



By Sinclair Lewis

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Read and Find Out

1. Why is the lawyer sent to New Mullion? What does he first think about the place?

Answer:

The lawyer was sent to New Mullion to serve summons on Oliver Lutkins, who was needed as a witness in a law case. He had expected the place to be a sweet and simple country village.

2. Who befriends him? Where does he take him?

Answer:

The lawyer was befriended by a delivery man who introduced himself as Bill. He told him that he knew Lutkins and would help the lawyer in finding him. He took him to all the places where Lutkins was seen or was known to hang out. He took the lawyer to Fritz's shop, where Lutkins played a lot of poker; to Gustaff's barber shop and then to Gray's barber shop; to the poolroom and several other places before finally taking him to Oliver's mother's farm. However, Oliver Lutkins was not found.

3. What does he say about Lutkins?

Answer:

Bill told the lawyer that Lutkins was a hard fellow to catch. He was always up to something or the other. He owed money to many people, including Bill, and had never even paid anybody a cent. He also said that Oliver played a lot of poker and was good at deceiving people.

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1. What more does Bill say about Lutkins and his family?

Answer:

Bill told the lawyer that he knew Lutkins' mother. He said that she was a terror. He narrated an incident when he took a trunk to her once and she almost took his skin off because he did not treat it like a box of eggs. He also said that she was about nine feet tall and four feet thick. She was very quick and could talk a lot. He said that Oliver must have heard that somebody was chasing him and consequently, would have gone into hiding at his mother's place.

2. Does the narrator serve the summons that day?

Answer:

No. The narrator did not serve the summons that day.

3. Who is Lutkins?

Answer:

The hack driver himself was Oliver Lutkins.

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Think about It

1. When the lawyer reached New Mullion, did 'Bill' know that he was looking for Lutkins? When do you think Bill came up with his plan for fooling the lawyer?

Answer:

Lutkins act of taking the lawyer for a ride clearly indicates that he is a very cunning person. It is his natural behaviour to not disclose his true identity to unknown persons. Moreover, being a cheat as he is it seems his regular practice to dupe people who are newcomers.

2. Lutkins openly takes the lawyer all over the village. How is it that no one lets out the secret? (Hint: Notice that the hack driver asks the lawyer to keep out of sight behind him when they go into Fritz's.) Can you find other such subtle ways in which Lutkins manipulates the tour?

Answer:

Lutkin never allows the lawyer to the place where the imaginary Lutkins is supposed to be present at a given time. The way he weaves stories about Lutkin's vagabond nature and the way he scares the lawyer about Lutkin's mother are great tools applied by Bill.

3. Why do you think Lutkins' neighbours were anxious to meet the lawyer?

Answer:

Lutkin's neighbours were not anxious to meet a person who could be easily duped. They wanted to enjoy the lawyer's predicament.

4. After his first day's experience with the hack driver the lawyer thinks of returning to New Mullion to practise law. Do you think he would have reconsidered this idea after his second visit?

Answer:

After his first day's experience with the hack driver, the lawyer had considered returning to New Mullion to practise law. However, he realised during his second visit that he had been literally taken for a ride by the hack driver (who himself was Lutkins). In this, Lutkins was helped by the townspeople. After becoming the laughing stock of the town, it is most likely that the lawyer would have reconsidered his initial idea of working there.

5. Do you think the lawyer was gullible? How could he have avoided being taken for a ride?

Answer:

The lawyer seems to be a simpleton and inexperienced person. He has yet to come to grips with the way the bad world functions. He could have done his homework better before going to the village. He could have taken a photograph of Lutkin if available. Before relying on Bill he could have cross checked with other people as well. He could have avoided sending Bill alone to search Lutkin.

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