2. We’re not Afraid to Die

In July,1976, the narrator Gordon Cook, his wife Mary, son Jonathon and daughter Suzanne set sail from Plymouth, England to duplicate the round- the world voyage made 200 years earlier by Captain James Cook. They took the voyage in their built ship, the ‘Wavewalker’ with two sailors--- Larrry Vigil, an American and Herb Seigler, a swiss on the Southern Indian Ocean.

The first part of the journey, about 105,000 kilometres up to Cape Town passed off very pleasantly. On the second day of Cape Town, they began to encounter strong gales----15 metres high as the main mast. On 25th December, they were in the southern Indian Ocean, 3500 kilometres to the east of Cape Town. They celebrated newyear on board the ship.

It was January 2, the waves were gigantic. The weather was unfavourable. So the speed was slowed, storm jib was dropped and other precautions were taken. The sailors completed life raft drill, attached lifelines and life jackets.

At 6 p.m, an explosion shook the Wavewalker. The author was thrown overboard. The ship was about to capsize when another gigantic wave hit it tossing it upright once again. The author was thrown back onto the deck, his head and ribs smashing against the walls. In spite of his injuries, the narrator took charge of the situation. Somehow he found the wheel, lined up the stern for the next wave and hung on till Mary appeared and took charge of the wheel. Larry and Herb started pumping out water like madmen. The narrator covered canvas across the gaps to prevent water from entering the ship. But then handpumps stopped working and electric pumps short-circuited. There was a spare electric pump under the chartroom that worked. The entire night was spent in pumping, steering, repairing, and sending radio signals. The narrator checked charts and calculated that Ile Amesterdam , was only the nearest island to save their lives.

Sue and Jon were injured but they said that they were not afraid to die if they could all be together. The narrator became more determined seeing his children’s courage. Finally they reached Ile Amesterdam, a volcanic island where they were welcomed by 28 inhabitants.

Q1: Where did the narrator want to go and why?

A: The narrator wanted to duplicate the ‘round-the-world voyage’ made by the famous explorer Captain James Cook 200 years ago. So he built a boat ‘wavewalker’ for the purpose. It was a 23 metre, 30 ton wooden-hulled sailboat. It was tested it for months in the roughest weather. The leisure time was spent in strengthing their seafaring skills in British waters.

Q2:”I didn’t want to worry you when you were trying to save us all”. What does this show about the speaker?

A: This sentence was spoken by Sue, the narrator’s 7 years old daughter. She was very courageous. After the gigantic wave hit the ship, she was also hurt. Her head was swollen when the narrator saw her in the cabin. But she never mentioned the deep cut in her arm because she didn’t want her father to worry about her when he was trying to save everybody else.

Q3: Why did Jonathan call the narrator, the best daddy and best captain in the world?

A: they all reached the island Ile Amesterdam. Jonathan called the narrator the best daddy and the best captain in the world. He was expressing his relief and gratitude towards his father dueto the narrator’s devotion to save them all from death as well as seafaring skills. He was the “best captain” because he had correctly enabled them to steer to the island so that they survived.

Q4:Justify the title of the story: “We’re Not Afraid to Die-----”

A: This is story of courage, perseverance (determination) that was shown by the narrator, his crewmen, his wife and children. Every body confronted (face) the disaster with patience, courage and determination. Even the children showed courage.

They did not give up hope till the last moment. The narrator made all possible attempts to save their lives. Like his father, Jon reacted very bravely that they were not afraid to die, but it would be better if they died together. So, the title is appropriate and logically justified.