

Footprints Without Feet

(Class X – NCERT)

Chapter 9: The Book That Saved the Earth – Claire Boiko

Detailed Summary (Expanded, Exam-Oriented)

Set in the 25th century, a historian recounts how a book of nursery rhymes prevented a Martian invasion of Earth in 2040. Think-Tank, the pompous Martian commander, sends a probe crew to Earth. They land in a library but do not recognize books. Think-Tank, unable to admit ignorance, declares they are sandwiches, then communication devices. After taking vitamin pills, they can read Mother Goose rhymes but misinterpret them literally. They think Earthlings grow armies in gardens, have cows that jump over moons, and are planning to attack Mars. Terrified, Think-Tank orders complete evacuation of Mars. This ridiculous misunderstanding saves Earth from invasion. Years later, Martians learn the truth and establish friendly relations with Earth, but never speak of their embarrassing panic.

Central Themes

1. Arrogance and Ignorance

Think-Tank's combination of ignorance and ego almost causes disaster.

2. Importance of Humility

Noodle's humble, tactful approach leads to better outcomes than arrogance.

3. Misunderstanding and Communication

The crisis stems entirely from misinterpreting simple children's rhymes.

4. Cultural Context Matters

Understanding requires proper cultural and contextual knowledge.

Character Sketches

1. Think-Tank

Pompous, arrogant Martian leader who refuses to admit ignorance. His ego leads to catastrophic misunderstandings.

2. Noodle

Intelligent, humble apprentice who is actually smarter than Think-Tank but tactfully manages his superior's ego.

3. The Probe Crew

Loyal followers who obey orders, even absurd ones like eating books.

Important Vocabulary (With Meanings)

- **Invasion** – hostile entry into territory
- **Pompous** – self-important, arrogant
- **Surveillance** – close observation
- **Apprentice** – someone learning from expert
- **Probe** – investigating vehicle

Exam-Ready Key Points

- Martians plan to invade Earth in 2040
- Think-Tank mistakes books for sandwiches, then communication devices
- Crew misinterprets nursery rhymes as military intelligence
- Think Earthlings grow armies, have super-powered cows
- Panic and evacuate Mars to Alpha Centauri
- A simple book of rhymes saves Earth from invasion
- Story teaches that arrogance plus ignorance is dangerous