



CLASS XII
VISTAS: SHOULD WIZARD HIT MOMMY

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Gist of the Lesson: • The chapter captures a very sensitive reaction of a small girl to an important aspect of the story that her father narrates to her. • The story reveals the worldview of a little child to a difficult moral question that shows her mental or psychological richness. • Jo is a little girl of four years. She is engaged in a story session with her father. • Jack, the father used to tell her a story every evening and especially for Saturday naps. • Jo feels herself involved with the characters and the happenings. • The story always had an animal with a problem. The old owl advises him to visit the wizard who would solve the problem. • Skunk's problem- he smelt bad, visited the wizard who changed it to the smell of roses. • Skunk's mother was unhappy with it and took him back to the wizard. She hit the wizard and asked him to restore the original smell. She wanted her son to keep his identity of a skunk and wanted his friends to accept him for himself. So the wizard changes him back to smell like a skunk. • After hearing the story of Roger Skunk Jo was not happy with the ending. • She wants her father to change the ending. She wants the wizard to hit the mother back and let Roger be which her father was not ready to do to establish his authority. This raises a difficult moral question whether parents possess the right to impose their will on their children. • Her father finds it difficult to answer her question.

Solved questions: Short Answer Questions:

1. How did the wizard help Roger Skunk?

The wizard was moved by Roger Skunk's story. On finding his magic wand - chanted some magic words & granted that Roger should smell like roses.

2. How did Roger Skunk's Mommy react when he went home smelling of roses?

Roger Skunk began to smell like roses. Mommy asked about the smell - Roger Skunk replied that the wizard had made him smell like that mother did not like that and asked Roger to come with her.

3. How did the Skunk's mother get him his old smell back?

Mother was furious to learn about the wizard who changed the original smell. She immediately visited the wizard and hit him on his head and asked him to restore the original smell.

4. Who is Jo? How has she changed in the past two years? How did Jo behave in 'reality phase'?

(Ans) Jo is Jack's 4 year old daughter. She was no more a patient listener. She did not take things for granted and tried to see things in her own way.

5. How does Jo want the story to end and why?

(Ans) Jo understood Roger Skunk's need to enjoy the company of his friends; therefore wanted that the wizard should take Roger's side.

6. Do you think Jack and Jo could identify with Roger skunk as a victim of the hatred of other creatures?

(Ans) Jack brought the story to life when he narrated the tale remembering certain humiliations of his own

childhood. The corners of Jo's mouth drooped down and her lower lip bent forward. A tear flowed along the side of the nose. This shows that even Jo could identify with Roger skunk.

7. Which two opposite forces acted on Jack while he was telling Jo the story?

(Ans) Jack was telling Jo something she must know and had no wish to hurry on. On the other hand he heard a chair scrapping. He realized that he must help his pregnant wife Clare to paint the wood work down stairs. These were the opposite forces acting on Jack while he was telling Jo the story.

8. Why did Jo not approve of skunk's mother scolding him for his new smell?

(Ans) Jo was very happy that skunk smelt like roses. He was accepted by the woodland creatures and was happy. Jo did not approve of skunk's mother scolding him for something that made him acceptable among his friends and brought him happiness.

9. What do you learn about Jo's new reality phase?

(Ans) Earlier Jo used to accept her father's word about magic etc. now she had started asking if magic spells were real. She had become curious since a month. She was growing up and wished to check the reality of all that was told to her.

Long Answer Questions:

1. Why an adult's perspective of life is different from that of a child's as given in the story?

(Ans) An adult's perceptive on life is always different - maturity of a person becomes his barometer to judge right & wrong. For him/her everything that occurs has a message. In the story, Jack at no level accepts Jo's worldview that wizard should hit Mommy. On the other hand - a child's perceptive is limited to his activities - child's perceptive completely different - they love 'action' more than thought - so does Jo in the story - she would delight in hearing the story of Roger Skunk's Mommy being hit by the wizard.

2. What is the moral issue that the story raises?

(Ans) The story shows the conflict between two generations. It tells us about the belief, of the older generation, in customs and traditions and constantly questioning attitude of the younger generation, hence contributing to a generation gap. Not understanding her son's pain of loneliness and dejection, mother Skunk gets his smell changed to his original foul smell and loves him the way he is, raising the moral issue of whether parents should always decide what the children should do or let the children do what they like to do. There is an evident contrast between an adult's perspective on life and the world view of a little child. Jo wants the wizard to hit Mommy and not vice versa because she represents the new generation and does not agree with her father's view. Jack sums up the issue in one sentence- 'She knew what was right'. Jack also says that the little Skunk agreed to the mother's proposal because he loved his mother more than the other animals. Little Jo feels that the Skunk's mother should not have robbed her little son of the pleasure he derived when playing with the other animals when he smelt of roses. She insists that the wizard hit the Mommy on the head and calls little Skunk's mother a 'Stupid Mommy'. Keeping to her view point, she insisted that her father should tell her the story the next day in a different manner. So we see that the story deals with moral issues dependent on the different levels of maturity of Jack and Jo.

3. How does Jo want the story to end? Why? What light does it throw on Jo's character?

(Ans) Jo wanted the story to end with Roger being accepted by the other animals. In Jack's version, the wizard was hit by mommy. Jo did not relish this. The wizard was the person who fulfilled everyone's wishes. He had rid Roger Skunk of the bad odour. So she wanted her father to end the story with Roger skunk having a new and pleasant smell and wizard spanking the stupid 'mommy'. Jo would get totally involved in the

story. She even shed a tear or so, when woodland creatures spurned Roger. She could not bear injustice to the wizard by 'mommy' skunk. She wanted the end of the story to change in which the benevolent Wizard hits mommy for being inconsiderate to Roger's need for acceptance by friends. She was independent in her thinking. Jo remains unconvinced by the father's argument that mothers are always right.

4. Character Sketch of Jack.

(Ans) Jack is the protagonist of the story 'Should Wizard Hit Mommy?' which examines the issue of parenting, the adult tendency to quell the questioning mind of a child and the belief that the view point of the adult represents the only valid one. Jack is conscious of his duties as a father and husband. He has been telling stories to his daughter Jo since she was two years old, before her Saturday and evening naps, but now two and a half years later he is fatigued and confused by her constant questioning, pointing errors (roger fish instead of skunk), asking for clarifications and suggesting alternatives. He has the typical parental attitude and opinion that parents know what is best for their children and stifles her objections and amendments shown by his defending the skunk's mother (and indirectly his own). Jack feels caught in an ugly middle position physically, emotionally and mentally. He did not like women to take anything for granted, to the extent that he extends the story, changing the ending, giving it the face that he wants to. This despite the fact that he knows that he should be helping his pregnant wife paint the woodwork. Jack is someone who is not used to his authority being questioned and so is confused by Jo's questioning. Though a loving parent he finds it hard to accept the fact that Jo now has a mind of her own. His insensitivity and impatience comes across in his dealings with his daughter, and the fact that an adult's viewpoint is biased by personal experiences.

5. What is the ugly middle position where jack finds himself trapped?

Ans The ugly middle position refers to jack's helplessness and dilemma. Its ugly because jack is not used to the women questioning his authority and Jo's constant interruptions, clarifications, pointing out mistakes, disagreements, questioning the end of the story and suggesting an alternate end makes jack uncomfortable. It is a middle position because jack is as if coerced by the tradition (recalls his own mother) and society to inculcate certain moral lessons in Jo but at the same time he is at loss. Jack feels that he has been caught in an ugly middle position physically, emotionally as well as mentally. He was conscious of his duties as a father and as a husband. His efforts to make Jo fall asleep proved quite fatiguing. She kept on interrupting him, asking for clarifications, pointing errors and suggesting alternatives. So he extended the story, though he was in a haste to go down stairs and help his pregnant wife in her hard work of painting the woodwork. The result of the extension to the story proved unfruitful and unpleasant for Jo, Jack and Clare. Jo wanted him to change the ending of the story. Clare complained that he had told a long story. Jack felt utter weariness and did not want to speak with his wife or work with her or touch her. He was really caught in an ugly middle position.

Answer the following in about 30-40 words.

1. Why was story telling 'especially fatiguing' for Jack on Saturdays?
2. Which two factors made Jack continue the story? (Board 2013)
3. What was Roger Skunk's problem?
4. How did Jack enact the part of the wizard?
5. How did the woodland creatures react to the Skunk's new smell? What did Skunk feel about the new change?
6. Why did Roger Skunk's mommy insist on taking him to the wizard at once? (Board 2013)
7. Why did Jo not approve of Skunk's mother scolding him for his new smell?
8. Why did Jo feel that the Skunk's mother was stupid? (Board 2014)
9. What inference do you draw from the narrator's statement, 'eventually they got used to the way he was and did not mind it at all'?
10. Why was Jack worried about his wife Clare?

Points for the Textual Long Questions

1. **What is the moral issue the story raises?** The story raises the moral question – should parents always decide what is best for their children or should the children be allowed to develop unquestioningly – through the story of Roger Skunk – the author brings home the point – the individuality of a person should never be at stake – Roger's mother does not like him smelling like roses – for her he would be better off with his original smell – makes the wizard restore his smell – through the character of Jack the author reiterates the fact that parent know what is best for their children.
2. **How does Jo want the story to end and why?** Jo was very happy to learn that skunk had a new pleasant smell – happy to know that his friends accepted him and played with him – but when Jack made skunk's mother restore his original smell Jo objects to the ending – she does not relish the idea that skunk would not be accepted by his playmates once again – she wants her father to end the story that the wizard should spank skunk's stupid mother who does not let her son have a new smell – insists that Jack change the ending.
3. **Why does Jack insist that it was the wizard that was hit and not the mother?** Jack insisted that it was the wizard that should be hit because he laced every story with some autobiographical details – the insult of Roger Skunk was created out of his own childhood – so when mummy takes him back to the wizard to restore his smell to the original one Jack is convinced that the mother is doing absolutely the right thing in retaining the individuality of the child – not willing to alter the end and insisted that skunk loved his mummy more than his friends – she knew what was right for him.
4. **What makes Jack feel caught in an ugly middle position?** While Jack was telling the story – he heard some furniture being moved – wanted to go down and help Clare who was six months pregnant – help her in painting the wood work – after the story was over – went downstairs – saw Clare wearing an old shirt and painting an old chair – he visualised the wood work as a cage and felt caught in an ugly middle position – this is reflective of his superior attitude and his disapproval of women taking him for granted – he liked them to be apprehensive – to hang on his words.
5. **What is your stance regarding the two endings to the Roger Skunk story?** In Jack's story about Roger Skunk- wizard made skunk smell like roses-he found friends – but his mommy did not approve of his smell- got the wizard to restore his original smell- But Jo did not like this ending and wanted skunk to smell good again
Jo's ending of the story- poetic justice- good rewarded- skunk found friends which brought a lot of happiness-being isolated is not good for a child's psyche- mommy need to understand the importance of being in a group.
Jack's ending of the story- the world is full of individual differences- one has to be true to one's identity- parents are a better judge of any situation- life has to be accepted with all its colours.
6. **Why is an adult's perspective different from that of a child?** An adult's perspective is different from that of a child because: Children have a rose-tinted view of the world while adults are more realistic, even cynical. Duty, morals, individuality are terms that children do not understand, Children understand only the reality that they have been exposed to and cannot think of ideas and feelings in abstraction, Children understand only basic emotions such as happiness, sadness, Children cannot justify/ explain an unhappy ending.