Scribble and the Sentient Scone, divided into clearly marked sections. Each section is followed by a set of numbered Reading Comprehension Questions.

This format is designed to make the story easier to use in a variety of classroom situations:

Step-by-step reading – You can pause after each section to check understanding, clarify vocabulary, or encourage predictions before moving on.

Flexible lesson planning – Sections can be covered across multiple lessons or used selectively to fit your timetable.

Targeted discussion – The questions provide a natural starting point for conversation, encouraging both factual recall and inference skills.

Teachers may choose to:

Read the story aloud to the class, pausing for questions.

Have students read sections in pairs or small groups before attempting the questions.

Use the sections for listening practice by reading them while students follow along in their text.

This structure allows you to adapt the material to suit different levels of engagement, class sizes, and lesson lengths, while keeping the narrative flow clear and accessible.

Section 1

Mr Septimus Scribble was a man of meticulous habits and a profound love of afternoon tea.

Every day, precisely at four o'clock, he settled into his favourite armchair by the window with a freshly baked scone, a dollop of strawberry jam and a generous spoonful of clotted cream.

There were two armchairs by the window, although only one was ever used.

Mr Scribble had lived alone for many years and had become quite accustomed to it.

At least, that was what he told himself.

He had his books, his crossword puzzles and the view of the village green. A man could ask for very little more.

His scones came from Mrs Higgins' Heavenly Humbles, a bakery renowned throughout the village for producing exceptionally light and fluffy creations.

Mrs Higgins herself was considerably less light and fluffy.

She was a formidable woman with powerful arms, a booming voice and the suspicious nature of a customs officer.

"You do like your scones, Mr Scribble," she remarked one Tuesday morning as she placed one into a paper bag.

"I have always believed in maintaining standards," said Mr Scribble.

Mrs Higgins narrowed her eyes.

"You buy one every day."

"Consistency, Mrs Higgins, is the foundation of all civilisation."

He tucked the bag under his arm and left.

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. At what time did Mr Scribble have afternoon tea?
2. What was unusual about the two armchairs?
3. Where did he buy his scones?

Section 2

That afternoon, something peculiar happened.

As Mr Scribble reached for the jam pot, the scone moved.

Not much. Just a tiny wobble.

Mr Scribble stopped.

He peered at it.

The scone remained perfectly still.

Mr Scribble was a retired lexicographer, a profession which had left him with two permanent characteristics: a distrust of imprecise language and an equally profound distrust of his own imagination.

"Movement," he said aloud, "is the act of changing position."

The scone did not respond.

"Perhaps I was mistaken."

He reached for the jam again.

The scone wobbled.

Mr Scribble slowly withdrew his hand.

Then he leaned closer.

Reading Comprehension Questions

4. What did Mrs Higgins notice about his purchases?
5. What did Mr Scribble say was the foundation of civilisation?
6. What happened when he reached for the jam pot?

Section 3

The scone appeared to be breathing.

Very faintly, almost imperceptibly, but breathing nonetheless.

Mr Scribble sat back.

"Good Lord."

For several minutes, neither man nor scone moved.

Mr Scribble eventually decided that the sherry in his lunchtime trifle had perhaps been more generous than usual.

The following afternoon, however, it happened again.

When he tried to butter the scone, he felt a slight resistance, as though it were tensing itself.

Mr Scribble put down his knife.

"This is most irregular."

Reading Comprehension Questions

7. What did he see when he leaned closer?
8. What explanation did he consider for what he had seen?
9. What did he feel when he tried to butter the scone?

Section 4

He decided to conduct an experiment.

The next day, instead of strawberry jam, he placed a small piece of Stilton beside the scone.

The scone recoiled.

Mr Scribble stared.

He replaced the Stilton with a sliver of smoked salmon.

The scone gave a tiny quiver.

"Interesting."

He tried a pickled onion.

Nothing.

Finally, he fetched a garden slug he had discovered near the back door.

The scone shuddered violently.

"My apologies," said Mr Scribble, returning the slug to the garden.

Reading Comprehension Questions

10. What food did he place beside it first in his experiment?

11. How did the scone react to the Stilton?

12. How did the scone react to the garden slug?

Section 5

That evening, he visited his neighbour, Mrs Periwinkle.

Mrs Periwinkle was a cheerful widow whose imagination grew as wildly as the prize-winning roses in her front garden.

"My scone appears to be alive," Mr Scribble told her.

Mrs Periwinkle considered this.

"How lovely."

Mr Scribble frowned.

"I don't think 'lovely' is quite the appropriate word."

"Have you spoken to it?"

"Certainly not."

"Why not?"

"It's a scone."

"So?"

Mr Scribble discovered that he had no satisfactory answer to this.

Reading Comprehension Questions

13. Whom did Mr Scribble visit that evening?

14. How did she first respond to the news that the scone was alive?

15. What did she suggest he might do?

Section 6

The following afternoon, he sat down for tea and looked at the scone.

"Good afternoon," he said.

Nothing happened.

He felt ridiculous.

He opened The Times and attempted the crossword.

Seven across proved particularly irritating.

After several minutes, he threw down his pencil.

"Absurd. Nine letters. 'A person who interferes unnecessarily.' They appear to think 'busybody' has nine letters."

The scone tilted very slightly towards him.

Mr Scribble froze.

Then he smiled.

It was the first time he had smiled at four o'clock in a very long while.

Reading Comprehension Questions

16. What greeting did Mr Scribble offer the scone?

17. What was irritating him in The Times?

18. How did the scone react when he complained?

Section 7

After that, conversation became part of afternoon tea.

Mr Scribble talked about the weather, the village and the decline in standards at the Post Office. He complained about his knees. He discussed words he believed were being misused by television presenters.

The scone never spoke, of course.

But it listened.

When Mr Scribble became excited, it seemed to grow plumper. When he was gloomy, it sagged slightly. And whenever he raised his voice, it tilted towards him with what Mr Scribble came to regard as concern.

He named it Sidney.

He also stopped eating scones.

Reading Comprehension Questions

19. What topics did Mr Scribble discuss with Sidney?

20. How did the scone respond when Mr Scribble was gloomy?

21. What name did Mr Scribble give the scone?

Section 8

This did not escape the attention of Mrs Higgins.

Every morning, Mr Scribble entered Heavenly Humbles and bought another scone.

Every afternoon, however, Sidney remained uneaten.

By the end of the week, Mr Scribble had seven scones in his kitchen and was beginning to encounter serious storage difficulties.

"You're looking thinner," Mrs Higgins observed suspiciously one morning.

"Am I?"

"Yet you're buying more scones than ever."

"I fail to see the connection."

Mrs Higgins leaned across the counter.

"What are you doing with them?"

Mr Scribble adjusted his spectacles.

"That, Mrs Higgins, is a private matter."

Her eyes narrowed.

Reading Comprehension Questions

22. What did Mr Scribble stop doing?

23. How many scones had he collected by the end of the week?

24. What did Mrs Higgins notice about his appearance?

Section 9

The following Sunday, there was a thunderous knock at his door.

Mrs Higgins stood outside.

"Mr Scribble," she boomed, "I understand you have been fraternising with my baked goods."

Mr Scribble nearly dropped his teacup.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Mrs Periwinkle told me everything."

"Ah."

Mrs Higgins marched into the sitting room.

Sidney was resting peacefully on a plate beside the window.

Mrs Higgins stared at him.

Reading Comprehension Questions

25. When did Mrs Higgins next come to his home?

26. Who had told Mrs Higgins about Sidney?

27. Where was Sidney when Mrs Higgins entered?

Section 10

Mr Scribble explained the wobbling, the breathing, the Stilton, the smoked salmon and Sidney's remarkable ability to listen.

Mrs Higgins's expression did not change.

"Nonsense."

"I assure you-"

"Scones are for eating, not conversing with."

She reached for Sidney.

Sidney recoiled.

Mrs Higgins stopped.

For the briefest moment, uncertainty crossed her face.

"You saw that," whispered Mr Scribble.

"I saw nothing."

"You most certainly did."

Reading Comprehension Questions

28. What did Mr Scribble explain to her?

29. What did Mrs Higgins say scones were for?

30. What happened when she reached for Sidney?

Section 11

Mrs Higgins snatched Sidney from the plate.

"I shall take this scone back to the bakery for quality control."

"Put him down!"

Mrs Higgins turned.

Him.

The word seemed to hang in the room.

Mr Scribble looked at Sidney in her enormous hand.

"Please," he said quietly.

Mrs Higgins hesitated.

Then her expression hardened.

"It's a scone, Mr Scribble."

She marched out.

Reading Comprehension Questions

31. What did Mrs Higgins decide to do with Sidney?
32. What word surprised Mrs Higgins when Mr Scribble protested?
33. Did Mrs Higgins leave Sidney behind?

Section 12

The following afternoon, Mr Scribble went to Heavenly Humbles.

Mrs Higgins stood behind the counter, polishing a tray with unusual vigour.

"Where is Sidney?"

"Who?"

"My scone."

"Oh. That."

She put down the cloth.

"I conducted a thorough quality inspection."

Mr Scribble waited.

"Perfectly ordinary," she said. "I ate it myself with a cup of Earl Grey."

Mr Scribble said nothing.

For several seconds, he simply stood there.

Then he nodded.

"I see."

Reading Comprehension Questions

34. Where did Mr Scribble go the following afternoon?

35. What did Mrs Higgins claim she had done to Sidney?

36. What tea did she drink with Sidney?

Section 13

Perhaps he had imagined everything.

The breathing. The wobbling. The listening.

Perhaps a lonely man could persuade himself of almost anything if he wanted company badly enough.

"I'll have a plain biscuit," he said.

Mrs Higgins reached for the biscuit tin.

Mr Scribble noticed something on the counter.

A crumb.

Golden brown.

Exceptionally light and fluffy.

As he watched, it moved.

Just a tiny tremor.

Mr Scribble stared at it.

Reading Comprehension Questions

37. What did Mr Scribble begin to doubt?

38. What did he order?

39. What did he see on the counter?

Section 14

Behind the counter, Mrs Higgins sighed.

"Are you quite all right?" he asked.

She looked at him.

"Perfectly."

Mr Scribble glanced at the crumb again.

It was still.

"I've been rather lonely myself lately," Mrs Higgins said.

Mr Scribble looked up.

The formidable baker seemed surprised by her own words.

Then Mr Scribble noticed something else.

Reading Comprehension Questions

40. How did Mrs Higgins respond when Mr Scribble asked if she was all right?

41. What did she admit about her life?

42. How did the crumb look when Mr Scribble checked again?

Section 15

As he spoke, Mrs Higgins tilted her head very slightly towards him.

Exactly as Sidney used to do.

Mr Scribble raised a quizzical eyebrow.

Mrs Higgins frowned.

"What?"

"Nothing."

A smile appeared at the corner of Mr Scribble's mouth.

"Nothing at all."

He picked up his biscuit.

Reading Comprehension Questions

43. How did Mrs Higgins tilt her head?

44. Whose behaviour did that remind him of?

45. How did Mr Scribble react?

Section 16

"Four o'clock tomorrow, Mrs Higgins?"

She stared at him.

"For what?"

"Tea."

Mrs Higgins hesitated.

Then, very faintly, she smiled.

"Four o'clock."

On the counter between them, the little golden-brown crumb gave one final, contented wobble.

Reading Comprehension Questions

46. What invitation did Mr Scribble offer her?
47. Did Mrs Higgins accept the invitation?
48. What happened to the crumb at the very end?

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. At what time did Mr Scribble have afternoon tea?
2. What was unusual about the two armchairs?
3. Where did he buy his scones?
4. What did Mrs Higgins notice about his purchases?
5. What did Mr Scribble say was the foundation of civilisation?
6. What happened when he reached for the jam pot?
7. What did he see when he leaned closer?
8. What explanation did he consider for what he had seen?
9. What did he feel when he tried to butter the scone?
10. What food did he place beside it first in his experiment?
11. How did the scone react to the Stilton?
12. How did the scone react to the garden slug?
13. Whom did Mr Scribble visit that evening?
14. How did she first respond to the news that the scone was alive?
15. What did she suggest he might do?
16. What greeting did Mr Scribble offer the scone?
17. What was irritating him in The Times?

18. How did the scone react when he complained?
19. What topics did Mr Scribble discuss with Sidney?
20. How did the scone respond when Mr Scribble was gloomy?
21. What name did Mr Scribble give the scone?
22. What did Mr Scribble stop doing?
23. How many scones had he collected by the end of the week?
24. What did Mrs Higgins notice about his appearance?
25. When did Mrs Higgins next come to his home?
26. Who had told Mrs Higgins about Sidney?
27. Where was Sidney when Mrs Higgins entered?
28. What did Mr Scribble explain to her?
29. What did Mrs Higgins say scones were for?
30. What happened when she reached for Sidney?
31. What did Mrs Higgins decide to do with Sidney?
32. What word surprised Mrs Higgins when Mr Scribble protested?
33. Did Mrs Higgins leave Sidney behind?
34. Where did Mr Scribble go the following afternoon?
35. What did Mrs Higgins claim she had done to Sidney?
36. What tea did she drink with Sidney?

37. What did Mr Scribble begin to doubt?
38. What did he order?
39. What did he see on the counter?
40. How did Mrs Higgins respond when Mr Scribble asked if she was all right?
41. What did she admit about her life?
42. How did the crumb look when Mr Scribble checked again?
43. How did Mrs Higgins tilt her head?
44. Whose behaviour did that remind him of?
45. How did Mr Scribble react?
46. What invitation did Mr Scribble offer her?
47. Did Mrs Higgins accept the invitation?
48. What happened to the crumb at the very end?

Essential Vocabulary

The following 45 words and phrases appear in the revised story. Use a dictionary to check their meanings and write an example sentence for each.

Table 1

meticulous	profound	armchair
dollop	clotted cream	accustomed
renowned	exceptionally	formidable
suspicious	consistency	civilisation
peculiar	wobble	lexicographer
imprecise	profound distrust	imperceptibly
sherry	trifle	resistance
tensing	irregular	experiment

Table 2

Stilton	recoiled	sliver
quiver	shuddered	imagination
prize-winning	appropriate	ridiculous
crossword	plumper	gloomy
sagged	spectacles	fraternising
quality control	hesitated	vigour
tremor	quizzical	contented

Vocabulary Practice Exercise

Follow the steps below to help you learn and remember new words and phrases more effectively:

Write each new word or phrase in your vocabulary notebook.

Look up the meaning of each word in your dictionary.

Write a clear and simple definition next to the word.

Create your own sentence using the word or phrase correctly. Try to make the sentence meaningful and connected to your own life or experiences.

Examples

Meticulous – *showing great attention to detail; very careful and precise.*

Example sentence: *My friend is so meticulous when baking that she measures every ingredient to the exact gram.*

Wobble – *to move slightly from side to side in an unsteady way.*

Example sentence: *I placed the cup on the uneven table and saw it start to wobble.*

Why do this?

Doing this regularly will help you improve all areas of your English — reading, writing, speaking, and listening. By

writing definitions and making your own examples, you are actively using the language, which helps it stick in your memory.

True or False?

Decide whether each statement is true or false according to the story. Correct the false statements.

1. Mr Scribble had his afternoon tea at four o'clock.
2. Both armchairs by the window were used every day.
3. Mr Scribble was a retired lexicographer.
4. The scone recoiled from Stilton.
5. Mrs Periwinkle advised Mr Scribble not to speak to the scone.
6. Sidney tilted towards Mr Scribble when he raised his voice.
7. Mr Scribble stopped buying scones after naming Sidney.
8. Mrs Higgins heard about Sidney from Mrs Periwinkle.
9. Mrs Higgins claimed she ate Sidney with Earl Grey tea.
10. The final crumb remained completely still.

What is the Correct Synonym?

Match each word to its closest synonym. Use each letter once.

1. meticulous
2. peculiar
3. renowned
4. formidable
5. recoiled
6. hesitated
7. gloomy
8. quizzical
9. vigour
10. contented

- A. paused
- B. well-known
- C. energy
- D. strange
- E. satisfied
- F. drew back

G. careful

H. questioning

I. imposing

J. sad

What is the Correct Antonym?

Match each word with its opposite. Use each letter once.

1. meticulous
2. peculiar
3. formidable
4. gloomy
5. recoiled
6. hesitated
7. suspicious
8. contented
9. plumper
10. quietly

- A. cheerful
- B. thinner
- C. careless
- D. trusting
- E. unthreatening
- F. loudly
- G. approached

H. ordinary

I. dissatisfied

J. acted immediately

Gap-Fill Exercise

Complete each sentence with a word from the box. Use each word once; change the form if necessary.

meticulous	peculiar
recoiled	formidable
hesitated	quizzical
vigour	contented
suspicious	tremor

1. She was extremely _____ about every detail of her work.
2. There was a _____ noise coming from the kitchen.
3. The child _____ when he saw the enormous spider.
4. The headteacher had a _____ reputation.
5. He _____ before answering the difficult question.
6. She gave him a _____ look when he made the strange claim.
7. The gardener worked with great _____ all morning.

8. After a good meal, the cat looked completely _____.

9. The shopkeeper became _____ when the customer refused to explain.

10. A slight _____ passed through the ground.

Words and Meanings

Match the ten words with the definitions A–J.

1. meticulous
2. peculiar
3. formidable
4. recoiled
5. hesitated
6. quizzical
7. vigour
8. contented
9. suspicious
10. tremor

- A. Paused before acting
- B. Unusual or strange
- C. Inclined to distrust or doubt
- D. Very careful and attentive to detail
- E. Strength and energy
- F. A small shaking movement
- G. Inspiring respect or fear through strength or presence

H. Satisfied and at ease

I. Showing curiosity or mild puzzlement

J. Moved suddenly backwards

Discussion Questions

1. How would you have reacted if you noticed your food moving or “breathing” like Mr. Scribble’s scone?
2. Do you think Mr. Scribble really experienced a sentient scone, or was it his imagination? Why?
3. In your opinion, how much can loneliness affect the way people see the world?
4. Mrs. Higgins clearly didn’t believe Mr. Scribble. Should she have taken him more seriously? Why or why not?
5. If you had a talking or moving food item, what would you want it to say or do?
6. How does the story use humour to keep the reader interested? Can you give examples?
7. Which character do you think is the most believable, and why?
8. Do you believe unusual things sometimes happen in real life that we can’t explain? Give an example if you can.
9. Why do you think Mr. Scribble gave the scone a name? What does this tell us about his personality?
10. The final crumb moves after Mr Scribble invites Mrs Higgins to tea. What might this suggest?

11. If Mrs. Periwinkle had owned the bakery instead of Mrs. Higgins, how do you think events would have changed?
12. What role do you think food plays in human emotions and relationships?
13. Which part of the story made you smile the most, and why?
14. How would this story be different if it were set in your country?
15. Do you think the scone's reactions to different foods mean something symbolic?
16. Why do you think Mrs Higgins admits that she has been lonely?
17. How might the invitation to tea change the lives of Mr Scribble and Mrs Higgins?

Role Play

Role Play – “The Scone Affair”

Characters:

Mr. Septimus Scribble – a precise, slightly flustered retired lexicographer

Mrs. Periwinkle – imaginative, warm, slightly eccentric neighbour

Instructions:

Divide into pairs and each person choose a role to play.

Practice reading the script out loud for a while then, when you are ready, perform in front of the class.

[Sound effects: Kettle whistling, clink of teacups]

MRS. PERIWINKLE: Oh, Mr. Scribble! You look as if someone’s stolen your dictionary. Whatever is the matter?

MR. SCRIBBLE: Worse, Mrs. Periwinkle. Much worse. They’ve taken Sidney.

MRS. PERIWINKLE: Sidney? You’ve taken in a lodger without telling me?

MR. SCRIBBLE: Not a lodger... a scone. My scone. From Heavenly Humbles. He was... different. Special. I swear he could feel things.

MRS. PERIWINKLE: (amused) You don't say.

MR. SCRIBBLE: I offered him Stilton once. He recoiled. Smoked salmon—delighted. He responded to my moods, even listened to me! And now Mrs. Higgins has snatched him away.

MRS. PERIWINKLE: (tutting) That woman. Always so sharp with her tongs.

MR. SCRIBBLE: She called it quality control. Said he was ordinary. Ate him, apparently.

MRS. PERIWINKLE: Oh, my dear... I believe you. You see, I once bought a batch of muffins from her—blueberry, they were—and every single one hummed the theme to Coronation Street.

MR. SCRIBBLE: (leaning in) Surely not?

MRS. PERIWINKLE: I assure you. I had to eat them quickly before the neighbours complained.

MR. SCRIBBLE: (sighs) So you think... there's more to Heavenly Humbles than meets the eye?

MRS. PERIWINKLE: Absolutely. And perhaps, Mr. Scribble... Sidney isn't gone. Not entirely.

[Sound effects: faint wobbling sound, followed by a soft sigh, as if from a plate on the table]

MR. SCRIBBLE: Mrs. Periwinkle... did you hear that?

MRS. PERIWINKLE: I think, my dear, you'd better put the kettle on again.

[Music fades in: light, whimsical theme]

Group Discussion Activity – “Remarkable British Dishes”

This is a group discussion activity for the whole class.

Aim:

Students will create and discuss imaginary British dishes with unusual or magical attributes, inspired by the “sentient scone” in the story.

Step 1 – Warm-up

Ask students: What are some traditional British foods you know?

Write a list on the board (e.g. scones, shepherd’s pie, trifle, spotted dick, jelly, Cornish pasty, fish and chips).

Discuss quickly: Which ones would be easiest to give “unusual powers” or “personalities”?

Step 2 – Brainstorm Examples

Teacher shares three sample “magical British foods”:

Singing Jelly – Quivers in time to your heartbeat and hums lullabies.

Invisible Shepherd's Pie – Delicious but completely see-through, making mealtimes confusing.

Shy Sticky Toffee Pudding – Tries to hide under the sauce when strangers are near.

Step 3 – Group Task

Put students in small groups (3–4 people).

Each group invents two unusual British dishes with:

A creative name

A description of its unusual attribute(s)

How it reacts to people or other foods

A short backstory (where it came from, any legends)

They prepare to present their dishes to the class in a short “food festival” pitch (1–2 minutes per dish).

Step 4 – Discussion Prompts (after presentations)

Which dish would you most like to try? Why?

Which dish would be the most dangerous or difficult to live with?

Do you have any foods in your country with strange legends or stories attached to them?

Optional Extension

Writing Task: Students write a short story or menu description for one of their invented dishes.

Role Play: Turn one group's idea into a short sketch or radio ad for the dish.

Writing Exercise – “A Day with My Unusual British Dish”

Aim

Students will use one of the magical British food ideas (either one they invented in the group activity or one from the sample list) as inspiration for a short creative story.

Task

Choose one unusual British food from the discussion.

Write a short story (200–250 words) about a day in your life with this magical dish.

Your story should include:

Introduction – Where you got the dish and what it looks like.

The unusual attribute – What makes this dish special or strange.

An event or problem – Something that happens because of the dish.

Resolution – How the event or problem is solved.

Writing Prompts / Examples

A “Singing Jelly” that won’t stop performing at night and keeps the neighbours awake.

An “Invisible Shepherd’s Pie” that disappears when you try to serve it to guests.

A “Shy Sticky Toffee Pudding” that hides under furniture when visitors come.

A “Wobbling Treacle Tart” that always tries to escape the plate.

Language Focus

Encourage students to:

Use past tense verbs for storytelling.

Include adjectives to describe the food’s appearance and behaviour.

Add dialogue to make the story lively.

Optional Extension

After writing, students can swap stories in pairs, read each other’s work, and vote on:

The most imaginative food

The funniest event

The most realistic-sounding magical dish

Reading Comprehension Questions – Model Answers

Accept equivalent answers that are consistent with the revised story.

1. At what time did Mr Scribble have afternoon tea?

At precisely four o'clock.

2. What was unusual about the two armchairs?

Only one of the two armchairs was ever used.

3. Where did he buy his scones?

At Mrs Higgins' Heavenly Humbles bakery.

4. What did Mrs Higgins notice about his purchases?

He bought a scone every day.

5. What did Mr Scribble say was the foundation of civilisation?

Consistency.

6. What happened when he reached for the jam pot?

The scone gave a tiny wobble.

7. What did he see when he leaned closer?

The scone appeared to be breathing.

8. What explanation did he consider for what he had seen?

Perhaps there had been too much sherry in his lunchtime trifle.

9. What did he feel when he tried to butter the scone?

A slight resistance, as if it were tensing.

10. What food did he place beside it first in his experiment?

A small piece of Stilton cheese.

11. How did the scone react to the Stilton?

It recoiled.

12. How did the scone react to the garden slug?

It shuddered violently.

13. Whom did Mr Scribble visit that evening?

His neighbour, Mrs Periwinkle.

14. How did she first respond to the news that the scone was alive?

She said, "How lovely."

15. What did she suggest he might do?

Speak to the scone.

16. What greeting did Mr Scribble offer the scone?

"Good afternoon."

17. What was irritating him in The Times?

A crossword clue for seven across.

18. How did the scone react when he complained?

It tilted very slightly towards him.

19. What topics did Mr Scribble discuss with Sidney?

The weather, the village, the Post Office, his knees and misused words.

20. How did the scone respond when Mr Scribble was gloomy?

It sagged slightly.

21. What name did Mr Scribble give the scone?

Sidney.

22. What did Mr Scribble stop doing?

Eating scones.

23. How many scones had he collected by the end of the week?

Seven.

24. What did Mrs Higgins notice about his appearance?

He was looking thinner.

25. When did Mrs Higgins next come to his home?

The following Sunday.

26. Who had told Mrs Higgins about Sidney?

Mrs Periwinkle.

27. Where was Sidney when Mrs Higgins entered?

On a plate beside the window.

28. What did Mr Scribble explain to her?

The wobbling, breathing, food reactions and Sidney's ability to listen.

29. What did Mrs Higgins say scones were for?

Eating, not conversing with.

30. What happened when she reached for Sidney?

Sidney recoiled.

31. What did Mrs Higgins decide to do with Sidney?

Take him to the bakery for quality control.

32. What word surprised Mrs Higgins when Mr Scribble protested?

“Him.”

33. Did Mrs Higgins leave Sidney behind?

No. She took him away.

34. Where did Mr Scribble go the following afternoon?

He went to Heavenly Humbles.

35. What did Mrs Higgins claim she had done to Sidney?

She said she had eaten him.

36. What tea did she drink with Sidney?

Earl Grey.

37. What did Mr Scribble begin to doubt?

Whether the scone had ever truly been alive.

38. What did he order?

A plain biscuit.

39. What did he see on the counter?

A small golden-brown crumb that moved.

40. How did Mrs Higgins respond when Mr Scribble asked if she was all right?

She said, "Perfectly."

41. What did she admit about her life?

She admitted she had been lonely lately.

42. How did the crumb look when Mr Scribble checked again?

It was still.

43. How did Mrs Higgins tilt her head?

Slightly towards Mr Scribble.

44. Whose behaviour did that remind him of?

Sidney's.

45. How did Mr Scribble react?

He raised an eyebrow and smiled.

46. What invitation did Mr Scribble offer her?

Tea at four o'clock the next day.

47. Did Mrs Higgins accept the invitation?

Yes; she agreed to four o'clock.

48. What happened to the crumb at the very end?

It gave one final, contented wobble.

True or False — Answers

1. True
2. False — Only one of the two armchairs was used.
3. True
4. True
5. False — Mrs Periwinkle encouraged him to speak to the scone.
6. True
7. False — He continued buying scones, eventually collecting seven.
8. True
9. True
10. False — The crumb gave a final contented wobble.

What is the Correct Synonym — Answers

1 → G

2 → D

3 → B

4 → I

5 → F

6 → A

7 → J

8 → H

9 → C

10 → E

What is the Correct Antonym — Answers

1 → C

2 → H

3 → E

4 → A

5 → G

6 → J

7 → D

8 → I

9 → B

10 → F

Gap-Fill Exercise — Answers

1. meticulous
2. peculiar
3. recoiled
4. formidable
5. hesitated
6. quizzical
7. vigour
8. contented
9. suspicious
10. tremor

Words and Meanings — Answers

1 → D

2 → B

3 → G

4 → J

5 → A

6 → I

7 → E

8 → H

9 → C

10 → F

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