

5.The Rat Trap by Selma Lagerlof

Gist of the lesson:

- The peddler was a vagabond who sold rattraps with a little thievery on the side to make both ends meet. Had no worldly possession to call his own, not even a name.
- It amused him to think of the world as a rattrap and all the material possessions as bait as the world, he felt was never kind to him. Moreover, he prided himself in the fact that he was out of it.
- Takes shelter at a crofter's cottage. The crofter welcomed him, gave him dinner, shared his pipe, played mjolis with him also confided in him about his income and showed him where he put it.
- Next morning, the Peddler steals the money and takes the back roads to keep away from people and gets lost in the jungle at night. While he wanders in the forest he realizes that he has also got caught in the rattrap and that the money was the bait.
- Finally reaches Ramsjo ironworks, where he takes shelter for the night. The blacksmith and his assistant ignore him but the master mistakes him to be an old acquaintance and invites him home. Though the Peddler does not correct the ironmaster, hoping to get some money out of him, he declines his invitation.
- The ironmaster then sends his daughter who persuades him to go home with her. She notices his uncouth appearance and thinks that either he has stolen something or he has escaped from jail.
- The Peddler is scrubbed, bathed, given a haircut, a shave and a suit of old clothes of the ironmaster. In the morning light, the iron master realizes he is mistaken and that he is not the Captain. He wants to call the Sheriff. The peddler is agitated and breaks out that the world is rattrap and he too is sure to be caught in it. The ironmaster is amused but orders him out. The compassionate Edla convinces her father that he should spend the Christmas day with him.
- The Peddler spends the whole of Christmas Eve eating and sleeping. The next day at church, Edla and her father come to know that the Peddler is a thief who stole thirty kroners from the poor crofter.
- -Back home, they found a letter addressed to Edla, signed as Captain Von Stahl and a rattrap as a gift from the crofter. In the rattrap were the three ten kroner notes of the crofter.

SOLVED SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Peddler choose to go through the forest?
2. After stealing the thirty kroners from the crofter, the Peddler knew that he would be caught and put in prison if he continued to walk by the man road. So he chose the back roads that went through the forest.
3. Why did not the Peddler reveal his true identity when the ironmaster mistakes him to be the Captain?
The Peddler thought that the ironmaster might take pity on him give him some money if he thought he was an old acquaintance. So he keeps quiet and allows the iron master to presume he was the captain.
4. Why did it please the tramp to compare the world to a rattrap?
The world was not very kind to the tramp and so it gave him great pleasure to think of it as a rattrap.
5. Why did the tramp sign the letter as Captain Von Stahle?
The tramp, though illiterate and a thief, found himself raised to a captain through Edla's kindness and compassion. He got a chance to redeem himself and hence he signs the letter as Captain Von Stahle.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Both the Crofter and Edla Willmanson were kind and hospitable to the Tramp. But he repays crofters kindness by stealing his money while Edla is able to transform him to a better human being. Why?

Value Points:

Crofter very hospitable. Welcomes him with a smile - gives him supper and shares his tobacco. Tells him about income-shows him the money - very trusting and friendly.

Stealing a way of life for the tramp-no twinge of conscience while stealing-But later he realizes that he who prided himself in not being caught in the rattrap was caught in it by stealing – feels depressed.

Edla's kindness and hospitality awakens his conscience-Realises that there is a way out of the trap- Returns the money through Edla- His redemption –gift to Edla.

QUESTIONS FOR PRACTICE:

1. “The world was a rattrap and the peddler himself became a victim of it”. Elucidate.
2. The rattrap exemplifies the truth that essential goodness of human can be awakened through understanding and love. Discuss
3. The story focuses on human loneliness and the need to bond with others. Explain.
4. Why was the crofter so talkative and friendly with peddler?
5. Why did the rattrap seller develop negative view of the world?
6. Why did the peddler decline the iron master’s invitation?
7. Edla is a better judge than her father. Do you think so? Why/why not?
8. Why did the peddler defend himself against not having revealed his true identity?

LONG ANSWER QUESTION: PRACTICE

1. ‘The essential virtue of human heart can be aroused through compassion and empathy.’ How far has the meaning of this statement been exemplified in the story ‘The Rattrap’

2. **Value Based Question:** Answer the following in about 100 words. 5

It has been understood from the story ‘The Rattrap’ that the compassion, empathy and unconditional love and trust of Edla Wilmanson only could win the heart of the rattrap seller to reclaim him to be an honest and upright individual at last. ‘An Eye for an Eye will make the whole world blind.’—It is through fellow-feeling, love, compassion and trust in others that we can change the society. Write your argument for the statement to participate in a debate competition.