

The Bishop's Candlesticks

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1. Copy and complete the following paragraph about the theme of the play in pairs:

The play deals with a _____ and _____ Bishop who is always ready to lend a _____ hand to anyone in distress. A _____ breaks into the Bishop's house and is _____ and warmed. The benevolence of the Bishop somewhat _____ the convict, but, when he sees the silver candlesticks, he _____ them, and runs away. However, he is _____ and brought back. He expects to go back to jail, but the Bishop informs the police they are a _____. The convict is _____ by this kindness of the Bishop and before he leaves he seeks the priest's blessing.

Answer

The play deals with a kind and charitable Bishop who is always ready to lend a helping hand to anyone in distress. A convict breaks into the Bishop's house and is fed and warmed. The benevolence of the Bishop somewhat confounds the convict, but, when he sees the silver candlesticks, he steals them, and runs away. However, he is arrested and brought back. He expects to go back to jail, but the Bishop informs the police they are a gift. The convict is moved by this kindness of the Bishop and before he leaves he seeks the priest's blessing.

5. (a) Working in pairs give antonyms of the following words

kind- hearted	unscrupulo us	forgiving	stern	benevolent	credulous
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generous	pious	suspicious	sympathetic	understanding	wild
innocent	penitent	clever	brutal	cunning	caring
sentimental	trusting	protective	concerned	honourable	embittered

Answer

- (i) Kind Hearted – nasty, unkind, cruel
- (ii) Unscrupulous – ethical, moral, good
- (iii) Forgiving – censure, charge, punish
- (iv) Stern – cheerful, funny, lenient
- (v) Benevolent – greedy, malevolent, mean, selfish
- (vi) Credulous – skeptical, suspecting, suspicious
- (vii) Generous – greedy, mean, miserly
- (viii) Pious - atheist, impious, irreligious
- (ix) Suspicious – innocent, trustworthy, trusty
- (x) Sympathetic – callous, merciless, uncaring, unconcerned
- (xi) Understanding – misunderstanding, intolerant
- (xii) Wild – civilized, controlled, delicate, gentle
- (xiii) Innocent – bad, blamable, corrupt
- (xiv) Penitent – happy, unashamed
- (xv) Clever – awkward, foolish, idiotic, ignorant,
- (xvi) Brutal – generous, humane, kind, nice
- (xvii) Cunning – gullible, kind, naive
- (xviii) Caring – disregarding, ignoring, neglecting
- (xix) Sentimental – hard-hearted, indifferent, pragmatic, unemotional
- (xx) Trusting- disagree, dispute, reject, renounce
- (21) Protective – attacking, harmful, hurtful, injurious
- (22) Concerned – happy, undisturbed, unperturbed
- (23) Honourable – not respectful, unhonourable
- (24) Embittered – pleasant, content, genial

(b) Select words from the above box to describe the characters in the play as revealed by the following lines from the play.

Lines from the play	Speaker	Quality revealed
1. “You told him she was feeling poorly, did you? And so my brother is to be kept out of bed, and go without his supper because you told him she was feeling poorly.”		
2. _____ “take my comforter, it will keep you warm.”		
3. “If people lie to me they are poorer, not I.”		
4. “You are like a child. I can’t trust you out of my sight. No sooner my back is turned than you get that minx Marie to sell the silver saltcellars.”		
5. “My dear there is so much suffering in the world, and I can do so very little.”		
6. “My mother gave them to me on – on her death bed just after you were born, and – and she asked me to keep them in remembrance of her, so I would like to keep them.”		

7. "I am too old a bird to be caught with chaff."		
8. "You have your soul to lose, my son."		
9. "Give me food or I'll stick my knife in you both and help myself."		
10. "_____ they have made me what I am, they have made me a thief. God curse them all."		
11. "Why the devil are you kind to me? What do you want?"		
12. "I – I – didn't believe there was any good in the world...but somehow I – I – know you're good, and – and it's a queer thing to ask, but could you, would you bless me before I go?"		

Answer

Lines from the play	Speaker	Quality revealed
1. "You told him she was feeling poorly, did you? And so my brother is to be kept		

out of bed, and go without his supper because you told him she was feeling poorly.”	Persome	Protective
2. _____ “take my comforter, it will keep you warm.”	Bishop	Kind hearted
3. “If people lie to me they are poorer, not I.”	Bishop	Innocent
4. “You are like a child. I can’t trust you out of my sight. No sooner my back is turned than you get that minx Marie to sell the silver salt-cellar.”	Persome	Caring
5. “My dear there is so much suffering in the world, and I can do so very little.”	Bishop	Sympathetic
6. “My mother gave them to me on –on her death bed just after you were born, and – and she asked me to keep them in remembrance of her, so I would like to keep them.”	Bishop	Sentimental
7. “I am too old a bird to be caught with chaff.”	Convict	Cunning
8. “You have your soul to lose, my son.”	Bishop	Pious

9. “Give me food or I’ll stick my knife in you both and help myself.”	Convict	Unscrupulous
10. “_____ they have made me what I am, they have made me a thief. God curse them all.”	Convict	Embittered
11. “Why the devil are you kind to me? What do you want?”	Convict	Suspicious
12. “I – I – didn’t believe there was any good in the world...but somehow I – I – know you’re good, and – and it’s a queer thing to ask, but could you, would you bless me before I go?”	Convict	Penitent

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6. Answer the following questions briefly

(a) Do you think the Bishop was right in selling the salt-cellars?
Why/why not?

Answer

No, the Bishop was not right in selling the salt-cellars. His own economic condition was not good and he should have asked for Persome’s opinion before he sold the cellars, which belonged to her too. From another point of view the Bishop was right in selling the saltcellars

as he wanted to give the money he got from selling the cellars to Mere Gringoire who could not give rent to the landlord on time and was about to face eviction. The Bishop was very broadminded as he could empathise with the condition of Mere Gringoire and chose to do away with the salt cellars. The Bishop felt that one could eat salt out of china as well.

(b) Why does Persone feel the people pretend to be sick?

Answer

Persone is protective and wishes to maintain the household. She is pained to see that the entire humanity is turning upon them for charity and benevolence. She feels people like Marie's mother pretend to be sick and take undue advantage of the Bishop.

(c) Who was Jeanette? What was the cause of her death?

Answer

Jeanette was the convict's wife. She died due to illness and starvation.

(d) The convict says, "I am too old a bird to be caught with chaff." What does he mean by this statement?

Answer

The convict has suffered, he is embittered, he is experienced. So he couldn't be tricked. He ordered the Bishop to stay put because he couldn't trust anyone not to report to the police and get him arrested.

(e) Why was the convict sent to prison? What was the punishment given to him?

Answer

The convict was sent to prison for stealing a loaf of bread. He was sentenced to ten years in a prison hulk.

(f) Do you think the punishment given to the convict was justified? Why/ why not? Why is the convict eager to reach Paris?

Answer

The punishment given to the convict was not justified. It is too inhuman for someone who was caught stealing just to feed his sick wife. He was guilty of stealing only to feed his wife who was dying of starvation. But they showed him no mercy and treated him like a beast. They chained him like a wild animal, lashed him like a hound and fed him filth. He was covered with vermin and had to sleep on boards. This kind of treatment is inhuman and not justified.

The convict is eager to reach Paris because it was a big city and the Police would never be able to find him there.

(g) Before leaving, the convict asks the Bishop to bless him. What brought about this change in him?

Answer

The Bishop's benevolent, kind and caring attitude had brought about a change in the convict. That is why before leaving for Paris, he asks the Bishop to bless him.

7. Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow by choosing the correct options.

A. Monseigneur the Bishop is a -----ahem!'

(a) Why does Persome not complete the sentence?

- (i) she used to stammer while speaking.
- (ii) she was about to praise the Bishop.
- (iii) she did not wish to criticise the Bishop in front of Marie. (iv) she had a habit of passing such remarks.

Answer

(iii) She did not wish to criticise the Bishop in front of Marie. (b) Why is she angry with the Bishop?

- (i) The Bishop has sold her salt-cellars.
- (ii) The Bishop has gone to visit Mere Gringoire.
- (iii) He showed extra concern for Marie.
- (iv) She disliked the Bishop.

Answer

(i) The Bishop has sold her salt-cellars.

B. *'She sent little Jean to Monseigneur to ask for help, and—'*

(a) Who sent little Jean to the Bishop?

- (i) Mere Gringoire
- (ii) Marie
- (iii) Persome
- (iv) Marie's mother

Answer

(i) Mere Gringoire

(b) Why did she send Jean to the Bishop?

- (i) so that he could pray for her
- (ii) as she knew that he was a generous person
- (iii) as she was a greedy woman
- (iv) as she was a poor woman

Answer

(ii) as she knew that he was a generous person

C. *'I offered to take her in here for a day or two, but she seemed to think it might distress you.'*

The Bishop wanted to take Mere Grngoire in because _____.

(a) The Bishop wanted to take Mere Grngoire in because _____.

- (i) she was sick
- (ii) she had no money
- (iii) she was unable to pay the rent of her house
- (iv) she was a close friend of Persome

Answer

(iii) she was unable to pay the rent of her house

(b) Persome would be distressed on Mere Gringoire's being taken in because _____.

(i) she did not want to help anyone

(ii) she felt that Mere Gringoire was taking undue advantage of the Bishop

(iii) she was a self-centred person

(iv) she would be put to a great deal of inconvenience

Answer

(ii) she felt that Mere Gringoire was taking undue advantage of the Bishop

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9. Identify the situations which be termed as the turning points in the convict's life?

Answer

The Convict, when was caught and brought to the Bishop's house, was asked to be released by the Bishop saying that he is a friend to him. The Bishop also gives him his mother's only memory i.e. candle-sticks. This entire incidence makes convict believe that there still exists humanity.

This is the turning point in the convict's life