

Unit 2 Prose

I Can't Climb Trees Anymore

Ruskin Bond



Warm Up

- Have you ever tried swinging from a tree?
- Have you ever climbed up a tree to pluck fruits?
- Think of other occasions when you have climbed up trees, either near your home or outside. Share your reasons with the class.

Read the story given below. Find out why the visitor feels that he can't climb trees anymore.

He stood on the grass verge by the side of the road and looked over the garden wall at the old house. It hadn't changed much. The old house built with solid blocks of granite wasn't altered at all. But there was a new outhouse, and there were fewer trees. He was glad to see that the jackfruit tree still stood at the side of the building casting its shade on the wall.

He remembered his grandmother saying: 'A blessing rests on the house where the shadow of a tree falls.' And so the present owners must also be receiving the tree's blessings. At the spot where he stood there had once been a **turnstile**, and as a boy he would swing on it, going round and round until he was quite dizzy. Now the turnstile was gone, the opening walled up. Tall **hollyhocks** grew on the other side of the wall.

'What are you looking at?'

It was a disembodied voice at first. Moments later a girl stood framed between dark red hollyhocks staring at the man. She was only twelve or thirteen, with lively eyes and long black hair.

'I'm looking at the house. Is it yours?', he asked.

'No. It's my father's. Why? Do you want to buy it?'

'And what does your father do?'

'He's only a **colonel**.'

'Only a colonel?'

'Well, he should have been a brigadier by now.'

The man burst out laughing.

'It's not funny,' she said. 'Even Mommy says he should have been a **brigadier**.'

It was on the tip of his tongue to make a witty remark ('*Perhaps that's why he's still a colonel*'), but he did not want to give