

## **9<sup>th</sup> Standard English**

### **The Bishop's Candlesticks Summary**

Norman McKinnell's 'The Bishop's Candlesticks' is a very popular play based on the theme that love and kindness can change a man rather than violence. The play is about a convict who was arrested because he stole food for his starving and dying wife. He was put in jail where he was tortured and treated like an animal. He ran away from the 'hell' and broke into the Bishop's house. The Bishop represented all the noble Christian virtues and gave clothes and bed to the convict. The Bishop's kind behaviour softened the convict a little but he could not contain himself from stealing his silver candlesticks. He was captured and brought back. The Bishop saved him by telling the police that those candlesticks were a gift from him. The act of the Bishop transformed the convict. He now believed that the spirit of God dwells in the heart of every human being.

#### **Bishop Always Ready to Help Others**

The Bishop is always ready to help the needy pa-sons of his parish. He goes to attend to Marie's mother who is feeling poorly. He is out in cold without supper. He sells his salt cellars to help Mere Gringoire to pay her rents. His sister Persome feels that her brother is the dupe of every idle vagabond and old lying woman. He has sold his land, his furniture and spent all his savings to help others. Persome feels that her brother's generosity and innocence is being misused by the people of his parish. But the Bishop thinks that this world is full of suffering and he can do very little to help the sufferers.

### Convict Enters Stealthily with a Knife

The convict enters with a long knife and seizes the Bishop from behind. He warns the Bishop not to play any trick with him. He is too old a bird to be caught with chaff. Persome is frightened when she sees a knife in his hand. The convict is staring at them like a wild beast. The Bishop asks Persome to give company to the guest at supper. The convict eats greedily and throws a bone on the floor. Persome leaves the Bishop with the convict and goes to her room. Then the convict narrates his story.

### Convict Narrates His Tragic Story

Once the convict had a little hut and a wife. Then came the bad year. He was out of job and had no money. His wife Jeanette fell ill. She was dying. He stole to buy her food. He was arrested. He pleaded to them why he stole but they laughed at him. He was sentenced to ten years in the prison hulks. The night he was sentenced, he was told that Jeanette was dead.

### Life in 'Hell'

He was no more a man now. He became a wild beast. The jail employees chained him like a wild beast. They lashed him like a hound. He was fed on filth and covered with vermin. They took away his soul and gave a devil in its place. But one day they were careless and he escaped.

### Convict Steals Bishop's Silver Candlesticks

The convict comes to know that he is with a Bishop. He warns him not to try to convert him. He doesn't want any damn religion and the church. The Bishop asks him to go to bed. When left alone, the convict sees the silver candlesticks. He knows that they were given to the Bishop by his mother. His heart goes

soft. But he soon hardens himself, steals the candlesticks and goes out into the darkness.

#### Convict is Caught and Brought Back to Bishop

When Persome and the Bishop get up next morning, they find the candlesticks and the convict missing. Soon they hear a knocking. A sergeant enters with three soldiers and the convict in chains. The sergeant tells that they found him (convict) walking on the road with the candlesticks. They arrested him on suspicion. They identified the candlesticks of the Bishop and so they brought them there to him. The Bishop saves the convict by declaring that those candlesticks were given to him as a gift. The convict is freed again.

#### Convict is Transformed

The Bishop saves the convict from going to “hell” again. This leaves a deep impression on the convict. He is a transformed man now. He is no more a wild beast. He sobs and repents. The Bishop gives him the candlesticks and the convict takes them in absolute amazement. The Bishop shows him a very lonely path through the woods at the back of his cottage leading to Paris. The soldiers don’t like lonely paths at night. The Bishop blesses the convict and tells him that “this poor body is the Temple of the Living God”.