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Class 12 English (Vistas) Notes

EVANS TRIES AN O-LEVEL

Key Notes and Important Questions with Answers

EVANS TRIES AN O-LEVEL

By Colin Dexter

Evans was a prisoner in the H. M. Prison. He was known as 'Evans the Break' as he was notorious for his jail breaks. When he expressed his desire to study German and appear for the O Level Examination, everyone doubted his sincerity. Nevertheless, he was given the permission to attend night classes in German.

The permission for the exam was taken from the Secretary of the Examination Board and the exam was to take place in Evans' prison cell. All care was taken for the smooth conduct of the exam. Evans' room was searched the previous night to ensure that there were no sharp objects like razors and nail scissors. A microphone was fitted in his room so that the Governor of the prison could listen to each and every conversation taking place. Rev. S. McLeery, a parson from St. Mary Mags was to be the invigilator.

On the day of the exam, the tables were set in his room and he was asked to smarten up. When the prison officers saw him, Evans had a filthy looking hat on his head, which he insisted was his lucky charm. Actually, Evans wanted to hide the fact that he had cut his long hair short. The Invigilator, McLeery, was also searched even though he was a parson. He had come with a brown suitcase and a semi-inflated rubber ring which contained pig's blood. Prison Officer, Stephens sat outside the cell, peeping in every now and then. The Governor did not want to take chances.

The Exam began and McLeery asked Evans to write the Index No. 313 and Centre No. 271 on his sheet.

The Index No. and Centre No. were hints for a hotel in Chipping Norton. At 9.40 a.m., the correction slip was given to McLeery as it was not placed in the packet.

At 10:15 a.m. Evans requested if he could have a blanket draped over his shoulders. Stephens thought that Evans may have been feeling cold. But Evans actually used the blanket to change dresses. When the examination got over at 11:20 a.m., Stephens heard the Governor's orders that he should accompany McLeery to the prison gates. Stephens obeyed the orders

without realizing it was a fake order. On the way to the main gates, Stephen felt that McLeery looked slimmer, his black overcoat longer and his Scottish accent slightly broader.

On return, Stephens found a wounded Mc Leery, his blanket slipping from his shoulders and blood dripping through the beard. The Governor was informed who in turn informed the Police. It seemed Evans had escaped impersonating as McLeery.

The Governor examined the question paper and found a photocopied sheet carefully and cleverly superimposed over the last page. The superimposed paper had instructions and plans written in German - 'make your way to Neugraben'. 'Neugraben' meant Newbury in English. This was done to mislead the Governor to Newbury.

On the advice of McLeery, the Governor instructed the Police to take him along in their search for Evans and later admit him to a hospital. After a futile chase for Evans, McLeery got down at Elsfield from where the Ambulance was supposed to pick him up. But the Ambulance could not find McLeery anywhere near Elsfield. McLeery had vanished. In fact 'McLeery' was an accomplice of Evans. The real McLeery, the parson, was bound and gagged in his room. Soon everyone realized it was not 'McLeery' impersonating as Evans who had walked out of the prison, but Evans impersonating as 'McLeery' who had stayed in the cell.

Meanwhile, Evans had reached the hotel in Chipping Norton very happy over his escape only to be shocked to find the Governor waiting for him in his hotel room. The Governor told him that the Index No. and the Centre No. gave away the location. Evans was handcuffed and taken to the prison van. As the van started moving, the prison officials inside the van unlocked his handcuffs. Actually, the prison officials were his friends. Evans asked the driver to take him to Newbury. The Governor was once again deceived.

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Points to Remember

1. Evans seeks permission to appear on O Level German exam from the jail.
2. He is granted permission as he is a young and amiable person.
3. He is called 'Evans the Break' as he has escaped from the jail thrice.
4. Thorough checking is done before and on the day of the examination.
5. Evans seeks permission to put on his hat which is a lucky charm for him.
6. On the day of examination, his invigilator Reverend Stuart Mcleery arrived on scheduled time.
7. Mcleery was in long black over coat and a shallow crowned clerical hat.
8. Examination was conducted inside his cell under strict care and vigil of Stephens and Jackson.
9. Mcleery was checked thoroughly before entering the cell.
10. Jackson ensured all safety measures so that Evans could not escape.
11. Exam started a bit late at 9.40 am, the assistant secretary informed that there was a correction slip to be kept in the package.
12. Stephens peeped through the peep hole at the interval of one minute or so.
13. Evans asked for a blanket.
14. After the paper was over, Stephens dropped Mcleery to the main gate.

15. When he peeped into Evan's cell, he was shocked to see Mcleery bleeding there.

16. Mcleery told him he knew the whereabouts of Evans.

17. Jackson rushed to the spot in Newsbury.

18. Evans had impersonated Mcleery.

19. Ultimately, he was spotted at the Golden Lion hotel.

20. The Governor told him that he got his address through the correction slip.

21. He was arrested and taken in a police van from where he was freed by his friend in police uniform.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What kind of a person was Evans?

Evans was a young, clever prisoner. He had escaped thrice from the prison for which he was known 'Evans the Break'. He was not a violent sort of a person. He was quite a pleasant person and was a star at the Christmas concert. He was a 'Kleptomaniac' and had broken jail thrice. He was a master planner and was very sociable. He knew how to keep intimate contacts with people. In the words of the Governor, he was a pleasant sort of chap with no record of violence.

2. What were the precautions taken for the smooth conduct of the examination?

Value Points : For smooth conduct of examination various precautionary measures were taken. All sharp instruments like razor, nail scissors were removed.

The Governor, senior prison officer Jackson and officer Stephen were put on duty. A special invigilator was arranged.

A microphone was fitted in the prison cell where the examination was to be conducted.

3. How did the question paper and the correction slip help the prisoner and the governor?

A photocopied sheet was very cleverly pasted on the question paper and the correction slip. It was to finalize the details of plan of escape and to make the authorities believe that the wounded man was Mcleery, the invigilator himself. On the other hand, these helped the governor to locate the place where Evans was hiding.

4. What was seen by Stephens on opening the peep hole of Evans' cell after seeing off Mcleery?

After seeing off Mcleery, Stephens had an intuition to have look into the cell of Evans. He was shocked to see something very horrible. There he found a man lying in the chair with his head smeared in blood. Based on a preconceived notion, without ensuring the identity of injured man, Stephens took him as Mcleery. He raised hue and cry and called the police.

5. How did Evans manage his final escape?

Evans was on verge of arrest in the hotel. He was handcuffed and made to sit in prison van. But the people sitting in the van were his accomplices who were hand in glove with him. They opened his handcuff and took the van to News bury and facilitated his final escape. Thus, Evans outwitted the governor by dodging and taking a lead over him with his calculated and meticulous steps.

6. How was injured Mcleery able to befool the prison officers?

Mcleery befriended the invigilator in the jail who supplied him the artificial blood in a rubber ring. Being a fine actor, he poured it over himself and with his handkerchief hid his face from the eyes of the prison officers. He faked unbearable pain and pretended incoherent an utterance so as to conceal his voice. With his superb acting he befooled and confused the prison officers'.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. What different queries does the Secretary of the Examination Board make from the Governor before conducting the examination for Evans and why?
2. Who made a call regarding a correction in the question paper? What did it really want to convey?

3. Who is Carter? What does the Governor want him to do and why?

4. How did the Governor manage to reach Evans in the hotel?

OR

What helped the prison officers track Evans?

5. What did the Governor do to find about the correction slip?

6. Why did Evans drape a blanket round his shoulder? What did Stephens think about it?

7. In spite of strict vigilance, how did Evans' friends manage to help him disguise in the cell?

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What were the precautions taken for the smooth conduct of the examination?

Ans. Evans had already escaped from the jail on three occasions. There was always a fear that he might make another attempt to escape. Therefore all possible precautions were taken The Governor personally monitored all security arrangements. Recreation Block was heavily guarded from where he expected the prisoner to make another break. Evans' cell was thoroughly checked by Jackson to ward off the possibility of the presence of material which might hamper the smooth conduct of the examination.

His nail scissors, nail-file and razor were taken away and to keep a strict watch on the activities of the cell during the examination, the Governor got it bugged. A police officer Stephens was posted to keep a constant vigil on his activities. The invigilator was also frisked to make sure that he carried no objectionable material with him.

2. "Between crime and punishment it is mainly a battle of wits". Justify the statement.

Ans. In the story "Evans tries an O-level", the prisoner Evans was able to escape in spite of the best precautionary measures. In this story there is a battle of wits between the governor and two officers on

one hand and Evans on the other. It was fully ensured by the prison authorities that Evans should not escape at any cost. He impersonated Mclerry, the invigilator, and stayed inside the cell. And finding the right opportunity he escaped. Thus, Evans had the last laugh while the Governor was just a good for giggle, gullible officer.

The police arrest criminals and the law enforcing agencies fight cases. But many a times, the criminals go scot free by playing numerous uncanny ways. The punishment often does not match with the gravity and intensity of crimes. It varies according to the resourcefulness of the criminal, his ability to defend himself and how cunningly he is able to manipulate the facts and figures.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. How does Evans outwit the jail authorities?
2. How could the jail authorities have averted Evan's escape?
3. Do you think the title 'Evans Tries an O-Level' is appropriate? Give reasons in support of your answer.
4. How did the Governor manage to reach Evans in the hotel?
5. Who is the driver of the van who eventually takes Evans to freedom?