Vikram’s English Academy (ICSE)

**Notes: The Lady or the Tiger**

**Answer the following:**

1. **Which term has been used to describe the king mentioned in the lesson? What does it mean?**

Ans: The term semi-barbaric is used to describe the king mentioned in the lesson. Barbaric means cruel or savage and semi is a prefix meaning partly or half. This term is used to describe the king as he was partly cruel and partly civilized.

1. **Describe the amphitheatre. Why did the king make it?**

Ans: The amphitheatre was vast with encircling galleries and mysterious vaults and unseen passages. It was made to give poetic justice in which crime was punished or virtues rewarded by the decrees of an impartial and incorruptible chance.

1. **How was poetic justice ensured by the king? OR What was the king’s semi-barbaric way of administering justice.**

Ans: When a subject was accused of a crime of sufficient importance according to the king, public notice was given that on an appointed day the fate of the accused person would be decided in the arena (the amphitheatre). When all the people had assembled in the galleries, the king would sit high up on his throne on one side of the arena. He would then give a signal and a door beneath him opened and the accused subject stepped out into the amphitheatre. Directly opposite him, on the other side were two doors exactly alike and side by side. It was the duty and the privilege of the person on trial to walk directly to these doors and open one of them. He had the complete freedom to choose and would not be guided or influenced by any. From one door a hungry tiger would come out which would tear him to pieces. If he opened the other, there came a lady, the most suitable to him. The lady was carefully selected. The accused would then have to immediately marry the lady. This was the king’s semi-barbaric method of administering justice.

1. **Why was the method for punishing the accused fair according to the king?**

Ans: The method was fair for many reasons. The criminal could not know out of which door would come the lady, he opened either he pleased without having the slightest idea about his fate the next moment. The outcome was such that the accused person was instantly punished if he found himself guilty and if innocent he was rewarded on the spot whether he liked it or not. Thus, the method seemed perfectly just to the king.

1. **How did this kind of poetic justice affect the life of the common people?**

Ans: When the people gathered together on one of the great trial days, they never knew whether they were to witness a bloody slaughter or a hilarious wedding. This element of uncertainty aroused the interest of the people in the occasion. The masses were entertained and pleased and the thinking part of the community could not call this plan unfair as the accused had the whole matter in his own hands.

1. **What turn of fate did the king witness?**

Ans: The king had a daughter who was very much semi-barbaric like him. The king loved her above all humanity. One day the princess fell in love with a young man who was a courtier but not from a higher rank. When the king heard about the affair, he did not hesitate in his duty and immediately got the young man arrested.

1. **‘This was an especially important occasion, and his majesty, as well as all the people, was greatly interested in this trial.’ Which occasion is mentioned? Why were the people greatly interested?**

Ans: The occasion was the day when the young lover of the princess was to face the day of trial in the arena like all other accused. The people were greatly interested because never before had such a case occurred.

1. **What special arrangements were made this time? Why?**

Ans: This time the king ensured many special arrangements to be made. The most savage and ferocious tiger was selected and the ranks of maiden youth and beauty throughout the land were carefully surveyed by competent judges if the man happens to choose the door with the lady. The king made such special arrangements to ensure that one way or the other, the youth would be disposed of and the king would be happy that his daughter would not be marrying him.

1. **What happened when the youth walked to the arena? Why?**

Ans: When the young man walked into the arena, he was greeted with a low him of admiration and anxiety. He was tall, beautiful and fair and half the audience had not known so grand a youth had lived among them. They thought it was such a terrible thing for him to be there.

1. **Why was the princess there to witness the barbaric end of her love?**

Ans: The princess was there to witness the scene because she too had the same strand of barbarism in her blood as belonged to her father.

1. **What did the young man do on entering?**

Ans: As the youth advanced into the arena he turned as the custom was, to bow to the king, but his eyes were fixed upon the princess, who sat to the right of her father. His eyes met hers. He wanted to know from her the door that he should be selecting.

1. **What was the state of mind of the princess after hearing the decree?**

Ans: As soon as the decree had gone forth that her lover should decide his fate in the king’s arena, the princess had thought of the case day and night. That was the only thought in her mind.

1. **What unusual thing had the princess done? Why?**

Ans: As the princess possessed more power, influence and force of character than anyone who had ever before been interested in such a case, she had done what no other person had done. She had learnt the secret of the doors. She knew in which of the tow rooms stood the cage of the tiger and in which waited the lady.

1. **What did the princess know about the lady behind the door? Why did she hate the lady?**

Ans: The princess knew who the lady was and also the fact that she was one of the fairest and loveliest of the ladies of the court. She hated the lady because she had often seen or imagined she had seen the lady throw glances of admiration upon her lover and sometimes she thought her lover too returned the glances.

**15. When the young man was in the arena, what did the princess do and what did he do?**

Ans: When the young man was in the arena, the princess gestured for him to go to the door on the right, with her hand. The young man listened to the princess and opened the door on the right.

**16. Why did the young man glance at the princess?**

Ans: The young man glanced at the princess to get a clue from the princess about which door to select. He had expected her to know it because he understood her nature and his soul was assured that she would never rest until she had known the secret of the door which was hidden to all other on lookers. The only hope the young man had was an answer from the princess.

**17. How did the princess give a hint to the young man about the door? Why did the others not see her doing so?**

Ans: The princess’ right arm lay on the cushioned parapet of the seat. She raised her hand and made a slight, quick movement toward the right. No one except her lover saw her because every eye was fixed on the man in the arena.

**18. Bring out the dilemma the princess must have faced while deciding which door to show to her lover – the one with the tiger or the one with the lady.**

Ans: It was not easy for the princess to decide which door to signal to the young man – the one with the tiger or with the lady. Ever since she had found out about the secret of the doors she had been in a dilemma. At times she was filled with wild horror and had covered her face with her hands as she thought of her lover opening the door on the other side of which waited the cruel fangs of the tiger. Other times she had seen him at the other door and she had been anguished at the thought of her lover being extremely happy on opening the door with the beautiful maiden behind it. Her soul had burned with agony when she had seen him rush to meet that woman and lead her forth. Her decision had been signalled in an instant but it had been made after days and nights of a painful struggle in her thoughts.