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4. Answer the following questions by ticking the correct options:

(a) Ali's walking to the Post Office daily even in biting cold weather shows his _____.

- (i) courage
- (ii) optimism
- (iii) foolishness
- (iv) strength of will

Answer:

- (iv) strength of will

(b) The Post Office is referred to as Ali's "place of pilgrimage" as he _____.

- (i) visited it daily
- (ii) came there to pray for a letter from his daughter
- (iii) went there with faith and hope
- (iv) believed God would bless him if he went there

Answer:

- (iii) went there with faith and hope

(c) The Post Master's rudeness to Ali reveals his _____.

- (i) lack of empathy
- (ii) preoccupation with his work
- (iii) preconceived notions
- (iv) sensitivity

Answer:

- (i) lack of empathy

(d) Ali did not come to the Post Office for several days as _____.

- (i) he had given up hope
- (ii) he was upset by the Post Master's rebuke
- (iii) he was unwell and not able to walk to the Post Office
- (iv) he was busy hunting

Answer:

- (iii) he was unwell and not able to walk to the Post Office

(e) "Tortured by doubt and remorse, he sat down in the glow of the charcoal sigri to wait."

The Post Master was waiting

for _____.

- (i) a letter from Miriam
- (ii) a letter from his own daughter
- (iii) a letter from Ali
- (iv) Ali to deliver Miriam's letter to him.

Answer:

- (ii) a letter from his own daughter

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5. Answer the following questions briefly.

(a) Who was Ali? Where did he go daily?

Answer:

Ali was a clever and crack shot hunter, Coachman. He was so obsessed with hunting that not a day would pass when he would not hunt. He would go to the post office daily.

(b) "Ali displays qualities of love and patience". Give evidence from the story to support the statement.

Answer:

Ali had been visiting the post office regularly for last five years to get a letter from his only daughter, Miriam about her well-being. He was the first one to arrive at the post office and last one to go. Such was the height of his love for his daughter. He even suffered insult, humiliation and ridicule of the post office employees patiently. Though he had grown extremely old and frail and his end was drawing near, yet he gave five gold guineas to Lakshmi Das, a post office clerk, to deliver the letter at his grave. So he was an epitome of love, patience, hope and faith.

(c) How do you know Ali was a familiar figure at the post office?

Answer:

Ali was a well known figure at the post office because he had been visiting the post office regularly for last five years. He sat on the same bench everyday waiting for his name to be called. The postmen made fun of him. Even though there would be no letter for him, they would call out his name, just to see his reaction. The post office became a place of pilgrimage for Ali. Even bad weather could not deter him. He was always the first one to arrive to the post office.

(d) Why did Ali give up hunting?

Answer:

His only daughter Miriam got married and left him. Ali then understood the real meaning of love and separation. So he gave up hunting.

(e) What impression do you form of the postmaster after reading the story 'The Letter'?

Answer:

In the beginning the postmaster appears to be haughty, arrogant, ill-tempered, unfeeling, selfish, impatient, insensitive, indifferent, irresponsible and unresponsive. His face is as inexpressive as a pumpkin. There is no sign of loveliness in his features. He does not understand Ali's feelings and anxiety. He considers Ali a mad man and rebuke him by calling him a 'pest'. But, he undergoes a complete transformation when he himself faces the mental trauma of not getting the news of his own daughter's well-being. Now he realises the pain and suffering of Ali. He is full of remorse, guilt and repentance. He becomes loving, caring, helpful and sympathetic.

(f) The postmaster says to Ali, "What a pest you are, brother!" Do you agree with the statement? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer:

Ali used to go to the post office daily. He would go and sit at a particular bench everyday, waiting for his name to be called out. He would not bother anyone. On that particular day, he had come to the post office after several days as he had fallen ill. Since he had not come for many days, he enquired for his letter from the postmaster. The postmaster, who was in a hurry to leave, lost his temper on Ali and called him a pest. Ali was not at all a pest; it was just that he came after many days so he was curious to know whether a letter had come for him.

(g) "Ali came out very slowly, turning after every few steps to gaze at the post office. His eyes were filled with tears of helplessness, for his patience was exhausted, even though he still had faith." Why were Ali's eyes filled with tears of helplessness? What had exhausted his patience but not his faith?

Answer:

Ali had waited endlessly for his daughter's letter, he felt helpless. The employees at the post-office made fun of him but he couldn't resist the temptation of seeing Miriam's letter. When he was insulted by the post master, who called him a 'pest', Ali's patience was exhausted but his unflagging hope told him that a letter would surely arrive.

(h) "Tortured by doubt and remorse, he sat down in the glow of the charcoal sigri to wait." Who is tortured by doubt and remorse?

Why? What is he waiting for?

Answer:

The postmaster is tortured by doubt and remorse. He is filled with remorse because he failed to understand Ali's concern about his daughter. The postmaster's daughter was unwell and he anxiously waited for some news of her. When he saw an envelope of a shape and colour that he expected, he quickly snatched it. However, it was not addressed to him but to Ali. His disappointment at not receiving any news of his daughter made him realize the sorrow and pain of Ali who had waited for five years for some news from his daughter.

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