Vikram’s English Academy (ICSE)

Assignment: Skimbleshanks: The Railway Cat

1. Who all were searching for Skimbleshanks? Why?

Ans: All the guards, porters and the stationmaster’s daughters. The Night Mail won’t move unless Skimbleshanks is not found.

1. What is the whisper all about? Why is there a whisper?

Ans: The whisper all about is of Skimble’s location, where he was and if he had gone to hunt the thimble.

1. Where had been Skimbleshanks been busy? Why? What does he do when he appear?

Ans: Skimbleshanks had been busy in the luggage van of the Night mail. Probably checking out if the train is safe and secure. When he appears he gives one flash of his glass-green eyes.

1. Give two instances of Skimbleshanks’ communication.

Ans: Skimbleshanks’ communicates in the poem with his glass green eyes. He gives one flash to give orders. And, as the passengers get down at their destinations, the cat of the train gives a wave of his long brown tail which probably says that he would see them again.

1. Mention the different names given to the Night Mail.

Ans: Night Mail, Sleeping Car Express, Northern Mail, Midnight Mail

1. Does Skimbleshanks prove himself to be a good in-charge of the train? Justify.

Ans: Yes, Skimbleshanks proves himself to be a good in-charge of the train as he takes care of each and every passenger, he doesn’t distinguish between the classes, he regularly patrols and he would know if anything occurred. He watches without winking, he understands each passenger’s thoughts by looking at the expressions. He is strict and maintains discipline but at the same time takes care of minutest wishes of the passenger. He will keep himself awake so that nobody or nothing can disturb the sleeping passengers.

1. How does Skimbleshanks establish control? What does he do?

Ans: Skimbleshanks establishes control by a regular patrol as he would know at once if anything occurred. He would watch without winking and he would see what the passengers are thinking.

1. What is certain, according to the poet? Are the passengers scared of him?

Ans: According to the poet, it is certain that Skimbleshanks doesn’t approve of hilarity and riot. So he makes sure that the passengers are quiet and maintaining the discipline. Yes, passengers are indeed scared of him because they do maintain silence when he is on a round.

1. Mention the different amenities provided to the passengers in the den.

Ans: Name is written on the door of the den, berth is neat and cosy, newly folded sheet, no speck of dust on the floor, bright or dim light, handle to open the window to let the breeze come in, funny little basin, counterpane. A hospitable guard asking the passenger’s preference to tea.

1. What kind of treatment is given to the passengers accommodating the den?

ANs: A very royal treatment is given to the passengers accommodating the den. The name on the door shows a personal touch, different types of light show that small details are taken care of, the guard will also ask what kind of tea the passenger would like to drink. The Railway Cat takes utmost care to make his passenger comfortable and even will not let the mice bother them.

1. How do we know that Skimbleshanks’ nature is very strict?

Ans: We know that Skimbleshanks’ nature is very strict as the poet says that none can play any prank with him and more over he is a cat that cannot be ignored so nothing goes wrong on the Northern Mail.

1. What does the Railway cat do in the watches of the night?

Ans: In the watches of the night, the Railway cat is always fresh and bright. He has a cup of tea with perhaps a drop of Scotch while he is keeping on the watch.

1. According to the poet, at which stations would the passengers be sleeping?

What does the railway cat do?

Ans: At Crewe and Carlisle, the passengers would be fast asleep. At Crewe, the railway cat stays wide awake and he walked up and down the station. At Carlisle, he greets the stationmaster with elation.

1. What happens at Dumfries?

At Dumfries, he speaks to the police so that at the next station that is the Gallowgate any passenger need not wait. As Skimbleshanks will help the passengers to get out.

1. Give a character sketch of Skimbleshanks.

Ans: Strict, disciplinarian, dutiful, responsible, unbiased, treats all passengers equally, a very important character on the train, decision-maker (train doesn’t move unless he agrees), powerful, respectful (even other stationmasters respect and acknowledge him), warm and hospitable (says a good bye to passenger)