

FIRST FLIGHT (PROSE)

1. A Letter to God

(G. L. Fuentes)

ABOUT THE STORY

Introduction

"A Letter to God" is a story about an innocent man who has unshakeable faith in the generosity of God. But this faith gives rise to an amusing situation where the persons who try to save this man's faith in God are accused by him of being 'a bunch of crooks'.

Summary

"A Letter to God" is the story of Lencho, a very hardworking and a God-fearing peasant who lives with his family in an isolated house. When the story opens, we find him waiting for a downpour that will assure a very rich harvest. Lencho shares his hope with his wife who agrees with her husband, although not as enthusiastically as him. As the family settles down for dinner, Lencho's prediction about the rainfall comes true. This welcome rain thrills Lencho, and he runs out of the house like a child to get the pleasant feel of raindrops on his body. Little does he expect that the raindrops which promised a shower of prosperity would spell disaster. The constant rain is soon accompanied by very large hailstones which keep hitting the entire valley for more than an hour, eventually destroying the crops to the last grain.

Lencho helplessly watches his devastated fields with his sons by his side. He observes that even a swarm of locusts wouldn't have created

as much havoc. The family sits together lamenting their loss. Yet their unflinching faith in God saves them from absolute frustration and they count upon the Almighty's generosity.

Lencho knows that nothing is hidden from God's eyes, so on the following Sunday, he writes a letter to God asking for a hundred pesos. He asks for this money so that he can sow his field again and tide over the crisis till the next harvest. Addressing the letter to God, Lench personally takes it to the town for posting it. At the post office he stamps it duly and drops it into the mail box.

This unique letter with an unusual addressee's name causes much amusement in the post office. In the midst of laughter, the postmaster admits that he is touched by the deep faith of the sender. He decides to send an answer to Lench on God's behalf, so that his faith remains steadfast.

He opens the letter to find that Lench has requested God to send him money. However, he does not shirk from helping Lench and contributes a part of his salary to help him. He also raises some more money by seeking donations from his friends and employees. However, even the best of his efforts can't get him a hundred pesos and he has to manage this 'act of charity' with seventy pesos only. He puts the money in an envelope, writes a letter with only one word - 'God', and addresses it to Lench.

Next Sunday, Lench returns to the post office to collect God's response to his request. The postmaster hands him the letter and looks on from his office like a contended man who has performed a good deed. Lench opens the 'letter from God' and confidently takes out the enclosed money. However, he gets angry after counting it and feels that God could not have made a mistake in sending him thirty pesos short. He could also not have denied Lench's request. Immediately, he asks for paper and ink and writes another letter to

God. He buys a stamp, affixes it on the envelope and puts it in the mailbox. The postmaster opens it to find an ironical response from Lench. In this letter, Lench had complained to God that he had received only seventy pesos and God must send the rest at the earliest. But he instructs God not to send the money through the mail because the employees at the post office were an untrustworthy 'bunch of crooks'.

TITLE

The title "A Letter to God" is direct and simple as it highlights the letter written to God by Lench. This letter displays a man's faith in God as well as the kindness of the postmaster. The poor farmer's belief in the generosity of God is reflected through this letter. Even the helpful nature of the postmaster finds an expression after he reads this letter to God. Although Lench writes two letters to God, it is the first letter that forms the binding element of Lench's story.

THEME

"A Letter to God" is based on the theme that faith in God cannot be shaken. Lench, the farmer, believes strongly in the generosity of God. This faith gives him the hope to get help from God when he loses his crops to hailstorm. He actually writes to God for help and when he gets the response, he does not doubt God's grace. On the contrary, he suspects the honesty of the employees of the post office.

Another sub-theme is that good and kind souls are God's messengers. They help the believers to keep their faith intact. The postmaster and his colleagues belong to this category. Their act of kindness does not even get acknowledged but they part with their hard earned money to make Lench believe that God has answered his request.

MESSAGE

The story "A Letter to God" conveys the message that faith can move

mountains. Lenco's faith in God gets him financial help even though indirectly and not entirely as desired by him. However, this reinforces a poor and simple man's faith in the power of God. The people, who take upon themselves the responsibility to uphold Lenco's faith, inspire to keep alive the spirit of humanity. It is immaterial whether their kindness is acknowledged or not, the faith in the power of God remains steadfast.

CHARACTERS

Lenco

Lenco was a hard working farmer and an innocent person having immense faith in God. He was an 'ox of a man'. He toiled hard and never complained about it. He waited anxiously for the rain which he thought would help in a good harvest of corn. However, when the rain turned into the destructive hail, he still believed that God would help him. Displaying his deep faith in God, he even wrote a letter to Him requesting to send him a hundred pesos as help.

Lenco had a child-like confidence in God which made him believe that God will respond to his letter and fulfill his request. When he received only seventy pesos, he did not even once imagine that someone else could have sent that money. Rather, he doubted the integrity of the people at the post office and wrote another letter to God telling Him not to send the remaining money through mail. He had a firm conviction that neither could God have made the mistake of sending less money nor could He have denied his request.

It was this unquestionable faith in God that gave him immense strength to face difficult situations in life. His child-like simplicity, innocence and honesty make him an inspiring character.

Postmaster

The postmaster was a kind-hearted and a compassionate man. He

was amazed by the deep faith of Lenchö in the kindness of God. He expressed his appreciation for Lenchö's belief by sending him money on behalf of God. He took upon himself the responsibility of collecting money for Lenchö and generously contributed a part of his salary to this fund. His sincerity can be seen in the way he made every possible effort to save a simple peasant's faith in God. He made sure that Lenchö's faith remained intact so that the novel way in which he had started a communication with God does not become a wasted effort.

Like a true believer, he wished to have a similar faith in the goodness of the Almighty.

The postmaster, thus not only becomes a source through whom God sends help to Lenchö but also becomes an admirable character who inspires the virtues of fellow-feeling and generosity.

EXTRACTS FOR COMPREHENSION

*Read the following extracts and answer the questions
that follow in one or two lines each.*

(I)

The only thing the earth needed was a downpour or at least a shower. Throughout the morning Lenchö – who knew his fields intimately – had done nothing else but see the sky towards the north-east.

(a) Who was Lenchö? Where did he live?

Lenchö was a simple farmer who lived in a village in the valley.

(b) Why was Lenchö looking at the sky?

Lenchö was looking at the sky because he expected a downpour or a shower for his crop.

(c) Explain: ".....knew his fields intimately."

This expression means that Lenchö was an intelligent farmer. He was adept in farming skills.

- (d) Why did the earth need a downpour or a shower?**

The earth needed a downpour or a shower because that would have assured a good harvest of corn for Lencho.

(II)

"These aren't raindrops falling from the sky, they are new coins. The big drops are ten cent pieces and the little ones are fives."

- (a) Who speaks these words?**

These words are spoken by a simple farmer Lencho who lived in the valley.

- (b) Why does the speaker call the raindrops as 'new coins'? Or To what does the speaker compare the raindrops? Why?**

Lencho calls the raindrops as 'new coins' because they were round and glittering like new coins.

- (c) When does the speaker utter these words?**

Lencho utters these words after feeling the pleasure of rain on his body.

- (d) What is the state of mind of the speaker at this time? Why?**

Lencho is very happy and satisfied at this time because the rain is expected to bring a good harvest of corn for him.

(III)

"A plague of locusts would have left more than this. The hail has left nothing..."

- (a) Who speaks these words and to whom?**

Lencho the poor farmer, speaks these words to his sons.

- (b) When does the speaker utter these words?**

Lencho utters these words when he is standing in the middle of his hail-struck fields with his sons by his side.

- (c) Why does the speaker say this?**

Lencho says this because he is extremely sad and disappointed to

see his entire field of ripe corn with its flowers being ruined by the hailstrom.

(d) What is the speaker's state of mind at this time?

Lencho is extremely worried at this time and fears that his family will have to starve that year.

(IV)

But in the hearts of all who lived in that solitary house in the middle of the valley, there was a single hope:

(a) Where was the 'solitary house'?

The solitary house was on a crest of a low hill in the valley.

(b) Who all lived in that 'solitary house'?

Lencho, his wife and their sons lived in the 'solitary house'.

(c) What was the 'single hope' of the people in the 'solitary house'?

God was the 'single hope' of the people in Lencho's house.

(d) Why did the people in the 'solitary house' look for hope?

Lencho's family looked for hope as they had lost the entire crop of ripe corn to hailstorm and were faced with the threat of hunger.

(V)

The following Sunday, at daybreak, he began to write a letter which he himself would carry to town and place in the mail.

(a) Who is 'he' in this extract?

'He' in this extract is Lencho, the poor farmer who lost his crops.

(b) To whom did 'he' write a letter?

Lencho wrote a letter to God.

(c) What did 'he' write in the letter?

In his letter, Lencho pleaded with God to help him by sending a hundred pesos in order to buy seeds and sow his fields again so that his family would not have to remain hungry that year.

- (d) What does the extract reveal about the person who wrote the letter?**

The extract reveals that Lencio was a simple man who had unflinching faith in the supremacy of God.

(VI)

"What faith! I wish I had the faith of the man who wrote this letter. Starting up a correspondence with God!"

- (a) Who is "I" in this extract? To whom does he/she speak?**

'I' here refers to the postmaster and he speaks to his colleagues.

- (b) When are these words spoken?**

These words are spoken when the postmaster and his colleagues begin to laugh after finding a letter in the mail addressed to God.

- (c) Who is the 'man' who wrote the letter? Why does 'I' admire his faith?**

The man who wrote the letter is Lencio. The postmaster admired his faith because it indicated that the man had complete trust in the power of God.

- (d) What was the 'correspondence' about?**

The correspondence was Lencio's request to God to send him a hundred pesos to buy seeds to sow his fields again.

(VII)

Lencio showed not the slightest surprise on seeing the money; such was his confidence – but he became angry when he counted the money.

- (a) Who was Lencio? Why wasn't he surprised to see the money?**

Lencio was a poor farmer who had written a letter to God to send him money as help. He wasn't surprised to see the money because he had firm faith that it was God's response to his request.

- (b) Who had sent the money to Lencio? Why?**

The postmaster had sent the money to Lencio because he wanted a poor man's faith in God to remain intact.

(c) Why was Lenco so confident about getting the money?

Lenco was so confident because he had an unshakeable faith in God's kindness.

(d) Why did Lenco become angry after counting the money?

Lenco became angry on receiving thirty pesos short because he doubted that this missing amount had been stolen by the post office employees. He believed strongly that neither could God have made the mistake of sending less money nor could He have denied his request.

(VIII)

On the public writing-table, he started to write, with much wrinkling of his brow, caused by the effort he had to make to express his ideas.

(a) Who is 'he' in the above extract? Where is 'he' at the moment?

'He' in the above extract is Lenco. At this moment, he is in the postoffice.

(b) What is 'he' writing and why?

Lenco is writing another letter to God. He is writing it to ask Him to send the remaining thirty pesos and to warn Him not to send it through the mail.

(c) Why does 'he' have to make an 'effort' to express his ideas?

He has to make an effort to express his ideas because he is a simple farmer who works like an animal in the fields and knows only how to write.

(d) Who reads what 'he' writes? Why?

The postmaster reads the second letter to God written by Lenco because he expects Lenco to thank God for sending him seventy pesos.

(IX)

"Of the money that I asked for, only seventy pesos reached me. Send me the rest, since I need it very much. But don't send it to me through the mail because the post office employees are a bunch of crooks."

- (a) Who is 'I' in the above extract? To whom does the speaker address these lines?**

'I' in the above extract is Lencho. He is addressing God.

- (b) How much money had 'I' asked for? Why does he receive only seventy pesos?**

Lencho had asked for a hundred pesos. He received only seventy pesos because the money sent to him was collected by the postmaster who found it impossible to arrange the entire amount.

- (c) What did 'I' need the money for?**

Lencho's entire field of ripe corn had been destroyed by a hailstorm. So, he needed the money to sow his field again and to live until the crop came.

- (d) Why does 'I' call the post office employees a 'bunch of crooks'?**

Lencho calls the post office employees a 'bunch of crooks' because he believed that they had stolen thirty pesos out of the hundred sent to him by God. According to Lencho, God could neither have made the mistake of sending less money, nor could He have denied his request.

- (e) What light do these lines throw on the character of 'I'?**

These lines show that Lencho was a simple man who had complete trust in God's generosity.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 30 – 40 words each)

Q1. Where did Lencho live?

Lencho lived in a house that was located at the crest of a low hill. From that height, the river and the field of ripe corn dotted with flowers could be seen. His house was the only one in the entire valley.

Q2. Why did Lencho's fields need 'a downpour or a shower'?

Or

Why did Lencho see the sky towards north-east the entire morning?

The corn in Lencho's field was almost ripe and was dotted with flowers. This was a promise of a good harvest but only if there was some downpour or at least a shower. So, Lencho saw the sky towards north-east the entire morning expecting rain.

Q3. What were Lencho's family members doing before the rain arrived?

Or

In what activities were Lencho's family members engaged before the rain arrived?

Before the rain arrived, Lencho's wife was preparing supper, his older boys were working in the field, and the smaller boys were playing near the house.

Q4. Why did Lencho go out of his house when it started raining?

Or

Why did Lencho go out and get wet in the rain?

Lencho went out of his house when it started raining because he had been awaiting rain for a long time. The prospect of a rich harvest left him excited and he wanted to feel the pleasure of rain on his body.

Q5. What did Lencho compare the raindrops with and why?

Or

✓ Why did Lencho say the raindrops were like 'new coins'? (Textual)

Or

How did Lencho describe the raindrops?

Or

"These are not raindrops falling from the sky, they are new coins.

The big drops are ten cent pieces and the little ones are fives."

Why did Lencho say this?

Lencho compared the raindrops with 'new coins'. He compared the big drops to the ten cent pieces and the little ones to the five cent pieces. He felt so because these raindrops were round, shining and precious like coins. Besides, like coins, they were expected to bring him the wealth of a good harvest of corn.

Q6. Why was Lencho satisfied to look at his field?

Lencho was satisfied to look at his filed because it had ripe corn with flowers, draped in a curtain of rain. The rain would have benefitted the corn and he would have got a good harvest.

Q7. "It's really getting bad now". What was getting bad, according to Lencho?

The weather was getting bad because the rain was soon accompanied by a strong wind. This wind blew hard and brought in large hailstones that were as big as new silver coins and threatened to ruin Lencho's crop.

Q8. How did the storm damage Lencho's fields?

Or

Describe the scene after the hailstorm.

Or

What happened to Lencho's fields after the heavy storm?

Or

How did the rain change? What happened to Lencho's fields?

Or

(Textual)

How did the 'new silver coins' bring disaster to Lencho's corn field?

The storm that began with a light drizzle, soon turned violent. Strong winds began to blow and were accompanied by large hailstones. For an hour, the hailstones, that resembled 'new silver coins', rained on the house, the garden, the hillside, the cornfield and the valley. They covered the field like a sheet of white salt. Not a leaf remained on the trees and the corn in the field was completely destroyed. The flowers too had gone from the plants.

Q9. What were Lencho's feelings when the hail stopped? (Textual)

Or

What did Lencho tell his sons after the storm had passed?

Or

"A plague of locusts would have left more than this". When and why did Lencho say these words?

Or

Why was Lencho's soul filled with sadness?

After the storm had passed, Lencho's soul was filled with sadness. He helplessly looked at his completely destroyed corn-field and exclaimed that even the locusts wouldn't have ruined the crops to such an extent. He also said that in the absence of the harvest, the entire family would have to starve that year.

Q10. How did Lencho's family members try to console him after the crops were damaged?

Though the family members were also heartbroken after the crops were damaged, still they tried to console Lencho by telling him that no one died of hunger. They comforted him by asking him not to get upset even though it seemed like a total loss.

Q11. What was Lencho's only hope? *Or*

What hopes did Lencho hang on to?

Lencho hung on to his only hope - 'the help of God'. He believed that God's eyes have the power to see everything. His eyes could see even what is deep in one's conscience.

Q12. What was unusual about Lencho as a farmer?

Like all farmers Lencho was such a hard working man, that the author calls him 'an ox of a man'. But still, unlike other famers, he was literate and he knew how to read and write.

Q13. Why did Lencho decide to write a letter to God?

Or

Who or what did Lencho have faith in? What did he do? (Textual)

Or

What did Lencho do on a Sunday morning following the storm?

Why?

Or

Why was Lecho and his family in distress? Whom did Lencho ask for help?

Following the total devastation of his corn field by the hailstorm, Lencho was filled with sorrow. His family was on the brink of starvation. In this critical time, God was his only hope. Having full faith in Him, he decided to write a letter to God on a Sunday morning and ask for a hundred pesos to sow his field again and to live until the crop came.

Q14. What were the contents of Lencho's first letter to God?

Or

Who did Lencho write his first letter to? What did he write in it?

Lencho wrote his first letter to God. In this letter, he told God that if He will not help him, his entire family would go hungry that year. He then asked Him to send a hundred pesos to sow his field again and live on it till the next harvest.

Q15. What did Lencho do to make sure that his letter reached God?

To make sure that his letter reached God, Lencho carried it himself

to town. He addressed the envelope "To God", put the letter inside it, placed a stamp on the letter and dropped it into the mailbox.

Q16. How did the employees at the post office react on seeing Lencho's letter?

The postmaster and his employees were shocked to see Lencho's letter addressed to God. They found it very amusing and started to laugh heartily after reading it. However, the postmaster immediately got serious and admired the man's unflinching faith. The idea of starting a correspondence with God fascinated him.

Q17. How did the postmaster react on seeing Lencho's first letter to God?

The postmaster was deeply moved to see a letter addressed to God. He marvelled at the sensitivity of the idea to start up a correspondence with God. So, in order not to shake the writer's strong faith in God, he decided to answer it.

Q18. What idea did the postmaster come up with after reading Lencho's letter? Or

What did the postmaster resolve to do after reading Lencho's letter? How did he fulfill it? (Textual)

Or

How did the postmaster help Lencho?

After reading Lencho's letter, the kind-hearted postmaster understood that to answer it he needed more than goodwill. So, he resolved to keep Lencho's faith intact. To fulfill this resolve he collected money from his friends and contributed a part of his salary as well to be sent to Lencho on God's behalf.

Q19. Why did the postmaster send only seventy pesos to Lencho?

Or

How much money was the postmaster able to collect for Lencho?

Why?

It was impossible for the postmaster to gather together a hundred pesos, the amount requested by Lencio in his letter to God. He could collect only seventy pesos after giving a part of his salary and taking money from his friends 'for an act of charity'. So, he sent only seventy pesos to Lencio.

Q20. An amount of 70 pesos was raised by the postmaster. What light does this gesture reflect on human beings in general and the post master in particular?

The postmaster's gesture reflects the goodness of human heart. Human beings are generally charitable at heart and volunteer to help their fellow beings. The incident particularly reflects the postmaster's generosity and graciousness.

Q21. Why did Lencio visit the post office on consecutive Sundays?

Lencio visited the post office on the first Sunday to post the letter to God. The next Sunday he went there very confidently to receive God's letter in reply to his own.

Q22. How did Lencio react on receiving God's letter?

Or

Was Lencio surprised to find the letter with money in it? (Textual)

Lencio was not at all surprised to receive the letter and the money in it. He had immense faith in God, and was absolutely certain that God would respond to his request.

Q23. What made Lencio angry when he opened the letter?

Or

How did Lencio react when he counted the money?

Or

What were Lencio's feelings when he opened the letter with money in it?

Lencio was angry on finding just seventy pesos enclosed in the letter. He felt that God could neither have made a mistake nor

could have denied his request. He suspected that the dishonest post office employees must have stolen the missing amount.

Q24. Why did Lencho decide to write a second letter to God?

Or

Why was Lencho angry? And what did he do?

Lencho was angry to find just seventy pesos enclosed in God's reply. Suspecting the dishonesty of the post office people, he decided to write a second letter to God asking for the rest of the amount.

Q25. What were the contents of Lencho's second letter to God?

Or

What did Lencho write in his second letter to God?

The second letter was a request to God for sending the remaining thirty pesos. The letter also requested God not to send the amount through the mail as the employees there were a bunch of crooks who had stolen his money.

Q26. What must have the postmaster expected in Lencho's second letter?

Having done an act of charity, the postmaster was feeling contented. So, he must have expected that Lencho's second letter would contain words of gratitude at having received seventy pesos from God.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

(to be answered in about 100 – 150 words each)

Q1. Who was Lench? Why did he write a letter to God?

Lenco was a simple, God-fearing farmer who was an 'ox of a man'. He worked very hard in his fields and took delight in his work.

He was as committed to his family as he was to his fields. He worked hard to provide for them and rejoiced in fulfilling his responsibilities. His mode of livelihood depended on the mercy of nature which unfortunately once turned unfavourable. A hail storm completely devastated his crops. However, he had unshakeable faith in the generosity of God. So, he wrote a letter to God explaining that the failure of crop would result in the starvation of his family that year. He asked God to help him by sending a hundred pesos in order to sow his field again and to live till the crop was ready. He had a child-like confidence in God that prompted him to turn to Him for help and his unshakeable faith led him to start a correspondence with the Almighty.

Q2. What prompted the postmaster to respond to Lench's letter?

Or

Why did the postmaster send money to Lench? Why did he sign the letter as 'God'? *(Textual)*

One day, one of the post office employees brought a strange letter to the postmaster. This letter was addressed to God seeking help of a hundred pesos. Initially, amused at the innocence of the writer of this letter, the postmaster was soon touched by the depth of the man's steadfast faith in God. He did not want this faith to be shaken at any cost. So, this kind-hearted man took upon himself the task of assuring Lench, the writer of the letter, that God existed and helped those who believed in

Him. He then collected seventy pesos by contributing a part of his salary and raising the rest with the help of his friends and post office employees. He enclosed this money with a letter that was to be sent as God's response. So, the postmaster simply wrote a single word 'God' in this letter. He did so because he wanted Lencho to believe that the letter with which the money was enclosed was written by God himself.

Q3. Did Lencho try to find out who had sent the money to him? Why/ Why not?

No, Lencho did not try to find out who had sent the money to him because he was confident that it had been sent to him by God. Lencho was a simple farmer who had firm faith in the power of God. He believed that God can see everything, even the inner most thoughts of a person. This made his faith in God strong and complete. Besides, God was his only hope and he did not know who else to approach in his trying times. Thus, he did not doubt even once that the seventy pesos could have been sent by anyone else. In addition, perhaps his experience about human help had not been good. This becomes evident from the fact that even his family talks of hope only from God. Quite likely, Lencho had distrust for human beings with regard to money matters. That's why when he writes to God the second time, he tells Him not to send the remaining money through the dishonest post office employees.

Q4. What do you think was the postmaster's reaction to Lencho's second letter?

After having mailed seventy pesos to Lencho in the name of God, the postmaster experienced the contentment of a man who had performed a good deed. So, he must have expected the farmer to express his gratitude and appreciation in his second

letter to God. He eagerly opened this letter, the moment Lench dropped it in the mailbox. However, contrary to his expectations, the postmaster found that Lench had expressed dissatisfaction at not having received the complete amount. In addition, he had doubted the integrity of the post office employees and had called them 'a bunch of crooks'.

This must have come as a rude shock to the postmaster and might have left him heartbroken and dejected. He might also have felt that his efforts had been a waste. However, since he is projected as a sensible man, later he might have felt relieved that his purpose of having been able to restore Lench's faith in God had been achieved. The eventual truth was that Lench had not doubted even once that the help was not sent by God.

Q5. Who does Lench think has taken the rest of the money? What is the irony in the situation? *Or* *(Textual)*

Why was Lench angry when he found that God had sent him only seventy pesos? Why is it ironical?

Lench was angry when he found that God had sent him only seventy pesos because he had firm faith in God and believed that God could neither have made a mistake by sending less money nor could He have denied him what he had requested. Ironically, his suspicion about the missing amount fell on the post office employees who had actually taken the trouble to contribute to the seventy pesos that he received. Had the post office employees not taken this step, the poor farmer and his family would have had to face starvation that year. It is again ironical that Lench referred to these kind-hearted souls as 'a bunch of crooks' in his second letter to God. The irony is further compounded when Lench instructs God not to send the remaining money through the mail. Therefore, Lench's firm

faith in God's generosity remains steadfast, but ironically he doubts the goodness of human beings.

Q6. In response to Lencho's letter, did God actually help him?

God's ways are mysterious. He does answer our prayers and responds to our pleadings but His omniscient power doesn't appear in person to work miracles for us. He fulfills our wishes through his instruments in such a spontaneous manner that one wonders whether it is a chance happening or a shower of His grace. In Lencho's case, God did answer his request albeit indirectly and partially. The seventy pesos that reached Lencho were an act of charity done by the people who too believed in God's kindness. The motive of these people was not to let Lencho's faith in God be shaken. Their volunteering to take upon themselves the responsibility to help Lencho was in fact their way of answering God's call. They too must have experienced God's generosity and thus they made an effort to keep alive a simple man's faith.

Q7. There are two kinds of conflicts in the story – between humans and nature and between humans themselves. How are these conflicts illustrated? (Textual)

The story "A Letter to God" opens with a conflict between humans and nature. This conflict is illustrated when the hailstorm completely destroys Lencho's crops. The hard working farmer, along with his sons, toiled in his fields and expectantly waited for a downpour to seal the prospects of a very good harvest. However, nature, in its vicious mood, came in direct conflict with him at this time. The helpless Lencho witnessed the ruin of his labour caused by the hostile nature.

The second conflict, which is between the humans, is illustrated when Lencho accuses the post office employees as dishonest

and calls them a 'bunch of crooks' in his second letter to God. He fails to see their act of charity and doubts their integrity. This situation shows a conflict between humans which is the outcome of mistrust of one man with another. Nature is more powerful than man, so human beings accept defeat in case of a conflict with a superior power. However, they resent a situation where the conflict is with another human being who is equally strong.

- Q8. The story "A Letter to God" contains three letters. Which one of these does the title refer to?**

The story "A Letter to God" contains three letters. Two are written to God and the third is supposed to have been written by God. The title refers to the first letter that Lench writes to God as it is this letter that starts up a correspondence with God. This letter depicts the faith of a simple farmer on the only help that he can depend on. It is this first letter that arouses humane sentiments in the postmaster and motivates him to help Lench. Again, it is the first letter that reveals the fact that humanity is still bound together by its common faith in God. The second letter that Lench writes to God also brings to light an aspect of human psychology which indicates that people have more faith in the unseen than in what is visible. Still, the title is about the first letter that Lench writes to God.

- Q9. Discuss the character of the postmaster in light of his act of charity towards Lench.**

The postmaster is a kind-hearted man who admires the goodness in fellow human beings. He is amazed by the unshakeable faith of Lench in God. Although this fat and amiable man first laughs on seeing Lench's letter, but immediately his compassionate nature leads him to appreciate

the unique idea of starting a correspondence with God. He resolves to help Lencho by sending him money on behalf of God. The generosity and commitment of his character gets revealed when he takes upon himself the responsibility of collecting money for Lencho. He voluntarily contributes a part of his salary to this fund. His sincerity can be seen in the way he makes every possible effort to save a simple peasant's faith in God. He is a true believer and so, wishes to have a faith similar to that of Lencho's. The postmaster is thus an admirable character who inspires the virtues of fellow-feeling and generosity.

Q10. Why did Lencho say the raindrops were like 'new coins'? How did they change the face of Lencho's fields? Or

Describe the circumstances under which Lencho's crops were destroyed?

Lencho had been waiting for the rain since morning. He expected 'a downpour or a shower' in order to have a good harvest. So when it began to rain, Lencho was very happy. He felt that the raindrops resembled 'new coins'. He felt that the bigger drops were like ten cent pieces and the little ones like fives. The raindrops seemed to him to be like round, sparkling and precious coins. He knew that this rain would boost a good harvest and would bring him prosperity just like coins. However, the same new coins soon changed the face of Lencho's fields. After turning into 'new silver coins' and 'frozen pearls', the raindrops fell in the form of hailstones. They rained on the house, the garden, the hillside, the cornfield and on the whole valley. In place of raising the crop better and bringing prosperity, these frozen raindrops made his field white, as if covered with salt. The corn was completely destroyed and the flowers had gone from the plants. Not a leaf remained on the trees, and this filled Lencho's soul with sadness.