

Class 12 English chapter The Rattrap

About the author: Selma Lagerlof was a Swedish writer whose stories have been translated into many languages. Universal theme runs through all of them..This story is set amidst the mine of Sweden, rich in iron ore, which figure large in history and legends of that country. The metaphor of the rattrap serves to high light the human predicament. Material benefits are the traps that most human beings are prone to fall in to Human beings do have a tendency to redeem themselves from dishonest ways as does the peddler at the end of the story.

Answer the following questions:

1. How does the peddler interpret the acts of kindness and hospitality shown by the crofter, the ironmaster and his daughter?
 - A. The peddler interprets the acts of kindness and hospitality shown by the crofter, the iron master and his daughter differently. He cheats the crofter as he provides him companying his loneliness and helps him pass time. He wants to get a couple of kronors from the iron master and is surprised at the contrasting style of behavior of the father and daughter. He touched by the kindness, care and intervention of Edla on his behalf.
2. What are the instance in the story that shows that the character of the iron master is different from that of his daughter in many ways?
 - A. The iron master is impulsive .whereas his daughter is cool, logical, kind and thoughtful .In uncertain light iron master mistakes the stranger as his old regiment comrade .He invites him home and takes care of his feedings clothing etc. When he sees him broad day light he calls the man dishonest, demands an explanation and is ready to call the sheriff (police).

On the other hand his daughter is more observant. She notices the fear of the stranger and thinks that either he is a thief or run away prisoner. In spite of that she is gentle, kind and friendly to him. She treats him nicely. Even after knowing the mistake in identity.

3. What made peddler finally change his ways?
 - A. Edla Williamson treated the tramp in a friendly manner. She was nice and kind to him. She intercedes on his behalf when her father was about turn him out. She still entertained the peddler even after knowing the truth about him. She offered him the suit as a Christmas present and invited him to spend the next Christmas with them. Her love and understanding aroused the essential goodness in the peddler and finally he changed his ways.
4. How does the metaphor of the rattrap serve to highlight the human predicament?
 - A. The world entices a person through the various good things of life such as riches and joy, shelter and food, heat and clothing. These were just; like baits in the rattrap. Once some one is tempted by the bait, the world closed on him. The peddler was tempted by thirty kronor of the crofter. It makes him hide himself. He walks through the wood. He is afraid to go to the Manor house. He gets peace only after returning the bait (money) .
5. The story also focuses on human loneliness and the need to bond with others. Discuss.
 - A. There are at least three characters in the story who suffer from loneliness and express the need to bond with others. They represent three strata of the human society as well .The peddler with the rattrap, the old crofter and the iron master all suffer from loneliness. The peddler is called a tramp, a vagabond and stranger at various points of the story. He moves wearily from one place to the other..He is lost

in his own thoughts. He seeks shelter for a night and people look at him with sour faces..The old crofter suffers loneliness as he has neither wife nor children with him. Hence, he feels happy when he gets peddler to talk to in his loneliness. The iron master also lonely in his Manor house..His wife had died and his sons are aboard. There is no one at home except his oldest daughter and himself..He admits frankly that they didn't have any company for Christmas. The stranger turns down the request not to because he is against bonding with others but because he fears being caught with stolen money.

6. The story is both entertaining and philosophical. Discuss.
 - A. The story entertains us by providing glimpses in to human nature and how people reacts to various situations .The actions of the peddler after stealing thirty Koron are quite amusing .The reaction of the black smiths to the tramp's request for shelter show how casual and indifferent human beings can be.

The U-turn in the iron master's attitude towards the stranger reveals how selfish and ignorant human beings can be .Mistaking the vagabond for his old regimental. Comrade, whom he thinks he has run across un expectedly, he asks the stranger to accompany him home and spend Christmas with them..When the stranger refuses to go with him the iron master sends his daughter .With her better persuasive power she makes him follow her. .The iron master is annoyed on seeing the stranger in broad day light. But instead of realizing his own mistakes he put the blame on the man. He talks of handing him to the sheriff..The metaphor of the world being a rattrap saves the situation for the tramp, but the iron master wants to turn him out .His daughter's comments are quite entertaining and philosophical. She wants to tramp to enjoy a day of peace .Secondly, she doesn't want to chase away a person whom they had invited home and had promised Christmas cheer.