The Possibility of Evil

By Shirley Jackson

Please respond to the questions in detail. The questions are broken up into each of the reading skills for extra awareness and reinforced practice.

Comprehension

1. Describe the setting of the story. What is the author’s purpose in using this type of setting with the events of the story?

The overall setting of this story took place in a small town where Ms. Strangeworth goes shopping in the morning time , then goes home and does the mail in the afternoon, and then delivers the mail at the post office in the evening. The author’s purpose in this story is that you never rule the whole town and make it improve.

2. What is Miss Strangeworth’s attitude towards her town? Find one quote to prove your answer.

Ms. Strangeworth’s attitude in the story starts off nice but in reality, she is a really evil woman. In her town, she writes evil letters and tries to help the town improve.

3. How does Miss Strangeworth feel about her neighbours? Find at least one quote to support your theory.

Ms. Strangeworth feels bad about her neighbours about what things they have gone through, so therefore, she writes all evil letters to each of the other people and keeping the town at alert. She just wants things to be done in the way it is done. The quote supporting this is “ Didn’t you ever see an **IDIOT** child before? Some people just should not have children. Shouldn’t they?”

4. Who is the antagonist of this story? The protagonist? Why?

The protagonist and antagonist of the story is Ms. Strangeworth because she is the main character of the whole story. She is also the antagonist because later throughout the story, she changes to a really rude and evil person, especially when she writes the letters, and it is not her job to rule everyone and tell them on what to do.

5. Identify 3 symbols in the story:

Three Symbols in this story were:

* The roses
* The letter
* The Groceries

Inference

6. Describe Miss Strangeworth. What is her motivation for sending the letters? *Hint – there are 2 reasons – one that she tells herself and one she does not want to acknowledge.*

When Ms. Strangeworth writes those letters, she is writing it in an evil and horrible manner that how the children should be raised properly. She does not want to acknowledge the evilness inside her. She mentions true stuff but hurts other peoples feelings. She does not acknowledge the revenge inside of her.

7. What have the three people “done” to receive the letters? *This is a read-between-the lines question.*

In order for the three people to receive the letters, they told her about what was going on with them and then Ms. Strangeworth, makes up a really bad remark in the letter to the others and say bad stuff to them like “idiot” and ends up telling them the bad stuff and ruling on them when it is actually not her job to do that.

8. Explain the theme of the story.

The overall theme of the story is that appearances can be deceptive. At the beginning of the story, people think that Ms. Strangeworth is a kind and caring person but throughout the story when Ms. Strangeworth gives certain people mean letters and when she gives a letter and puts it in a mailbox, and drops it she doesn’t listen that someone calls out for her that she has dropped a message.

Making Connections

9. Imagine concerned citizens in the story getting together to decide what they should do about Miss Strangeworth. As a member of the community, what are your suggestions? We now live in an incredibly challenging world where getting along seems to be more and more difficult. We see fights breaking out over mask wearing, racial tensions are high, and controversies are pulling people apart. How do suggestions for dealing with Miss Strangeworth connect to helping society today come back together?

If I lived in her town, I would have spoke to her about those mean letters that she wrote. I would not have destroyed her roses because if I did, this could have led to a worse fight than before meaning that Ms. Strangeworth would get more upset. These roses are unbelievably valuable to her and they do not do a harm us like Ms. Strangeworth. During the story, Ms. Strangeworth thought she was doing a good deed by getting rid of all the evil in the town, but whatever she did like mentioning bad words like "idiot" in the letter was really disrespectful. The things that I would do is sit with her and talk to her about the mistakes she has done and what she can do next time in the future. If she would keep doing this repeatedly, I would just simply straight away ignore her because I told her what she needs to do and she wouldn't listen, so therefore if she sends a really mean letter to me and/or says anything mean, I would straight away ignore her and never listen or speak to her again. I would also ignore her if she kept on doing this because in this world, many people out there are immature and disrespectful so I would not just waste my time helping all these other disrespectful people become respectful again. After telling them to please stop saying mean things and the bully does not listen, there is almost no other option but to ignore them if they are sexually harassing you.