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5. Answer the following questions briefly.

(a) What genre of stories does Jenkins want the narrator to write? Why?

Answer:

Jenkins wanted the narrator to write fictions about ghosts i.e. ghost stories. He wanted supernatural theme which gave horror to the public as ghosts were live propositions.

(b) Does the narrator like writing ghost stories? Support your answer with evidence from the story.

Answer:

No, the writer was not fond of writing ghost stories at all. He himself says 'I didn't specialize in ghost stories.' Whenever he sat down to write a ghost story, he hadn't the shade of an idea. He had chased the inspiration in vain for months when he started writing ghost fiction for the first time. This all shows that the narrator was, though natural, an accidental ghost fiction writer.

(c) What makes Helen, the ghost, and her other co-ghosts organize The Writer's Inspiration Bureau?

Answer:

Helen and other co-ghosts organised The Writer's Inspiration Bureau because they felt there were many writers without ideas, however, with a vulnerable mind who were looking for an inspiration to write ghost stories. The bureau would assign a ghost to such a writer so that he/she could write good ghost stories.

(d) Why had Helen, the ghost been helping the narrator write ghost stories? Why was she going on strike? What condition did she place for providing continued help?

Answer:

Helen had helped the narrator because he was keen to write ghost stories but had no ideas and his mind was impressionable. But now the ghosts were fed up of being called too often from their beds. They had given up haunting and had taken up answering questions on the Ouija board but people had started pestering them too often. Helen promised to help the narrator if he would get his friends and acquaintances to stop using the Ouija board.

(e) How does the ghost undermine the narrator's faith in his ability to write ghost stories?

Answer:

The narrator is sure that ghost stories specialize in him. He never refuses Jenkins whenever he demands a ghost story for his magazine. He had always been able to dig up one for him. So he has started feeling overconfident about his ability to write on the supernatural everytime. But the lady ghost tells him that he always call her to help him in writing a ghost story. Many a time she has leaned on his shoulder to give him ideas. Now, he will not get more ideas or plots of ghost stories for him. In this way, the lady ghost undermines the narrator's ability to write ghost stories.

(f) Why does John want the ghost to disappear before his wife appears on the scene? What impression of his wife's character do

you form from his words?

Answer:

Lavinia, John's wife, is a jealous lady. John does not want Helen to be seen by his wife for fear of complications in his married life. His wife is over sensitive and the sight of a ghost in her house will affect her badly. Lavinia is basically a lady, who is a spendthrift and socialite, spending her time in parties and friends.

(g) Why does the narrator hesitate to be a partner to Laura Hinkle during the Ouija Board Party?

Answer:

Helen, the ghost, had asked the narrator to influence his friends to stop using the Ouija board. It was only on this condition that Helen promised to help the narrator to write ghost stories. If Helen sees him now himself trying to communicate ghosts through Ouija board, he fears how and what she would do to him. That is why the narrator was reluctant to be a partner to Laura Hinkle during the Ouija Board party.

(h) What message does the ghost convey to the group that had assembled in the narrator's house? What is their reaction to the message?

Answer:

Helen called John a traitor as he bluffs her. He had promised Helen that he would convince his friends to stop contacting ghosts; rather here he himself was doing the same. She is annoyed and filled with anguish and so goes to everyone's Ouija board one by one and tells that Mr. Hallock is a traitor. After this revelation everybody suspected John of cheating upon his wife, later John clarified to his wife and she even understood.

(i) Do you agree with the narrator calling the assembly of women "manipulators?" Give reasons.

Answer:

Assembly of Women were rightly called 'manipulators' by narrator as they very successfully and craftily manipulated the spirits to answer their questions. The way in which they brought report about Helen's statement about the narrator calling him traitor seemed like manipulation to him.

(j) Why is John's wife angry? What does she decide to do?

Answer:

John's wife is angry because she, like other women, believed what the spirit said through the Ouija board, about her husband. A woman even reported that Helen has called John a traitor. Lavinia thought that her husband was cheating on her. She decided to go to her grandmother's house. She also decided to separate from her husband.

(k) Why does John wish he were dead?

Answer:

John wished he was dead because a brief meeting with a ghost had created such situations that he was about to lose his wife, whom he loved dearly, it destroyed his happiness and home.

(l) When confronted by Lavinia about his flirtations over the Ouija Board, John insists that 'the affair was quite above-board, I assure you, my love'. Bring out the pun in John's statement.

Answer:

John assures his wife that his flirtations with Helen the ghost are above board. He tries to tell her that whatever that has happened between him and Helen is over the board of Ouija and there was nothing that he wished to hide from his wife; in fact there was nothing to tell.

(m) John's apprehensions about his wife's reaction to her encounter

with the ghost are unfounded. Justify.

Answers:

John thought that his wife would become hysterical if she saw the ghost Helen; however, when the encounter happened, she confidently spoke to the ghost and was not at all scared of it.

6. Answer the following questions in detail :

(a) After her reconciliation with her husband, John Hallock, Lavinia writes a letter to her friend expressing how her relationship with him had almost been on the verge of breaking and what saved it. Write her letter.

Answer:

Dear Friend,

How are you? Hope you are doing fine. Sorry about delaying in replying to your letter. I was caught in some personal problems. I wished to share a life-changing experience with you, my dear. About a month ago I, along with the women in my group, was fascinated with Ouija boards and we organised a party at my home. We were all excited and John had to substitute for someone. The party progressed and you wouldn't believe what happened next. A ghost named Helen tried to communicate with John through all the five boards and called him a traitor. John looked uncomfortable and guilty. I was angry and jealous. I could not believe it and spent the whole night crying. By morning I had packed and decided to file a divorce. I went to inform John and was shocked when he tried to hide someone in the room from me. I thrust him aside and was greeted with a ghost! Can you believe it? She looked like a phantom and I understood later that she had been providing John with inspiration for his stories. She was somewhat annoyed with him because she wanted him to convince people to stop using Ouija boards. I am so glad that my marriage did not break up. A ghost saved it, literally! John and I share a wonderful life now. I hope you enjoyed reading about my encounter with a ghost.

So much for now.

Look forward to your reply. Love

Yours truly

Lavinia

(b) John Hallock reflects upon his experience with Helen's ghost and in retrospect he finds it quite amusing. All the same he is relieved that he is no longer plagued by it. Ironically, the self same ghost inspires his creativity and he writes a diary entry reflecting upon the comical aspect of his experience. Write his diary entry.

Answer:

30 November

Dear Diary

The past few days have been a roller coaster ride for me. I was sitting in my study trying to write a ghost story and suddenly a ghost appeared. At first I could not believe it, however, slowly I got talking to it. She declared that she and other ghosts were going on a strike. Imagine ghosts going on a strike! Apparently, she had helped me write all my earlier ghost stories, as what she claimed. She then appeared in the Ouija board session that my wife had organised for her friends. She called me a traitor openly in front of all my folks. My wife and her friends almost believed that I was cheating on my wife. Lavinia threatened to leave me. Here I was caught between a ghost who threatened to go on a strike and a wife who was on the verge of leaving me. Phew!!

Thankfully Lavinia, got a chance to meet and speak to Helen and her misunderstanding was cleared. One good thing came out of these encounters with Helen, I now have got an idea for my next story. This one is going to be my best story so far. John

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