



Class 12 English Flamingo NCERT Solutions Chapter 4 The Rattrap

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1. Notice these expressions in the text. Infer their meanings from the context.

keep body and soul together: to manage to keep alive; to survive

hunger gleamed in his eyes: feeling so hungry that the expression shows on one's face

plods along the road: moving along the road slowly but deliberately, to walk with a heavy feet

unwonted joy: unusual pleasure or happiness

impenetrable prison: impassable confinement

nodded a haughty consent: indifferent agreement

eased his way: moved himself slowly and carefully

fallen into a line of thought: agreement of thoughts

things have gone downhill: to decline or grow worse and worse

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Think As you Read

1. From where did the peddler get the idea of the world being a rattrap?

Answer

One day the peddler was thinking of his rattraps. Suddenly he was struck by an idea that the whole world with its lands and seas, its cities and villages was nothing but a big rattrap. It offered riches and joys, shelter and food as baits in the same manner as the rattrap offered cheese and pork. As soon as someone touches the bait, he finds himself in the trap.

2. Why was he amused by this idea?

Answer

The peddler believed that the world with all its riches and joys, food and shelter appears as a rattrap to tempt people. The world had never been kind to him. It gave him unwonted joy to think ill of it. So he was amused to think about the people who were already caught in the trap and others circling around the bait.

3. Did the peddler expect the kind of hospitality that he received from the crofter?

Answer

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No, the peddler did not expect the kind of hospitality that he received from the crofter. This was because usually he was greeted by 'sour' and unfriendly faces whenever he knocked on doors and requested for shelter.

4. Why was the crofter so talkative and friendly with the peddler?

Answer

The crofter was an old man without wife and children. He was living a monotonous and dull life in solitude. He welcomed his guest very warmly. He offered him food and shelter. Naturally, he was happy to get someone to talk to in his loneliness. So he was talkative and friendly with the peddler.

5. Why did he show the thirty kroner to the peddler?

Answer

The crofter was very proud of his cow that gave him enough milk to support him. He told peddler that he had got thirty kronor last month as payment by supplying the milk to creamery. The peddler seemed doubtful about it. So, in order to assure his guest he showed thirty kronor to the peddler.

6. Did the peddler respect the confidence reposed in him by the crofter?

Answer

No, the peddler did not respect the confidence reposed in him by the crofter. In fact, he betrayed his trust by robbing the thirty kronors from him.

However, later in the story, his conscience was awakened by his stay with the Willmanssons and he decided to return the money.

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1. What made the peddler think that he had indeed fallen into a rattrap?

Answer

After stealing the crofter's money, the peddler believed that it was not safe to walk on the public highway. So he went into the woods. But it was a big and confusing forest. He walked and walked but could not get out of it. The forest having its trunks, branches and thickets appeared to him a big rattrap. Then he realized that he had fallen into the rattrap.

2. Why did the ironmaster speak kindly to the peddler and invite him home?

Answer

In the uncertain reflection from furnace, the ironmaster mistook the peddler as his old regimental comrade, Captain Von Stahle. His condition was very miserable. So being an old acquaintance he wanted to help him. He also wanted his company on Christmas Eve. So the ironmaster spoke kindly to the peddler and invited him home.

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3. Why did the peddler decline the invitation?

Answer

The peddler knew that the ironmaster had mistaken him as his old regiment comrade. The invitation by the ironmaster did not please the peddler since he had the stolen money in his pocket. He thought that it would be like throwing himself voluntarily into the lion's den. He was feeling guilty and frightened. So he declined the invitation.

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1. What made the peddler accept Edla Willman son's invitation?

Answer

Edla Willman son had better power of persuasion. She looked at the peddler quite compassionately. She knew he was afraid. So she assured him that no harm would come to him and he would be allowed to leave just as freely as he came. Her friendly manner made the peddler feel confidence in her and accepted the invitation.

2. What doubts did Edla have about the peddler?

Answer

When Edla went to the iron mill to fetch the peddler, she noticed that he was frightened. She had doubts that the peddler had stolen something or had escaped prison. His appearance and behaviour also left her in doubts whether he was actually an educated man, as claimed by her father.

3. When did the ironmaster realise his mistake?

Answer

The ironmaster realised his mistake the next day when the peddler turned up at breakfast. The valet had bathed the peddler, cut his hair, shaved him and given him clothes. The ironmaster realised that he had been deceived in recognising the person because of the reflection of the furnace, the previous night.

4. What did the peddler say in his defence when it was clear that he was not the person the ironmaster had thought he was?

Answer

The ironmaster came to know the reality about the peddler the next morning. The peddler in his defence explained that he never pretended to be what he was not. He showed himself as a poor trader. He only desired to sleep in the forge for the night. He had declined the ironmaster's invitation again and again.

5. Why did Edla still entertain the peddler even after she knew the truth about him?

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Answer

The peddler's true identity came to light the next morning. But Edla served the peddler not as her father's old comrade. Even after knowing the reality about the peddler she wanted him to stay with them on Christmas Eve and enjoy a day of peace. In her view it was not proper to chase away a person whom they had invited on Christmas.

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1. Why was Edla happy to see the gift left by the peddler?

Answer

When Edla opened the package of gift left by the peddler she felt very happy. She found a small rattrap with three wrinkled ten kronor notes and a letter addressed to her. He had left the 30 kronors for its rightful owner. He was not a thief but his circumstances made him so. She was happy to note that after all he had changed.

2. Why did the peddler sign himself as Captain von Stahle?

Answer

The peddler was a vagabond. When he was invited by the ironmaster, he behaved like a real captain. In this role, he raised himself above the petty temptation. Kindness and hospitality shown by Edla had transformed him completely. He wanted to behave nicely with them. So he signed himself as Captain Von Stahle.

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Understanding the Text

1. How does the peddler interpret the acts of kindness and hospitality shown by the crofter, the ironmaster and his daughter?

Answer

The different ways in which the peddler repaid the three people corresponds to the way he interpreted the kindness of the three people. The peddler realised that for the crofter it was his craving for company that led him to offer his hospitality. The ironmaster's hospitality apparently is limited to his acquaintances. It was only the daughter who genuinely offered warmth and goodness to the peddler. He was touched by Edla's kindness and it made him want to act differently. He repaid her good treatment with a gesture of true gratitude.

2. What are the instances in the story that show that the character of the ironmaster is different from that of his daughter in many ways?

Answer

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The ironmaster misunderstood the peddler for an old acquaintance, whereas his daughter could make out that the man was afraid, which was suggestive of him having stolen something. Though the father and the daughter express compassion for the vagabond both do so for different reasons. The ironmaster was sure to help the vagabond get over his tramp manners because he had mistaken the latter for his old comrade. The daughter however wishes to feed him and welcome him in spite of knowing that he was not Captain Von Stahle. The father acts impulsively and casually and invites him without confirming the stranger's identity. On realizing his mistake he recklessly wants to hand him over to the sheriff. Only when he is threatened to be ensnared by the rattrap of this world that he thinks otherwise. Edla on the other hand shows a strong sense of observation. She rightly judges him to be a tramp without any education. She persuades her father to let him stay because they had promised him Christmas cheer. When the blacksmith's daughter infects the protagonist with her true altruism the peddler's inner soul experiences a rapid transformation from an ugly duckling to a dazzling swan.

3. The story has many instances of unexpected reactions from the characters to others' behavior. Pick out instances of these surprises.

Answer

The first instance is that of the crofter's hospitality to the peddler. The rattrap peddler, used to being shooed away, was surprised at the friendly behaviour of the crofter. The peddler was also surprised at the sudden invitation given by the ironmaster, who was himself shocked to realize his mistake in recognizing the peddler, the next day. Another unexpected reaction, for both the peddler and the ironmaster, is Edla's intervention to seek peddler's presence for Christmas. However, the most unexpected reaction is from the peddler when he leaves the package and the letter for Edla, showing gratitude to the girl's hospitality and respect for him.

4. What made the peddler finally change his ways?

Answer

Edla Willman son treated the tramp in a friendly manner. She was nice and kind to her. She interceded on his behalf when her father was about to turn him out. She still entertained the peddler even after knowing the truth about him. She offered him the snit as Christmas present and invited him to spend the next Christmas with them. Her love and understanding aroused the essential goodness of the peddler and he changed his ways.

5. How does the metaphor of the rattrap serve to highlight the human predicament?

Answer

The metaphor of the rattrap signifies that the world exists only to trap people by setting baits for them. Whenever someone is tempted by the luxuries, he ends up being caught in a dangerous trap. The author, thus, makes a much deeper comment on the woeful plight of those in pursuit of the worldly pleasures, which often lead them to unfortunate situations. The story helps in realising the importance of general goodness and kindness. The peddler is saved from the snare of the huge rattrap called world only when he appreciates the kindness to him by Edla.

6. The peddler comes out as a person with a subtle sense of humour. How does this serve in

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lightening the seriousness of the theme of the story and also endear him to us?

Answer

The peddler doesn't come across as a humorous person, although one can locate a subtle sense of humour in the way he thinks about the world as being a giant rattrap. He is singularly pleased by this thought of his because it provides him with the opportunity of thinking 'ill' of the world that is not kind to him. It is clearly visible that whenever he gets caught unaware, in the web of deceit spun by his scheming mind, he hides behind the thought that the world is a rattrap and he merely a prey. Thus, he lightens the mood and theme of the story and makes us endear him.

Talking about the Text

Discuss the following in groups of four. Each group can deal with one topic. Present the views of your group to the whole class.

1. The reader's sympathy is with the peddler right from the beginning of the story. Why is this so? Is the sympathy justified?

Answer

From the beginning, the rattrap seller is shown as a victim of his situation and not a downright evil character. The peddler had to resort to beggary and stealing because his business is not profitable enough to make both ends meet. His condition of penury does not allow him to be fully righteous. Moreover, we find that he lacks friends and guide to steer him in the right path. The sympathy is justified because in the end we find out that the peddler is capable of appreciating genuine goodness and hospitality. When he is treated with respect and kindness, he reciprocates the same in the best way he can.

2. The story also focuses on human loneliness and the need to bond with others.

Answer

The Rattrap deals with the issues of human loneliness and the need to bond with others. Not only the peddler but also other characters like the crofter, the ironmaster and Edla emphasise this fact. The peddler's conscience had left him because he had been lonely in his predicament, for a long time. But Edla's kindness and hospitality changed him. The crofter, on the other hand, is a lonely fellow whose craving for company leads him to give shelter to a vagabond, and he ends up getting robbed. Even, the ironmaster and his daughter suffer from loneliness. They crave company on Christmas Eve and are excited when they get the opportunity to serve a guest.

4. The story is both entertaining and philosophical.

Answer

The story is told in the form of a fairy tale with a happy ending. The narrative is interesting with many surprises and attention-grabbing dialogues. The twists and the unexpected reactions of the characters often astonish the reader making the story entertaining.

However, the author has carefully managed to weave philosophical elements into the storyline. The rattrap peddler's comparison of the whole world with a giant rattrap makes this an interesting

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commentary on how such people end up getting trapped in the giant chasm. The story also makes an observation on the inherent goodness of people. It also showcases how goodness and kindness shown by some people can change others' perspective.

Working with Words

1. The man selling ratttraps is referred to by many terms such as “peddler, stranger” etc. Pick out all such references to him. What does each of these labels indicate of the context or the attitude of the people around him?

Answer

	Labels	Contexts
1	Peddler	As he peddles or sells the ratttraps
2	Vagabond	Used to describe his nomadic lifestyle
3	Stranger	Used to refer to the peddler when he was at the crofter's place, possibly to emphasize the fact that the crofter was compassionate to an unknown man
4	Guest	He is treated with compassion, especially at the ironmaster's house where he was invited to spend the Christmas
5	Intruder	When the peddler trespasses and enters the iron mill
6	Tramp	When the peddler asks for lodgings at the iron mill; also when the ironmaster, mistaking him for his old regimental comrade plans of helping him drop his tramp ways and begin a new vocation
7	Ragamuffin	When the ironmaster first notices him wrapped in rags and in the state to utter destitution
8	Old regimental comrade	The ironmaster mistakes him for his old friend when he first meets the peddler at his iron mill
9	Poor hungry wretch	Used only once when the author mentions the fact that Edla was excited about the prospect of getting a chance to help an unfortunate fellow on Christmas
10	Rat	The peddler calls himself a rat and thanks Edla for helping him escape the ratttrap with her kindness and compassion

2. You came across the words, plod, trudge, and stagger in the story. These words indicate movement accompanied by weariness. Find five other such words with a similar meaning.

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**Answer**

other words are lurch, stumble, slog, hike, clump, traipse and stomp.

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Noticing Form

1. He made them himself at odd moments.
2. He raised himself.
3. He had let himself be fooled by a bait and had been caught.
4. ... a day may come when you yourself may want to get a big piece of pork.

Notice the way in which these reflexive pronouns have been used (pronoun + self)

In 1 and 4 the reflexive pronouns “himself” and “yourself” are used to convey emphasis.

In 2 and 3 the reflexive pronoun is used in place of personal pronoun to signal that it refers to the same subject in the sentence.

Pick out other examples of the use of reflexive pronouns from the story and notice how they are used.

Answer

Examples	Usage
“...would be like throwing himself voluntarily into the lion’s den”	used in place of personal pronoun to signal that it refers to the same subject in the sentence
“...except my oldest daughter and myself ”	used in place of personal pronoun to signal that it refers to the same subject in the sentence
“...he laughed to himself .”	used in place of personal pronoun to signal that it refers to the same subject in the sentence
“...better powers of persuasion than he himself ”	used to convey emphasis
“stretched himself out on the floor”	used in place of personal pronoun to signal that it refers to the same subject in the sentence
“He could not bring himself to oppose her.”	used to convey emphasis

Thinking about the Language

1. Notice the words in bold in the following sentence.

“The fire boy shoveled charcoal into the maw of the furnace with a great deal of clatter”. This is a phrase that is used in the specific context of an iron plant.

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Pick out other such phrases and words from the story that are peculiar to the terminology of ironworks.

Answer

Other such phrases could be as follows:

1. 'a hard regular thumping'
2. 'Hammer strokes'
3. 'A large plant with smelter, rolling mill and forge'
4. 'Pig iron'
5. 'Coal dust'
6. 'Put on the anvil'
2. Mjolis is a card game of Sweden.

Name a few indoor games played in your region. 'Chopar' could be an example.

Answer

Some indoor games are chess, ludo, table tennis, playing cards, billiards, etc.

3. A crofter is a person who rents or owns a small farm especially in Scotland. Think of other uncommon terms for 'a small farmer' including those in your language.

Answer

Some other terms are peasant, plower, cultivator, krishak, kisan etc