

Short-Answer Questions

Q.1. “Edla sat and hung her head even more dejectedly than usual.” Which two reasons forced her to behave in that manner?

[CBSE (F) 2010]

Ans. Edla was sad and upset as she had heard that a crofter of ironworks had been robbed. This led her to think that the peddler to whom she gave shelter was responsible for this misdeed. Her father also added to her doubts by saying that he had heard the peddler was a thief.

Q.2. Why was the peddler surprised when he knocked on the door of the cottage?

[CBSE (AI) 2011]

Ans. The peddler was surprised as he was not only welcomed at the night time but was also provided food and shelter. He was treated like a guest and not as a beggar. The crofter was a lonely man, he also needed company.

Q.3. What made the peddler finally change his ways?

[CBSE (AI) 2011]

Ans. The peddler changed his way of living because of the love and hospitality shown by Edla, daughter of the ironmaster. He lived a pathetic life but when he was respected and cared, he changed his way of life. He began to live with dignity and respect.

Q.4. Why did the peddler keep to the woods after leaving the crofter’s cottage? How did he feel?

[CBSE (AI) 2011]

Ans. The peddler kept to the woods after leaving the crofter’s cottage because he wanted to avoid police. He was afraid as he had stolen the crofter’s money. If he took to the road he might be caught or seen by policemen or the crofter.

Q.5. Who was the owner of Ramsjö iron mills? Why did he visit the mills at night?

[CBSE (AI) 2012]

Ans. The owner of that mill was a very prominent ironmaster. His greatest ambition was to ship out good iron to the market. He insisted on quality and kept a watch on the work round the clock. He came to the forge on one of his night rounds of inspection.

Q.6. How did the ironmaster react on seeing the stranger lying close to the furnace?

[CBSE (AI) 2012, 2013]

Ans. The ironmaster adjusted his hat to see the stranger very carefully. He seemed to him as one of his acquaintances. He offered to take him home.

Q.7. Why didn't the stranger tell the ironmaster that he was not Nils Olof?

[CBSE (AI) 2012]

OR

How did the peddler react when he saw that the ironmaster had recognised him as Nils Olof, an old regimental comrade?

[CBSE (AI) 2008]

Ans. The peddler was mistaken by the iron master to be an old acquaintance from the regiment. He assumed that the ironmaster would hand him a few kronors and therefore made no attempts to deny the reference being made. He replies by saying that things had gone down hill for him. However, when the ironmaster said that he should not have resigned and suggested that "Nils Olof", accompany him to the manor, he flatly refused to do so, for fear of being recognised.

Q.8. Why did Edla invite the peddler to stay with her family?

[CBSE (F) 2013]

Ans. Edla was a kind and compassionate young lady. It was Christmas and she wanted the peddler to be a guest for the occasion and share all the goodies that were prepared for Christmas. She had also sensed his fear but she wanted him to spend some time in her house without any fear and relax in comfortable security.

Q.9. Why did the peddler think that the world was a rattrap?

[CBSE (AI) 2009]

Ans. The peddler was a very poor man. He earned his living by selling rattraps made out of material bought by begging. Suddenly he realised that the whole world was a rattrap. The riches and luxuries and comforts are the baits. Like rats, people allow themselves to be tempted by these baits. Once caught, everything is lost and even struggles would not let anyone escape.

Q.10. What did the gift of the rat trap signify?

[CBSE Sample Paper 2016]

Ans. In the story 'The Rattrap' the peddler leaves a small rat trap with thirty kronors and a note for Edla. He confesses his mistake and asks Edla to return the money to the crofter. He admits that he got caught in his own rattrap. He also thanks her for treating him as a real captain and for giving him another chance. Life is one big rat trap, one

gets trapped by own deeds. The gift of the rattrap signified that the peddler was releasing himself from the trap he had very nearly got into. It was an expression of gratitude to Edla, for enabling him get out if it became of her behaviour towards him. It is important that everyone gets a second chance to improve oneself, and Edla had given him his chance.

Q.11. Why was the peddler amused at the idea of the world being a rattrap?

[CBSE Delhi 2016]

Ans. The peddler believed that the world with all its riches and joys, food and shelter appears as a rattrap to tempt people. He was amused to think of many other people he knew, who were already caught in the trap, and some others who were circling around the bait.

Q.12. What hospitality did the peddler receive from the crofter?

[CBSE Delhi 2016]

Ans. The peddler was surprised as he was not only welcomed at the night time but was also provided food and shelter. He was treated like a guest and not as a beggar. The crofter was a lonely man, he also needed company.

Q.13. What do we learn about the crofter's nature from the story, 'The Rattrap'?

[CBSE (AI) 2016]

Ans. The crofter was lonely and trusting. He was hospitable and gullible. Without any doubt on the peddler, he invites the peddler inside his house at night and shares not only his food but also the whereabouts of his hard earned money. He was friendly and talkative. He felt proud of his cow that gave him enough milk to support him and talks a lot about it.

Q.14. Why did the Crofter show the thirty kroner to the peddler?

[CBSE (AI) 2016]

Ans. The crofter felt proud of the cow that gave him enough milk to support him. So he told the peddler that he had got thirty kronors from the creamery as the payment of previous month's supply. However, he felt that the peddler did not believe him. Thus, he showed the money to convince him.

Q.15. Why did the ironmaster speak kindly to the peddler and invite him home?

[CBSE (AI) 2016]

Ans. The iron master mistook the peddler to be "Nils olof", his old regimental comarade. He goes on to tell him that he would not have allowed him to resign if he had been in service. As if to make amends for what had happened, the ironmaster tells the

peddler to accompany him to the manor, so that he can be received honourably like an old regimental comrade.

Long-Answer Questions

Q.1. Describe the events which led to the change in the peddler's way of life.

[CBSE (AI) 2008C]

Ans. The peddler had been living a despicable life of poverty, despair and frustration. His only aim in life was to accomplish things in life. He did not care about the means he chose to acquire the material substances in life. Be it beggary, theft or cheating someone, he did not shy away from anything. His view towards the society was in fact shaped by the apathetic and indifferent attitude of the society towards him. He was never shown any understanding, respect or kindness by anyone. He did not have any respect for any one and viewed the whole world as a rattrap. He felt that the riches and luxuries of life were baits to entice people into a vicious cycle of struggles, from which there was no escape.

Neither the crofter's hospitality nor the ironmaster's invitation to his house brought about any change in him. It was only when he met the ironmaster's daughter, Edla that his outlook towards life changed. Edla's warmth, kindness, compassion and genuineness touched him. He left a rattrap as a Christmas gift for Edla and enclosed a letter thanking her for her kindness. He also confessed to stealing money from the crofter and left the money to be restored to the owner. This way, he redeemed himself from his dishonest ways and emerged as an altogether transformed person. In this transformation process he behaved like a real captain, the way Edla addressed him.

Q.2. Do you think the title 'The Rattrap' is appropriate? Give examples from the text in support of your view.

[CBSE (AI) 2008C]

Ans. Selma Lagerlof gives a very apt and logical title to the story. The metaphor of the rattrap is very effectively used. The whole world is nothing but a big rattrap. All riches, joys, food and shelter are just baits. These baits make people restless, helpless and powerless. The moment anyone touches the bait, the rattrap closes in on him. Then everything comes to an end.

The story revolves around the vagabond, who, though philosophises about the world being a rattrap, falls into its trap. Though the crofter shows him kindness by offering him food and shelter, he robs him. His greed for money makes him fall in the rattrap. Further, when the ironmaster mistakes him to be an old friend, he does not correct him. He decides to cheat him of his money. So even though the peddler tries hard not to fall into the rattrap or worldly riches and materialistic benefits, he ultimately falls into one.

Q.3. Attempt a character-sketch of the peddler in the story 'The Rattrap'.

OR

The peddler enjoys the sympathy of readers right from the beginning of the story. Draw a character sketch of the peddler justifying the sympathy he generates among the readers.

Ans. Selma Lagerlöf draws the character of the peddler with all sympathy and understanding. Selma wants to give a definite message. The peddler represents some human weaknesses. He is in fact the product of circumstances. But he is never devoid of basic human goodness. Only it lies in hibernation for some time. The essential goodness in him is awakened through love and understanding of Miss Edla Willmansson.

The peddler is so many things, all rolled in one. He is a vagabond cum beggar cum a petty thief. At moments he can raise himself to a philosopher. He philosophises life and compares the world to a big rattrap. Finally, he transforms himself into a 'gentleman'.

The peddler is a pragmatist. He finds his business not quite profitable. He doesn't mind resorting to both begging and petty thievery. Nor is he above temptations. He steals 30 kronors of his generous host, the old crofter.

The peddler raises himself above petty worldly temptations in the end. His essential human qualities raise him to heroic heights. He is witty and humorous. He knows how to deal with men and tricky situations. He thanks Miss Edla for her kindness and hospitality. She gives a little cry of joy when he decides to return 30 kronors to the rightful owner. She is requested to return the money to its rightful owner, the old crofter. The readers forgive him for his little human weaknesses. They develop sympathy and appreciation for him.

Q.4. Describe the peddler's meeting with the ironmaster. Why did he decline his invitation?

[CBSE Delhi 2008; (AI) 2008]

Ans. It was by chance that the peddler found himself at the Ramsjö Ironworks. It was a dark evening before Christmas. The peddler opened the gate and stood close to the furnace. It was nothing unusual for poor vagabonds to have night shelter in the winter in front of the fire. The ironmaster noticed the peddler. He walked close up to him and looked him over very carefully. He mistook him for Captain Stahle, an old comrade of his regiment. He felt sorry that he had resigned from the regiment long ago. The ironmaster invited the peddler home as their special guest on Christmas. The peddler was not amused. He didn't want to be received by the owner like an old regimental comrade. He looked quite alarmed and declined the invitation.

Going to the manor house appeared like throwing himself voluntarily into the lion's den. He didn't want to go there. He only wanted to spend the night in the forge. He wanted to

sneak away in the morning unnoticed. Then he thought of the thirty kronors. They were a bait and he couldn't resist the temptation. Now again the bait had been thrown at him. He had to resist the temptation and decline the invitation. The ironmaster only assumed that the peddler felt embarrassed because of his miserable clothing.

Q.5. Edla proved to be much more persuasive than her father while dealing with the peddler. Comment.

[CBSE Delhi 2015]

OR

The peddler declined the invitation of the ironmaster but accepted the one from Edla. Why?

[CBSE Delhi 2015]

Ans. The peddler was afraid as he was carrying stolen money with him. The peddler knew that the ironmaster had mistaken him for an old regimental comrade and feared that the ironmaster would send him to the police. He felt as if he was walking into a lion's den. He didn't want to go there. He only wanted to spend the night in the forge. He wanted to sneak away in the morning unnoticed. Then he thought of the thirty kronors. They were a bait and he couldn't resist the temptation. However he accepted Edla's invitation as she spoke kindly to him. She realised that he was afraid. Therefore, she assured him that no harm would come to him and he was at liberty to leave whenever he wanted. The compassionate manner of the daughter won the confidence of the peddler who agreed to go to her home.

Q.6. Why did the crofter repose confidence in the peddler? How did the peddler betray that and with what consequences?

[CBSE Delhi 2015]

OR

How did the peddler betray the confidence reposed in him by the crofter in 'The Rattrap'?

[CBSE (AI) 2008C]

Ans. The peddler did betray the confidence reposed in him by the Crofter. He considered this world nothing but a big rattrap. It sets baits for people. The peddler unwillingly allowed himself to be tempted to touch the bait. Those thirty kronors which the Crofter stuffed into the pouch proved to be bait. He stole the money. By doing so he committed a breach of trust. It was nothing but simple moral degeneration.

One dark evening as he was walking along the road, he saw a gray cottage by the roadside. He knocked on the door to ask shelter for the night. He was well received there. The owner was an old man (crofter) without wife or child. He was happy to find a

man to talk to in his loneliness. The old crofter served him supper, gave him tobacco and played a game of cards with him. The old man went to the window and took down a leather pouch. He counted thirty kronors and put it into the pouch. It provided a big bait. The peddler was tempted to steal them. In this way, he betrayed the confidence that was reposed in him by the host.

Q.7. The story 'The Rattrap' focuses on human loneliness and the need to bond with others. Explain.

[CBSE Delhi 2010]

OR

The story also focuses on human loneliness and the need to bond with others.

Ans. In this story, the author tells us that as normal human beings, we always like to share something with others, be it joy or sorrow. It means that humans do not want to be lonely and they want company of others. In this story, first the peddler is lonely and to overcome this, he sells rattraps. The crofter is lonely, so he welcomes the peddler to have a conversation with him. The ironmaster and his daughter are also lonely. They are rich and have a big house, but they do not have anybody to give them company. Hence, they request the peddler to spend Christmas eve with them. The author has very subtly focused on the loneliness of humans and how they strive hard to get a good companion.

Q.8. How can we transform and clean an evil doing person? Give example from the story.

OR

Have you known/heard of an episode where a good deed or an act of kindness has changed a person's view of the world?

Ans. The writer has highlighted a universal theme in this story. It is that we can arouse the goodness in the life of a man by love, understanding, sympathy and respect. Once upon a time, there was a man who went around selling self-made small rattraps of wire. His condition was too miserable to beg and do petty thefts. He was in rags with sunken cheeks and hungry eyes.

One day an idea flashed into his mind. He thought that the whole world around him was a big rattrap. It offered riches, joys, food, shelter, clothing like a bait offering cheese and pork in a rattrap for the rats. Those who were tempted to touch the bait, fell, it closed on them bringing an end to everything. One dark evening while staying at the crofter's cottage, he was given food and lodging. But the next morning the tramp stole his thirty kronor. He kept on walking the same path in the forest. On hearing the sound of hammer strokes, he reached the iron mill and lay near the furnace.

The ironmaster mistook him to be his old acquaintance and invited him for Christmas cheer but he refused. He sent his daughter Edla, who persuaded him to their house. After having him well dressed, the ironmaster found that he mistook him as Captain 'Nils Olof.' So he ordered him to get out at once. The young girl interceded for him and said that she wanted him to stay as they promised him Christmas cheer. He was treated like a real captain with food. In their absence, when they were at church, he left. In the church they learnt that the rattrap seller had robbed the old crofter. So they became worried.

When they returned, the valet told that he had taken nothing with him and had rather left behind a Christmas gift for Miss Willmansson. She found a small rattrap, thirty kronor and a letter in it. The letter stated that she had taken him as if he were a captain, so he would be nice to her as a captain. It had given him power to cleanse himself.

Q.10. Greed is the greatest evil force that has tempted man into doing a lot of misdeeds. It is greed that has led to so much corruption, violence and mayhem in the world. The peddler in 'The Rattrap' is not conscientious nor does he think twice before robbing a crofter. Bearing these thoughts in mind, write an article discussing the qualities that are required for overcoming the Evil of Greed in 100 words.

Ans. Value Points:

Greed is the greatest evil that paralyses the goodness of man.

It spreads like wildfire and makes a man immune to goodness and kindness.

Money, fame, power and property acquired by unfair means is like a vicious cycle—never lets anyone rest in peace.

The consequences of greed are deep and never-ending.

Meditation, consultations, keeping the company of good and honest people can keep the bridle on such men.

It is most important that the desire to overcome greed should come from within.