



THINK AS YOU READ

Q1. Why was Edla happy to see the gift left by the peddler?

Ans: As soon as Edla opened the package of the gift, the contents came into view. She found a small rattrap with three wrinkled ten kronor notes and a letter addressed to her. The peddler wanted to be nice in return as she had been so nice to him all day long. He did not want her to be embarrassed at the Christmas season by a thief.

Q2. Why did the peddler sign himself as Captain von Stahle?

Ans: The ironmaster has invited the peddler to his house mistaking him for Captain von Stahle. He was welcomed there and looked after as captain even after the reality became known. The peddler got a chance to redeem himself from dishonest ways by acting as an honourable Captain.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Q1. How does the peddler interpret the acts of kindness and hospitality shown by the crofter, the iron master and his daughter?

Ans: The peddler interprets the acts of kindness and hospitality shown by the crofter, the iron master and his daughter differently. He cheats the crofter as he provides him company in his loneliness and helps him pass time. He wants to get a couple of kronors from the iron master and is surprised at the contrasting style of behaviour of father and daughter. He is touched by the kindness, care and intervention of Edla on his behalf.

Q2. What are the instances in the story that show that the character of the ironmaster is different from that of his daughter in many ways?

Ans: The ironmaster is impulsive* whereas his daughter is cool, logical, kind and thoughtful. In uncertain light he (iron master) mistakes the stranger as his old regiment comrade. He invites him home and takes care of his feeding, clothing etc. When he sees him in broad day light he calls the man dishonest, demands an explanation and is ready to call in the sheriff. His daughter is more observant. She notices the fear of the stranger and thinks that either he is a thief or a run away prisoner. In spite of that she is gentle, kind and friendly to him. She treats him nicely even after knowing the mistake in identity.

Q3. The story has many instances of unexpected reactions from the characters to others' behaviour. Pick out instances of these surprises.

Ans: The peddler is surprised at the warm welcome, generous supper, cheerful company and intimate confidences by the crofter. The ironmaster addresses the peddler as Captain von Stahle. He is surprised when the ironmaster calls him "Nils Olof". The ironmaster assumes his declining the invitation a result of embarrassment caused by his miserable clothing. The peddler's comparison of the world to a rattrap makes the ironmaster laugh and he drops the idea of calling in the sheriff.

The peddler looks at Edla in boundless amazement when she tells him that the suit is a Christmas present. She also invites him to spend next Christmas with them. She does all this even after knowing the mistake about his identity. The crofter is robbed by his guest, the rattrap peddler, in return of his hospitality.

Q4. What made the peddler finally change his ways?

Ans: Edla Willmansson treated the tramp in a friendly manner. She was nice and kind to her. She interceded on his behalf when her father was about to turn him out. She still entertained the peddler even after knowing the truth about him. She offered him the suit as Christmas present and invited him to spend the next Christmas with them. Her love and understanding aroused the essential goodness in the peddler and finally he changed his ways.

Q5. How does the metaphor of the rattrap serve to highlight the human predicament?

Ans: The world entices a person through the various good things of life such as riches and joy, shelter and food, heat and clothing. These were just like the baits in the rattrap. Once someone is tempted by the bait, the world closed on him. The peddler was tempted by thirty kronor of the crofter. It makes him hide himself. He walks through the wood. He is afraid to go to the Manor house. He gets peace only after returning the bait (money).

Q6. The peddler comes out as a person with a subtle sense of humour. How does this serve in lightening the seriousness of the theme of the story and also endear him to us?

Ans: The peddler has a subtle sense of humour, which is revealed during his interactions with the ironmaster and his daughter after the truth about him becomes known. He is neither afraid of being turned out in cold in rags nor of being sent to prison. He makes the ironmaster laugh with his metaphor of the rattrap. His letter with the Christmas present to Edla is a fine example of his capacity to make others laugh at him. Thus, he lightens the seriousness of the theme of the story and also endears himself to us.

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