

Chapter 2 : Mrs. Packletide's Tiger

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It was Mrs. Packletide's pleasure and intention that she should shoot a tiger The compelling motivewas the fact that Loona Bimberton had recently personally procured tiger-skin and a heavy harvest of Press photographs could successfully counter that sort of thing.

(a) Why did Mrs. Packletide want to kill a tiger?

Answer

Mrs. Packletide was jealous of her rival, Loona Bimberton, who had recently travelled 11 kilometres in an airplane operated by an Algerian aviator. In order to outclass her, Mrs. Packletide decided to hunt a tiger and gain media coverage through her pictures.

(b) What does it tell you about her?

Answer

Mrs. Packletide is full of vanity. She is a selfish person who seems to be jealous at other people's success.

(c) What is the tone of the storywriter?

Answer

The tone of the story writer is full of satire and humour.

(d) Do you think she was successful in her mission?

Answer

In a way, yes. She was successful in outshining Loona Bimberton by killing a tiger and getting fame for doing that. But actually she was a failure, as she missed her shot and the tiger died due to heart failure.

(e) What do you think the story is all about?

Answer

The story is all about a pursuit of killing a tiger by Mrs. Packletide.

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4. Answer the following questions in your own words:

(a) Why did Mrs. Packletide wish to kill a tiger?

Answer

Mrs. Packletide wished to kill a tiger so that she could counter to Loona Bimberton's claim who had been carried eleven miles in an Algerian aviator.

(b) What made her decide to give a party in Loona Bimberton's honour?
What did she intend to give Loona on her birthday?

Answer

Mrs. Packletide decided that once she shot a tiger, she would invite Loona Bimberton for a luncheon party. At the party she would display the newly-acquired tiger skin. The party would be an appropriate time to show off the tiger skin and talk about her tiger-shooting experience to Loona Bimberton. She intended to give a tiger-claw brooch to Loona Bimberton on her birthday.

(c) How was the tiger shooting arranged? What kind of a tiger was chosen for the purpose?

Answer

The tiger shooting was arranged in neighbouring village. The villagers had seen an old tiger who used to hunt domestic animals on the outskirts of the local jungle. A platform or Machaan was built in a comfortable and conveniently placed tree for Mrs. Packletide and her paid companion Miss Louisa Mebbin. A noisy goat was tethered at the correct distance to attract the tiger.

The tiger chosen for this purpose was weak, diseased tiger who could not hunt wild animals due to old age.

(d) In what way did the villagers help Mrs. Packletide shoot the tiger?

Answer

The villagers made many arrangements for the hunting game. Children

were posted night and day on the outskirts so that the tiger would not leave his domain. Goats were left in the forest in order to satisfy the animal. Women took care not to make noise while passing by, so that the tiger would not be disturbed. Last but not the least, the villagers offered support and assistance at night of hunt. A platform had been constructed on a comfortable and convenient place on a tree for Mrs. Packletide and her paid companion. They remained there throughout the night.

(e) Who was Miss Mebbin? Was she really devoted to Mrs. Packletide? How did she behave during the tiger shooting?

Answer

Miss Mebbin was a paid companion. Mrs. Packletide had acquired her so that she could witness the shooting of the tiger. She was very materialistic. She didn't want to do more than she was paid for. In fact she also instigated Mrs. Packletide not to pay for the goat if the tiger did not eat it. She was not at all devoted to Mrs. Packletide. She was there only for the money.

(f) Mrs. Packletide was a good shot. Discuss.

Answer

Mrs. Packletide was daring and bold enough to go for hunting a tiger which was old and weak. She was not a good shot at all. In spite of all the arrangements, she was not able to shoot the old tiger who was walking slowly. Instead, she shot the goat as she had missed her aim.

(g) What comment did Miss Mebbin make after Mrs Packletide had fired the shot?

Why did Miss Mebbin make this comment? How did Mrs Packletide react to this comment?

Answer

Miss Mebbin commented that the bullet had shot the goat not the tiger. The tiger had succumbed to heart failure caused by the sound of firing accelerated by senile decay.

She made this comment to take advantage of the fact that the tiger was not killed by Mrs. packletide. In fact, she wanted to exploit the situation. Mrs. packletide was annoyed at the discovery.

(h) How did the villagers react to the tiger's death?

Answer

The villagers were anxious for their thousand rupees. They did not pay any heed to Miss Mebbin's revelation that Mrs. Packletide had not killed a tiger but a goat. They readily believed that Mrs. Packletide had shot the beast lest they lose their money.

(i) Do you think Mrs. Packletide was able to achieve her heart's desire? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer

Yes, I think Mrs. Packletide was able to achieve her heart's desire of killing a tiger and to show off that she was the possessor of a dead tiger. She wanted her photographs to be published in the newspapers. Her desire was accomplished positively. She was able to outdo Loona Bimberton and she sent her a gift of a tiger-claw brooch.

(j) How did Miss Mebbin manage to get her week-end cottage? Why did she plant so many tiger lilies in her garden?

Answer

Louisa Mebbin blackmailed Mrs. Packletide into buying her the weekend cottage or else she would have told Loona Bimberton that it was not the tiger but a mere goat that Mrs. Packletide had shot. The tiger lilies would always remind of how she had procured the cottage.

(k) "The incidental expenses are so heavy," she confides to inquiring friends. Who is the speaker? What is she referring to here?

Answer

Mrs. Packletide is the speaker. The lines are said in response to questions regarding why she did not hunt anymore. Mrs. Packletide is referred to the expenses that she incurred when she hunted for the first time, she paid the villagers, she paid Louisa Mebbin and even had to buy her a cottage.

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5. Discuss the following questions in detail and write the answers in your notebooks:

(a) Do you think the tiger shooting organized by the villagers was a serious affair? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer

The tiger shooting organised by the villagers was not a serious affair at all. They knew it was an old senile tiger. It could not run or escape due to its weakness. So, it would be easy to kill it instantaneously. They posted their children to keep the tiger in the outskirts of the jungle so that it might not roam away to fresh hunting grounds. They left cheap goats to keep him satisfied with the present quarters lest he should die of old age before the appointed lady. In this way, they provided the favourable opportunity of shooting a tiger without over-much risk.

(b) Do you think the writer is trying to make fun of the main characters in the story i.e. Mrs. Packletide, Miss Mebbin and Loona Bimberton? Pick out instances from the story that point to this fact.

Answer

Yes, the writer is trying to make fun of the main characters in the

story. Mrs. Packletide wanted to kill a tiger because of her jealousy and a desire to outshine Loona. Loona was a lady of boastful nature. She also grew jealous when she saw Mrs. Packletide's photo in the newspaper. She refused to attend the lunch party arranged in her honour by Mrs. Packletide. Miss Mebbin was very manipulative, shrewd and materialistic lady. She adopted a protective elder-sister attitude towards money. Moreover, the shooting of an old and weak tiger, who has lost his strength and ferociousness is also very humorous. Its death due to heart failure instead of a bullet arouses laughter.

(c) A person who is vain is full of self importance and can only think of himself/herself and can go to great lengths to prove his/her superiority. Do you think Mrs Packletide is vain? Give reasons in support of your answer.

Answer

The story begins with Mrs. Packletide's obsession to procure a tiger skin so that she can show it off to Loona Bimberton. To obtain the tiger skin Mrs. Packletide goes to extreme lengths; she offers a thousand rupees to the villagers to shoot a tiger without much risk or exertion. She acquires a paid companion, Louisa Mebbin, a witness to her extraordinary feat. She makes sure her pictures appear in international newspapers. Finally, she buys a weekend cottage for Louisa Mebbin to prevent her from telling anybody that it was not the tiger but a goat she had shot because the tiger merely died of a heart attack. All this proves that Mrs. Packletide was a vain woman.

(d) Sometimes writers highlight certain negative aspects in society or human beings by making fun of it. This is called satire. In your groups discuss whether you would classify this story as a satire. Give reasons to support your answer

Answer

The story is excellent example of satire. The writer, Saki, has satirized the jealousy and vanity of the fair sex. They want to show off their self importance and think of themselves only. To prove their superiority, they can go to any length. The author not only makes fun of the situation but also of the characters. Mrs. Packletide's actions were largely directed by dislike of Loona Bimberton. The motive behind tiger hunt was to show off to her. Loona Bimberton did not look at Mrs. Packletide's pictures in the newspapers. Her letter of thanks for the tiger-claw brooch was a model of repressed emotions. She declined to attend the luncheon party because she wouldn't be able to see people praising Mrs. Packletide. Both Louisa Mebbin and the villagers are only concerned about their remuneration. Louisa Mebbin even blackmailed Mrs. Packletide into buying her a cottage. The villagers happily believed that Mrs. Packletide had shot the tiger and not the goat lest they lose their fee. The whole situation of the tiger hunt is also laced with satire. An old tiger who had given up hunting was chosen for the purpose. The tiger dies of a heart-failure than a gun shot. The author paints a picture of a society that is essentially governed by wealth and mutual dislike for each other.

(e) How does the writer create humor in this story?

Answer

The author makes fun of each character and situation. The characters of Loona Bimberton, Mrs. Packletide, Louisa Mebbin and the villagers are all ridiculed for their peculiar character traits. The tiger hunt is mocked as; an old, infirm tiger is chosen for the hunt making it the least dangerous expedition. The power of money is so strong that the villagers agree that

it was not a goat but a tiger that was shot. Louisa Mebbin agrees to keep this a secret in return of money. Thus the author creates humour in the story by highlighting the negative aspects in society or human beings.

6. Choose extracts from the story that illustrate the character of the people listed in the table given below. There are some words given to help you. You may add words of your own. One has been done as an example:

| | | | | | | | |
|------|---------|-------------|--------|--------------|--------|---------------|----------|
| vain | jealous | competitive | shrewd | manipulative | stingy | materialistic | spiteful |
|------|---------|-------------|--------|--------------|--------|---------------|----------|

| Character | Extract from the story | What this tells us about the character |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Mrs. Packletide | (i) The compelling motive for her sudden deviation towards the footsteps of Nimrod was the fact that Loona Bimberton had recently been carried eleven miles in an aeroplane by an Algerian aviator, and talked of nothing else; only a personally procured tiger-skin and a heavy harvest of Press photographs could successfully counter that sort of thing | Competitive |
| | (ii) Mrs. Packletide had offered a thousand rupees for the opportunity of shooting a tiger without over-much risk or exertion, | _____ |
| | (iii) Mrs. Packletide faced the cameras with a light heart, and her pictured fame reached from the pages of the Texas Weekly Snapshot to the illustrated Monday upplement of the Novoe Vremya. | _____ |

| | | |
|------------------------|--|-------|
| Louisa Mebbin | (i) "If it's an old tiger I think you ought to get it cheaper. A thousand rupees is a lot of money." | _____ |
| | (ii) Louisa Mebbin adopted a protective elder-sister attitude towards money in general, irrespective of nationality or denomination | _____ |
| | (iii) "How amused everyone would be if they knew what really happened," said Louisa Mebbin a few days after the ball. | _____ |
| | (iv) Louisa Mebbin's pretty weekend cottage, christened by her "Les Fauves," and gay in summer-time with its garden borders of tiger-lilies, is the wonder and admiration of her friends | _____ |
| Loona Bimberton | (i) As for Loona Bimberton, she refused to look at an illustrated paper for weeks, and her letter of thanks for the gift of a tiger-claw brooch was a model of repressed emotions | _____ |

| | | |
|--|---|-------|
| | (ii) there are limits beyond which repressed emotions become dangerous. | <hr/> |
|--|---|-------|

Answer

| Character | Extract from the story | What this tells us about the character |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Mrs. Packletide | (i) The compelling motive for her sudden deviation towards the footsteps of Nimrod was the fact that Loona Bimberton had recently been carried eleven miles in an aeroplane by an Algerian aviator, and talked of nothing else; only a personally procured tiger-skin and a heavy harvest of Press photographs could successfully counter that sort of thing | Competitive |
| | (ii) Mrs. Packletide had offered a thousand rupees for the opportunity of shooting a tiger without over-much risk or exertion, | Manipulative |
| | (iii) Mrs. Packletide faced the cameras with a light heart, and her pictured fame reached from the pages of the Texas Weekly Snapshot to the illustrated Monday upplement of the Novoe Vremya. | Vain |
| Louisa Mebbin | (i) “If it’s an old tiger I think you ought to get it cheaper. A thousand rupees is a lot of money.” | Stingy |

| | | |
|------------------------|--|---------------|
| | (ii) Louisa Mebbin adopted a protective elder-sister attitude towards money in general, irrespective of nationality or denomination | Materialistic |
| | (iii) "How amused everyone would be if they knew what really happened," said Louisa Mebbin a few days after the ball. | Shrewd |
| | (iv) Louisa Mebbin's pretty week-end cottage, christened by her "Les Fauves," and gay in summer-time with its garden borders of tiger-lilies, is the wonder and admiration of her friends | Spiteful |
| Loona Bimberton | (i) As for Loona Bimberton, she refused to look at an illustrated paper for weeks, and her letter of thanks for the gift of a tiger-claw brooch was a model of repressed emotions | Jealous |
| | (ii) there are limits beyond which repressed emotions become dangerous. | Spiteful |

7. There are many amusing lines in the story. Here are a few of them. Rewrite each one in ordinary prose so that the meaning is retained. One has been done for you as an example:

(b) Mrs. Packletide had already arranged in her mind the lunch she would give at her house in Curzon Street, ostensibly in Loona Bimberton's honour, with a tiger-skin rug occupying most of the foreground and all of the conversation.

Answer

Mrs. Packletide had already imagined the lunch party she would have, supposedly in honour of Loona Bimberton, where she would display the tiger-skin rug and talk about the tiger hunt.

(c) Mothers carrying their babies home through the jungle after the day's work in the fields hushed their singing lest they might curtail the restful sleep of the venerable herd-robber.

Answer

Mothers, with thier babies, after the day's work, walked past the jungle in complete silence so as not to disturb the sleep of the esteemed lion.

(d) Louisa Mebbin adopted a protective elder-sister attitude towards money in general, irrespective of nationality or denomination

Answer

Louisa Mebbin was very particular about money, irrespective of nationality or denomination.

(e) Evidently the wrong animal had been hit, and the beast of prey had succumbed to heart-failure, caused by the sudden report of the rifle, accelerated by senile decay

Answer

It was clear that the wrong animal had been shot. The lion had died of heart-failure caused by the gun shot and hastened by old age.

(f) As for Loona Bimberton, she refused to look at an illustrated paper for weeks, and her letter of thanks for the gift of a tiger-claw brooch was a model of repressed emotions

Answer

Loona Bimberton did not read the illustrated newspaper for weeks and her letter of thanks for the gift of a tiger-claw brooch was written in the form which could hide her true feelings.

8. The story Mrs. Packletide's Tiger has a number of oxymorons. Can you identify them and write them down in your notebooks?

Answer

List of oxymorons used in the story:

Over-much risk

Elaborate carelessness

Immeasurably nearer

Gladly connived

Pardonably annoyed