THE RATTRAP by Selma Lagerlof

Short Answer Questions. 30-40 words:

1. Why did the rattrap seller resort to begging and thievery?
2. What philosophical idea did the peddler give about this world?
3. How did the crofter treat the peddler? Why did he do so?
4. In what context did the crofter show money to the peddler?
5. The peddler couldn’t respect the confidence reposed in him. Comment.
6. What did the peddler realise when he was stuck in the woods?
7. Describe Ramsjo iron works in the good old days.
8. Where did the peddler go to seek shelter in the cold night? Who did he meet there?
9. Why did the iron master invite the peddler over?
10. What happened after the iron master had left the mill?
11. “Although his guest was now so well groomed, the iron master did not seem pleased.” Why?
12. How did the peddler defend himself when he was questioned by the iron master?
13. Why did Edla decide to entertain the peddler even after knowing the reality?
14. How did the peddler spend Christmas Eve?
15. What did the iron master and his daughter get to know at church?
16. What had the peddler left for Edla?

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Long answer Questions. 120-150 words.

1. The crofter, iron master and Edla were kind to the peddler. How did he treat them? What values do we learn from this?
2. A little expression of love and compassion can alter human behaviour. Elaborate.

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ANSWER KEY  
  
Short Answers

1. The rattrap seller made the rattrap himself from the materials he got by begging at the big farms. The business was not profitable so he had to resort to begging and thievery to sustain his survival. He was so poor that his clothes were in rags; his face was weak and his eyes hungry.
2. The peddler got the idea about the world being a big rattrap which existed to set baits for people. The riches and joys, shelter and food, heat and clothing were the baits for people and whosoever felt tempted to touch it, would be trapped in the rattrap.
3. The rattrap peddler sought shelter in an old crofter’s roadside cottage. The old man gave him food, tobacco. He also played with the peddler, a game of cards. The crofter entertained the peddler as he was lonely and in need for some company.
4. The old crofter was so generous in his dealings with the rattrap seller that he even shared the fact that his extraordinary cow gave milk for the creamery and the previous month, he had received thirty kronor in payment. Finding the peddler incredulous, he took out the money and showed him.
5. Despite being treated like a guest, the peddler couldn’t respect the courtesy accorded to him by the crofter. The next morning, when they both went out of the house, he came back, broke the window pane and stole the money shown to him the previous night.
6. After taking away the thirty kronor, the rattrap peddler escaped into a big confusing forest and got lost. It was then that he recalled his idea of the world being a rattrap and realised that he had fallen for one of its baits and was now trapped forever. He was sure that his end was near.
7. The Ramsjo iron works in its good old days was a large plant with smelter, rolling mill and forge. In summer times, the canal was used to transport long line of heavily loaded barges and in the winter time, the roads near the mill were black from all the coal dust sifted down from the big charcoal crates.
8. When the peddler was lost in the forest, thinking his end was near, he heard a thumping sound and reached Ramsjo iron works and decided to take shelter there. In the Ramsjo iron works, he met the owner who had come to take his nightly rounds of inspection.
9. The iron master looked at the peddler in dim light and mistook him as an old acquaintance, Nils Olof, and invited him to stay with them for Christmas but the stranger declined the offer.
10. After the ironmaster had left the mill, another visitor came in. She was Edla Willmansson, daughter of the owner of Ramsjo iron works. The peddler found her so persuasive that he couldn’t decline the offer to spend Christmas Eve with them again.
11. The peddler was persuaded by Edla to spend Christmas with them. After he had shaved, showered and dressed in better clothes, he looked well groomed. In the broad daylight, when the iron master looked at the peddler, he realised that the stranger was not captain Nils Olof, his old acquaintance.
12. On being questioned by the iron master, the stranger defended himself, claiming that he had declined the invitation and had pleaded and begged to stay in the forge. He offered to put on his rags again and go away.
13. Edla had cherished the idea of making things homelike and Christmassy for the poor vagabond. Hence, she intervened for him and compelled her father to allow him to spend Christmas with them.
14. The peddler was so hungry and sleep deprived that he spent the Christmas Eve doing nothing but sleeping. He didn’t cause any trouble. He ate Christmas fish and porridge, thanked everyone and bade them goodnight. He was told by Edla that if he wanted, he could spend next Christmas Eve and would be welcome back again.
15. On Christmas day, when Edla and her father went to the church, they came to know about the crofter and his unfortunate encounter with a rattrap peddler. They realised that the man they had so carelessly invited into their home was the thief who had stolen the money from the crofter.
16. While returning from church the iron master and Edla were anxious. They anticipated that the stranger must have wiped the house clean of all valuables but they were pleasantly surprised to find that he had taken nothing. In fact, he had left thirty kronors in a rattrap along with a letter. He had requested the stolen money be returned to the crofter and had stated that since he had been treated with kindness and respect and his status elevated to that of a captain, he couldn’t embarrass them.

Long Answers

1. The peddler felt absolutely no compunctions about accepting the hospitality of the crofter. He enjoyed his dinner and spent the entire evening playing cards with his host and then made away with his money the next morning. When the iron master mistook him for a regimental comrade, invited him to his house, he felt a sense of entrapment and thus declined the invitation. He realised that to accept the invitation was like voluntarily throwing himself into the lion’s den. However, he didn’t disclose his true identity because he hoped to profit from the mistaken identity. The kindness of Edla Willmansson had touched him deeply. She made him feel comfortable and raised his self-esteem. She showed him sympathy even after his true identity was discovered and convinced her father. She didn’t suspect him and the peddler repaid the faith and compassion by leaving behind the stolen thirty kronors to be returned to the crofter. He also left a gift of a rattrap with a letter expressing his gratitude towards Edla for raising him to the status of captain and giving him a chance for redemption.
2. The peddler had spent his entire life in solitude and rejection. This had made him cynical and embittered. His sole objective was his survival without realising the difference between right and wrong. He had lost his self-worth. The rattrap selling could not provide him with enough means to sustain a living so he had to resort to begging and thievery. The life of seclusion and constant rejection had made him cynical. He developed resentment towards the world in general and had arrived at a conclusion that the whole world was a rattrap and its comfort and riches only baits. He couldn’t respect the trust reposed on him by the crofter and cheating him of thirty kronors. He did not reveal his true identity to the iron master who mistook him for his old acquaintance. However, the kindness and compassion shown by Edla helped him raise his self-esteem. Being raised to the status of captain, he actually behaved like one and maintained the trust placed in him by leaving thirty kronor along with a rattrap as a Christmas gift for Edla. He stated that he didn’t want to let her down and was grateful for giving him a chance to redeem himself proving that a little expression of love and compassion can change human behaviour.