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Class 12 English (Flamingo) Notes

THE RATTRAP



Key Notes and Important Questions with Answers

4. The Rattrap

Selma Lagerlof talks about the universality of human goodness that can be awakened through understanding love, compassion and belief.

–Selma Lagerlof

Points to Remember

The Rattrap Man

- made his living by selling rattraps.
- business not profitable.
- had to beg and steal.

His philosphy

- whole world a rat trap.
- it offers riches, joys, shelter fond etc. as bait.
- everything comes to end and with no return.

Shelter at Crofter's house:

- one night rattrap man stayed at an old man's house.
- old man happy to get a company
- simple, generous, hospitable, served porridge
- offered big slice from tobacco roll; played cards
- told him about his prosperous past.
- now his cow supported him, earned thirty kronors.
- showed the rattrap man pouch having those kronors.
- next day the rattrap man stole money.

Rattrap man lost his way:

- did not continue on public highway
- went into woods, lost his way
- walked endlessly, tired
- realized he himself has been caught in a rattrap.
- heard sounds of hammer strokes

- walked in that direction, reached iron mill.
- found master smith, did not notice rattrap man.
- later blacksmith granted him permission to sleep.

Iron master and his daughter Edla :

- owner of Ramsjo Iron Mill
- Mistook rattrap man as old acquaintance called Von Stahle.
- invited him home to spend Christmas
- rattrap man did not agree
- agreed when Edla came and requested
- overwhelmed by her compassionate and friendly manner.

Secrets Revealed

- rattrap man was given bath and new dress
- iron man realized his mistake that the rattrap man was not his friend.
- complained that the rattrap man made no attempt to hide
- the peddler ready to leave the new dress and wear old rags.
- Edla requested her father to allow him to stay
- they had promised him to celebrate Christmas with him.
- The rattrap man turned a new leaf
- quietly ate food, slept whole time
- next morning father and daughter went to church
- they heard that the crofter was robbed by a rattrap man.
- daughter sad, father anxious if their house would also have been robbed.
- but the peddler had left a gift of a small rattrap with thirty kronors and a note
- wished money to be returned to crofter.
- confessed that he had made a mistake
- got caught in his own rattrap.
- thanked Edla for treating him like a real captain.

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. How did the peddler earn his livelihood? What kind of life did he live?

Ans. The peddler earned his livelihood by selling small rattraps of wire, which he used to make himself from the material got by begging in the stores or at big farms. But this was not so profitable, so he had to beg or even to steal. He roamed about like a vagabond all alone. He lived a sad and monotonous life with no one to welcome him.

2. How did the crofter treat peddler and why?

Ans. The crofter was a lonely man without wife or child. He craved and desired human company to share his loneliness. He welcomed the peddler and offered him porridge, supper and even tobacco. He played cards with him. He even showed him his earnings and let him know where it was kept.

3. Did the pedller respect the confidence reposed in him by the crofter?

Ans. No, the peddler did not respect the confidence reposed in him by the crofter. He broke his trust as the very next morning he picked the thirty kronors. The evil in him forced him to do so.

4. What made the peddler accept Edla Willmanson's invitation?

Ans. Edla started sympathising with the vagabond that he was going through a hard time. She was compassionate and benevolent. Her manner was friendly that the vagabond felt confident. She insisted that he could leave at his will after spending christmas with them. Because of her friendly request, the peddler accepted her invitation.

Questions for Practice

1. What strange idea about the world struck the peddler?
2. Why did the peddler decline the iron master's invitation?
3. Pick out two instances from the story 'The Rattrap' to show that the peddler realized that he himself was trapped?
4. What had the peddler left behind as a Christmas gift for Edla Willmanson? Why?
5. Why was Edla happy to see the gift left behind by the peddler?
6. Why did the peddler sign himself as Captain Von Stahle?

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. What rattrap was the peddler trapped in? How did he come out of it?

Key points

- The whole world a rattrap
- World full of temptations
- shelter food, joy and riches – are the baits.
- The bait that he fell for was at the crofter's house
- blamed the crofter for having tempted with his bait.
- initially refused the office of iron master thinking it to be another bait.
- After meeting with Edla, he got reformed and returned the thirty kronors in a rattrap.

2. Describe how the story, "The Rattrap" shows that basic human goodness can be brought out by understanding and love.

Ans. The story 'The Rattrap' highlights the fact that compassion and concern can awaken the essential goodness in a man.

- The peddler, who had been resorting to begging and thievery all the time, never bothered to clear his identity befooled the ironmaster too.
- But, Edla gave him a royal treatment, served him delicious supper, gifted her father's dress to him.
- This kind of unconditioned love and compassion from Edla made him realise his mistake and he confessed his guilt too.
- This way, she made a lot of difference in his life and he got transformed into a much better person.
- He left the stolen money behind, even a letter and a gift for Edla.

Questions for Practice

- The peddler betrayed the trust of the crofter and was caught in the trap of the world. Temptation to bait should be restricted at all cost. Write a note on "Strength of Character".