



READ AND FIND OUT

Q1. Who is Mr Lamb? How does Derry get into his garden?

Ans: Mr Lamb is an old man with a tin leg. His real leg was blown off years ago during the war. He lives all alone in his house. There is a garden near the house. It has ripe crab apples looking orange and golden in colour.

Mr Lamb is sitting in his garden when Derry climbs over the garden wall to get into his garden. Though the gate is open, the boy does not use it.

Q2. Do you think all this will change Derry's attitude towards Mr Lamb?

Ans: Mr Lamb learns from Derry that the latter does not like being near people. They stare at his face and feel afraid of him as half of it has been burnt by acid and looks very ugly. Mr Lamb offers him a new way of thinking. He tells him about a person who was afraid of everything and locked himself in a room. A picture fell off the wall on his head and killed him. Derry finds that the old man says peculiar things. He is further surprised to learn about the old man's habits. He loves to read books. His house has many books. There aren't any curtains at the windows. He likes the light and the darkness. He keeps the windows open to hear the wind.

Derry says that he too likes to hear the sound of rain on the roof. But he also hears people talking about him and his future. The old man tells him that he has all the God-given organs. He will get on the way he wants, like the rest. He could even get on better than them, if he made a firm decision. He tells Derry that hatred is worse than acid because it can burn man from inside. He should not worry about his burned face or what people say about it. All this brings a positive change in Derry's attitude towards Mr Lamb. He promises to come back after informing his mother. He asks Mr Lamb about his life and friends and recognises his loneliness and disappointment. He keeps his promise and returns only to find Mr Lamb lying on the ground.

READING WITH INSIGHT

Q1. What is it that draws Derry towards Mr Lamb in spite of himself?

Ans: Both Derry and Mr Lamb suffer from physical impairment. Derry has one side of his face disfigured and burnt by acid. The old man has a tin leg because his real leg got blown off during the war. Apart from these physical disabilities, Derry finds signs of loneliness and disappointment in Mr Lamb's life. The old man tries to overcome these feelings but the sense of alienation felt by him is more painful than the pain caused by physical disability. Derry tries to avoid meeting people because they consider his face frightful and ugly. They avoid him as they are afraid of him. His parents seem worried about him and talk about him and his future. Mr Lamb provides him a new approach to things. He tells him to see, hear, feel and think about things around him. He should not hate others. Hatred is worse than acid because it burns the inside. He has all the God-given limbs. He must take a firm decision and work towards it. He will succeed. He should not be afraid of people and they will not be afraid of him. All these factors draw Derry towards Mr Lamb.

Q2. In which section of the play does Mr Lamb display signs of loneliness and disappointment? What are the ways in which Mr Lamb tries to overcome these feelings?

Ans: It is in the middle section of the first scene of the play that Mr Lamb displays signs of loneliness and disappointment. He says that when it is a bit cooler, he will get the ladder and a stick, and pull down those crab apples. He makes jelly. Derry could help him. Then he says he is interested in anybody or anything that God made. It may be a person, flower, fruit, grass, weeds or rubbish. There are plenty of things to look at. Some of them are his crab apples or the weeds or a spider climbing up a silken ladder or his tall sun-flowers. He also likes to talk and have a company. He has a hive of bees. He hears them singing. He sits in the sun and reads books. He likes the light and the darkness. He hears the wind coming through open windows. There aren't any curtains at the windows as they either shut things out or shut things in. These are the ways in which Mr Lamb tries to overcome his loneliness.

Q3. The actual pain or inconvenience caused by a physical impairment is often much less than the sense of alienation felt by the person with disabilities. What is the kind of behaviour that the person expects from others?

Ans: The play 'On The Face Of It' focuses our attention on the physical pain and mental anguish of the persons suffering from some physical impairment. The playwright, Susan Hill, presents the two leading characters—an old man and a small boy—having different sorts of physical disabilities.

The old man has a tin leg. It did hurt him when it came off. Then he got used to it. He feels pain now and then in wet weather. He finds it inconvenient to run, to climb a tree or a ladder. He lives all alone in a big house with a garden.

The boy has one side of his face badly burnt by acid. He felt the physical pain then. After discharge from hospital, he feels hurt at the attitude of the people. They regard his face as horrible and ugly, show signs of being scared and avoid his presence. In short, he is disliked, if not hated. He is not accepted as an ordinary member of society. So, he does not like people to look at him.

It is clear that the sense of alienation that these disabled persons feel causes them constant pain. Such persons expect kind and considerate behaviour from others. They do not want tears, sympathy or pity. They dislike being pointed at, nicknamed, mocked at or made a fun of. They only demand a reasonable behaviour from others, full of appreciation of their difficulties.

Q4. Will Derry get back to his old seclusion or will Mr Lamb's brief association effect a change in the kind of life he will lead in the future?

Ans: (Two different answers are possible. One is being given below) Derry will not get back to his old seclusion. He has been associated with Mr Lamb for a short time only, but even this brief association will effect a change in the kind of life he will lead in future. Instead of being conscious of what people comment about the ugliness of his face, he will use his head and heart to achieve what he decides to do in life. It is also possible that with his firm determination and zeal to achieve his aim, he might do better than the rest, even those who do not suffer from any physical impairment.

By his persuasive manner and skilful use of anecdotes, Mr Lamb convinces Derry that a life of seclusion and withdrawal from the world is dull as well as risky. The world has many beautiful objects to see and admire, sounds to hear and ideas to think. One should have an open mind and positive attitude. Hatred is worse than acid. Derry's mother tries her best to keep Derry with her. But Derry resolves to go back to Mr Lamb to look at things and listen to him. He no longer cares about his face. What he thinks and feels, and what he wants to see and find out and hear is more important. He

does not want to remain at his home. He has got clear perception of things. If he does not go back there, he will never go anywhere in that world again. In short, Derry's coming back to Mr Lamb is indicative of the change in the kind of life he is likely to lead in future.

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