

THE ENEMY

Pearl S. Buck

INTRODUCTION

The story is written with the backdrop of the Second World War. It brings out the sad plight of a prisoner of war and also deals with the conflict that a doctor couple faces because of sheltering an enemy.

Dr. Sadao, a Japanese surgeon finds an American soldier in a dying state on the beach at his doorstep. He is unable to throw him back into the sea though the young navy is his enemy as he is a doctor and his first duty is to save a life. Hana, his wife, though initially was reluctant because it was dangerous for all of them including the children to have the enemy in the house, joins her husband in operating and nursing the enemy soldier back to health, even though the servants desert the house.

Though it was war time and all hands were needed at the front, the General did not send Sadao with the troops as he was an expert scientist and surgeon and the General needed him for an operation. Sadao tells him about the enemy soldier but he does not take any action as he remains self-absorbed with his ailment and completely forgets his promise that he will send his private assassins to kill the enemy and remove his body too. Taking advantage of the general's forgetfulness, Sadao decides to save the soldier's life. After the soldier is out of danger, Dr. Sadao helps him to escape from his house to a nearby island to safety.

After all is done, Sadao recalls his time spent in America, the people he met, the teacher who taught him, Miss Harley who hated him and yet was kind to him, the Americans with all their prejudices and sentimentality. He wondered why he could not kill Tom, the American prisoner of war.

DR. SADAO

'The Enemy' by Pearl S Buck, is the story of a kind, considerate, passionate Japanese doctor, Sadao Hoki, whose love for and honesty to his profession was far above and beyond narrow nationalism and prejudices.

His father, a Japanese to the core, had spent infinite pains for his upbringing and education and for this reason, he had sent him to America at the age of 22 to learn all of medicine and surgery. There he met Hana, a Japanese girl, and fell in love with her. However, he waited until his father's consent and married her only after the approval.

Dr. Sadao was a dedicated surgeon and scientist. He was first a doctor and then anything else. Since he was perfecting a discovery which would render wounds entirely clean, he had not been sent abroad with the troops. Even the general would have needed him for a possible operation.

The climactic moment in his life comes when he and Hana found a prisoner of war, wounded and bleeding, on the shore in front of their residence. He at once packed the wound with sea moss. However, Sadao was in a dilemma. The wounded man was an American and Japan and America were at war. If he provided shelter to a white man he could be arrested. Again, if he handed him over to the police, the prisoner would certainly die. In fact, the best traits of his character come to light when risking his own life and the entire family he dared to operate the soldier and thus save the enemy. Even facing vehement opposition from the servants, he knew his priorities and responsibilities as a doctor very well.

Sadao, thus, emerges as a real human being and true doctor for whom the essential worth of human life was of paramount importance. He stood far above and beyond countries and continents, races and wars and narrow nationalistic feelings and prejudices.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

Why was Dr. Sadao kept in Japan and not sent abroad with the troops?

Dr. Sadao was a famous surgeon and a scientist. He was perfecting a major discovery which would render wounds entirely clean and so had not been sent abroad with the troops. A second reason was that there was some slight danger that the old General might need an operation for a condition for which he was then being treated medically, and for this possibility Sadao was being kept in Japan.

What did Sadao and his wife want to do with the white man after he had stopped his bleeding? Why?

Japan was at war with America. Thus if Sadao and his wife sheltered the white man in their house, they would be arrested for treason. Again, if they turned him over as a prisoner, the man was sure to be killed. Therefore, they thought the best thing would be to put him back into the sea.

How did Hana help Dr Sadao?

First Hana washed the wounded man's face and body with warm water till it was quite clean. She assisted Dr Sadao during the operation. She brought in the towels and though she was not comfortable at the sight of the bleeding wound, she gave anaesthesia to the man.

What happened on the seventh day after Dr Sadao had typed the letter?

Two things that happened on the seventh day –

In the morning the cook, the gardener and Yumi packed up their belongings and left together.

The second thing that happened was the arrival of a messenger to tell Sadao that he had been called to the palace as the general was in pain again.

How does the writer indicate that Dr Sadao's father was a very traditional and conventional man?

Dr. Sadao's father, very traditional and conventional, was a Japanese to the core. He had never joked or played with him but had spent infinite pains upon him in his upbringing. Since Sadao's education was his prime concern, he had sent him to America at the age of 22 to learn all of medicine and surgery.

Again Sadao fell in love with Hana, the girl he met in America, only after being sure of her Japanese birth since his father would never have received her unless she was pure in her race. Even the marriage was solemnized in the old Japanese way as the father had so arranged.

How does the General offer to help Dr.Sadao get rid of the American?

The General offered to send his own private assassins to Dr.Sadao house to help him get rid of the American. He further informed the doctor that they were capable assassins, and without much aid and noise would kill the man by causing internal bleeding. They would also dispose of the body, he assured Dr.Sadao.

How did Dr Sadao help the American to escape? What instructions were given by Dr.Sadao to him before he left for the sea?

Even on the third night, the General had not sent his assassins and Sadao could bear the strain no further. So he planned for the American's escape.

He planned to put his boat on the shore that night, with food and extra clothing in it for Tom to row to a little island near the coast. He could live there until he saw a Korean fishing boat pass by and thereby row to safety.

Sadao instructed him to row and stay on the island for the arrival of a Korean fishing boat. He advised him not to bum any fire for fear of being caught. He gave him his flash light and told to signal with a flash if he was alright but there. In case he ran short of food, two flashes should be the signal. He sternly warned him to flash the light only at the sunset and never during the darkness.

Do you think Dr Sadao's final decision was the best possible one in the circumstances? Why/Why not? Explain with reference to the story, 'The Enemy'.

Dr Sadao rose above narrow prejudices of race and country and not only saved the young American soldier from dying, but also helped him to escape. Basic human goodness overpowered Dr Sadao and the final decision that he took was indeed the best possible one in the circumstances. He could not hand over a dying man, even if he was an enemy, to the police. The ethics of his profession had taught him to save a dying man. His essential love for humanity and sincerity towards his duty as a doctor transcended all other narrow considerations. As a doctor, it was his duty to save a dying man and so he put aside all other options and respected the ideals and principles of his profession.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

The servants of Sadao and Hana reflect a particular mindset of the general public in society towards the thinking and broad minded human beings. Elaborate with the help of the story 'The Enemy'.

Servants reflect the mindset of poor, uneducated and narrow minded section of society

were frightened on hearing about wounded American soldier being given shelter in the house

1. Yumi refused to wash clean the wounded white man since she had never washed a white man. Even on being commanded, she looked fiercely resistive.
2. The gardener felt that the master ought not to heal the wound of the white man. First he was shot and next the sea caught him and wounded him with her rocks. If the master

healed what the gun and the sea did they would take revenge on them. He argued that when the white man was so near death Sadao should not have saved him.

3. The cook was of the opinion that young master was so proud of his skill to save life that he even saved the life of an enemy

Finally the servants left Sadao's house being afraid of the repercussions of helping an enemy soldier.

None could understand Sadao's dilemma and his decision to save the white man.

What conflicting ideas arise in Dr Sadao's mind after he has brought the wounded American soldier home? How is the conflict resolved?

From the day Dr Sadao found the wounded soldier outside his house, he had been caught up in a web of conflicts and difficulties.

The first difficulty arose when Sadao decided to operate upon the soldier. He was caught between his duty as a doctor and loyalty towards his nation. Nonetheless, Sadao emerged a champion in this regard. As an ethical and sincere doctor, he saved the life of the soldier and as a responsible citizen, he also informed the General about the presence of the soldier.

Next, when the General's men did not arrive to kill the enemy, Sadao was again caught in a dilemma as to how to get rid of the white man. His innate virtues of compassion and benevolence forbade him from killing the man. Thus, he decided to let the prisoner escape by sending him off to an unguarded island.

This is how Dr Sadao successfully resolved the conflict.

Attempt a character sketch of the old General in the lesson, 'The Enemy'.

The old General is a man whose personal consideration over-weighed all other considerations. Even though it was the time of the World War and a doctor of the calibre of Dr Sadao would have proved to be a blessing for the soldiers on the front, he was retained in Japan primarily because he was indispensable for the General's health and well-being and should the latter needed to be operated upon. Again, knowing about the presence of the American soldier at Dr Sadao's house, he simply forgets sending his private assassins to kill the enemy soldier as was promised by him The General, therefore, come across a self-engrossed person who is actually too preoccupied with his own self. His illness and fear of death so did outweigh all other considerations.