

DRAMA

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THE DEAR DEPARTED

By Stanley Houghton

INTRODUCTION

A true test of people is how they behave towards the elderly. With modernisation, reverence of the elderly seems to have suffered a grievous blow. All happiness to the elderly is parsimoniously measured out. Too often the elderly suffer death by invisibility long before their physical demise. The daughters in 'Dear Departed' are very materialistic and like beasts of prey, they are only ready to pounce on the money and belongings of their father. Keeping father at home has become a tiresome burden. Looking towards the elderly has become a matter of comfort and financial aid rather than for inspiration and emotional strength. For a civilised society a new culture of giving needs to be ushered and one must give to the elderly without any selfish motive. We must remember that the difference between a helping hand and an outstretched palm is only a twist of the wrist.

SUMMARY

The play 'The Dear Departed' presents an interesting situation that has tragically become common place in the world of today. The scene of the play is set in the sitting-room of a small house in a lower middle-class district of a provincial town. The setting of the play reveals that the tea-table has been laid. Mrs Slater, a plump and active lady is in mourning and she is getting ready to receive some guests. She beckons to her daughter Victoria, who is ten year old, and instructs her to change into something sober. It is revealed that Victoria's grandfather has passed away and the Slater family is getting ready to receive Aunt Elizabeth and Uncle Ben. Victoria expresses surprise at this news because her aunt and uncle had not paid them a visit for years. Mrs Slater reveals that they were coming over to talk about grandfather's affairs, on hearing of his death. In the meanwhile Mr Slater enters. He is a heavy man who stoops he is also in mourning dress.

Henry Slater is skeptical whether Elizabeth will come, for the last time when Mrs Slater and Elizabeth had quarrelled, she had vowed never to pay a visit again to their house. Mrs Slater gives Henry new slippers of her father. She also plans to take away the new bureau of the grandfather and shift it to their room, before Elizabeth and Ben arrive. Both the husband and wife, lock the front door and shift the bureau down and put their old chest of drawers there. Victoria wants to know why they were stealing grandfather's things but her mother tells her to remain quiet. Grandpa's new clock is also taken away. Meanwhile

there is loud knocking at the door and the Slaters take plenty of time to look normal. Mrs Jordan and Ben pretend to be emotional at the death of Mr Abel Merryweather. Both the ladies compare their mourning dresses, criticising the other's outfit. Mrs Jordan is surprised to discover that no doctor had been summoned to check on her father. Mrs Slater insists in a stubborn manner that she had been keen on Mr Pringle and if he was out of station, they couldn't be offensive and call someone else. Mrs Slater reveals that her father had been happy in the morning and he had apparently gone to pay the premium of his insurance policy. He was generally going to "Ring-O-Bells" frequently and the night before he had come drunk and had gone to bed without having dinner. Mrs Jordan and Ben prefer to have tea before going and looking up father. All four of them start discussing about the obituary and the kind of announcement in the newspapers to be inserted. Mrs Jordan wants a long poem but Mrs Slater protests by saying that it will cost a lot. Meanwhile Mrs Jordan reveals that her father had willed his gold watch to her son Jimmy. Mrs Slater feels very offended and refuses to believe it. Victoria says that grandfather had not gone in the morning to pay his premium but had instead gone over to 'The Ring of Bells,' the public house, managed by John Shorrocks's widow. Everyone starts blaming the old man for not paying his premium. Victoria is instructed to go over to grandpa's room to get the receipt of the premium. Mrs Jordan is surprised to note a new bureau and she wishes to know the details, because she doubts Mrs Slater's version. Victoria enters, looking dazed. She gives the shocking news that

Grandpa was stirring and moving. After some time Mr Abel Merryweather enters and is surprised to see his other daughter and son-in-law, Mr and Mrs Jordan. He reveals that he was well and just had a slight headache he notices Henry wearing his new slippers and takes them. Abels wishes to know, why all were in mourning dresses. Mrs Jordan makes up some story to pacify him. Abel Merryweather enjoys tea and has a generous slice of the apple-pie. He grumbles and scolds Mrs Slater for taking away his bureau. Mrs Jordan gets agitated and accuses her sister of robbing her father. The husbands also join their wives in hurling accusations at each other Abel discovers about his death. He addresses his daughters directly and declares that he was going to change his will and all the money will go to the one, in whose house he dies. Both the daughters fight with each other to keep their father. Abel is amused and watches all the fun. At last he makes his announcement which shocks everyone. On Monday, he would go to the lawyer and alter his will, then he would go to the insurance office and pay his premium. After that he would go to the church and get married to Mrs Shorrocks. Everyone is shocked. Abel reveals that he had at last found someone who was happy to keep him. He exits with an invitation of his marriage. He also thanks Mrs Slater for shifting the Bureau down-stairs for now it will be easy to cart it away to "Ring-O-Bells."

सारांश

यह नाटक 'द डियर डिपार्टेड' एक रोचक स्थिति पर आधारित है। दुख की बात है कि यह आज की दुनिया का कटु सत्य है। नाटक का दृश्य एक मध्यमवर्गीय जिले के एक छोटे से शहर के एक छोटे से मकान की बैठक में होता हुआ दिखाया गया है। मंच पर चाय की मेज सजी है, श्रीमती स्लेटर जो एक गोल मटोल और फुर्तीली महिला हैं मातमी वस्त्रों में कुछ मेहमानों के इंतजार में बैठी हैं। वह अपनी पुत्री विक्टोरिया को संकेत करती है जिसकी आयु दस वर्ष है और कहती है कि कपड़े बदल कर कुछ सौम्य वस्त्र पहनो। दर्शाया गया है कि विक्टोरिया के नाना का निधन हो गया है और स्लेटर परिवार आंटी एलिजाबेथ और अंकल बैन के इंतजार में है। विक्टोरिया को यह सुनकर अचरज होता है कि अंकल और आंटी वर्षों से वहाँ नहीं आये थे। श्रीमती स्लेटर बताती हैं कि वे लोग नानाजी के मामलों के बारे में बातचीत करने आ रहे हैं। तभी श्रीमान स्लेटर अंदर आते हैं। वे भारी शरीर के और झुकी हुई कमर वाले व्यक्ति हैं।

श्रीमान हेनरी स्लेटर को विश्वास नहीं है कि वे लोग आयेंगे या नहीं क्योंकि पिछली बार श्रीमती स्लेटर और एलिजाबेथ में झगड़ा हो गया था और उसने प्रण लिया था कि वहाँ कभी नहीं आयेंगी। श्रीमती स्लेटर हेनरी को अपने पिता की नई चप्पलें देती हैं। उनकी योजना यह भी है कि नानाजी के डेस्क को अपने कमरे में ले जायें, इससे पहले कि एलिजाबेथ और बेन आयें। पति-पत्नी दरवाजे को ताला लगाकर

डेस्क को अपने कमरे में रखकर उसकी जगह अपना पुराना डेस्क वहाँ रख देते हैं। विक्टोरिया जानना चाहती है कि वे नानाजी का सामान क्यों चोरी कर रहे हैं? उसकी माँ उसे चुप करा देती है। नानाजी की नई घड़ी भी वे उठा लेते हैं। इस बीच में कोई ज़ोर-ज़ोर से दरवाजा खटखटाता है। स्लेटर परिवार अपने को ठीक दिखाने के लिए काफ़ी वक्त लेते हैं। श्रीमती जॉर्डन और बैन, एबल मैरीवेदर के निधन पर खूब रोने - धोने का स्वाँग भरते हैं।

दोनों महिलाएँ एक दूसरे के मातमी वस्त्रों को घूरती हैं। श्रीमती जॉर्डन को यह जानकर अचरज होता है कि उनके पिता की जाँच के लिए किसी भी डॉक्टर को नहीं बुलाया गया। श्रीमती स्लेटर ज़ोर देकर कहती हैं कि वे श्रीमान पिरिंगल को बुलाना चाहती थीं और क्योंकि वह शहर से बाहर थे तो वे किसी और को बुलाने का दुस्साहस कैसे करते। वे बताती हैं कि उनके पिता सुबह खुश थे और इंश्योरेंस पॉलिसी का प्रीमियम भरने गये थे। वह आमतौर पर रिंग-ओ-बैल्स' जाते रहते थे और पिछली रात वे वहाँ से नशे में धुत आये थे और बिना खाना खाये सो गये थे।

श्रीमती जॉर्डन और बैन पिता को देखने जाने से पहले चाय पीना पसंद करते हैं। चारों पिता की निधन-सूचना के विषय में बातचीत करने लगते हैं, जिसे अखबार में छपने के लिए भेजा जाना है। श्रीमती जॉर्डन चाहती हैं एक लम्बी कविता भेजी जाये, श्रीमती स्लेटर मना करते हुए कहती है कि वह तो बहुत महँगा पड़ेगा। तभी श्रीमती जॉर्डन बताती हैं कि उनके पिता अपनी सोने की घड़ी उनके बेटे जिम्मी को देना चाहते थे। श्रीमती स्लेटर बुरा मानते हुये इस बात पर विश्वास करने से इंकार करती है।

विक्टोरिया बताती है कि नानाजी सुबह प्रीमियम भरने नहीं गये थे। परन्तु रिंग ऑफ बेलस जो कि एक मधुशाला थी - वहाँ गये थे जिसको जॉन शैरोक की विधवा चलाती थीं। सभी लोग बूढ़े को बुरा भला कहने लगते हैं कि प्रीमियम भरने क्यों नहीं गया। विक्टोरिया को नानाजी के कमरे में प्रीमियम की रसीद लाने भेजा जाता है।

श्रीमती एलिजाबेथ नये डेस्क को देखकर हैरानी प्रगट करते हुए उसके बारे में जानना चाहती हैं क्योंकि उन्हें श्रीमती स्लेटर के कथन पर शक है। विक्टोरिया सुन्न स्थिति में अंदर आती है और यह सनसनी भरी खबर देती है कि नानाजी चल फिर रहे हैं। कुछ समय बाद श्रीमान एबल-मेरिवेदर अंदर आते हैं और अपनी दूसरी पुत्री और दामाद को देखकर हैरान होते हैं। वह बताते हैं कि वह ठीक हैं बस हल्का सा सिर-दर्द है। तभी वह हेनरी के पैरों में अपनी नई चप्पलें देखते हैं और उन्हें ले लेते हैं। वे जानना चाहते हैं सभी लोग मातमी पोशाक में क्यों हैं। श्रीमती स्लेटर बात बनाकर टाल जाती हैं। एबल मेरिवेदर चाय और सेब से बने केक का आनंद लेते हैं। वे कुड़कुड़ाते हैं और श्रीमती स्लेटर को डाँटते हैं कि उन्होंने उनका नया डेस्क क्यों लिया। श्रीमती जॉर्डन गुस्से में आकर अपनी बहन पर इल्जाम लगाती हैं कि उन्होंने पिता की चीजों की चोरी की। दोनों पति भी अपनी पत्नियों के साथ मिलकर एक-दूसरे पर दोष लगाते हैं। एबल को अपनी मृत्यु की घटना का पता लगता है और वे सीधे अपनी बेटियों को कहते हैं कि वे अपना वसीयतनामा बदलने जा रहे हैं और सारा धन उसे मिलेगा जिसके घर में उनकी मृत्यु होगी।

दोनों पुत्रियां झगड़ा करती हैं कि पिता को कौन रखेगा। एबल मजे से इसका आनंद लेते हुए देख रहे हैं। अंत में वे फैसला सुनाते हैं जिसे सुनकर सबको सदमा पहुँचता है। वे कहते हैं कि आने वाले सोमवार को वे वकील के पास जा कर अपनी वसीयत बदल देंगे। इसके बाद इंगोरेन्स के दफ्तर जा कर प्रीमियम भरेंगे और फिर चर्च जाकर श्रीमति शौरोक से विवाह करेंगे। क्योंकि आखिरकार उन्हें एक ऐसा साथी मिल गया है जो उन्हें अपने साथ रखने में खुश है। वे अपने विवाह का न्योता देकर निकल जाते हैं और जाते हुए श्रीमती स्लेटर का धन्यवाद करते हैं कि उन्होंने भरी डेस्क नीचे लाकर उनके लिए आसन कर दिया कि वे उसे 'रिंग-ओ-बैल्स ले जा सकें।

WORD-MEANINGS

- **outshine** : to compete and try to overdo more than the other
- **speck** : a bit or particle
- **trifles** : small small things
- **complacent** : easily satisfied
- **outfit** : dress
- **accustomed** : used to
- **regrettable** : worth regretting
- **chirpy** : cheerful
- **furtively** : in a sly manner
- **etiquettes** : manners
- **swindling** : cheating
- **reluctantly** : hesitatingly
- **disparaging** : to speak in a hurting manner
- **transfixed** : stunned
- **vindictive** : revengeful
- **disconcerted** : to be disturbed
- **snappishly** : irritably

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS (SOLVED)

5. Answer the following questions briefly.

- (a) *How does Mrs Slater plan to outshine the Jordans? What does it reveal about her character?*

Ans. Mrs Slater has managed to procure a black dress for mourning, though it is not complete. She believes that her mourning outfit would still be better than Mrs Jordan's, who might not have managed to arrange it also. Her obsession for a mourning dress reveals that she is a frivolous and pretentious woman who is not distressed at the death of her father and is bothered more about worldly pretensions.

- (b) *Why does Mrs Slater decide to shift the bureau from grandfather's room before the arrival of the Jordans? How does Henry react to the situation?*

Ans. Mrs Slater wishes to steal the bureau and shift it in her room and replace it by her old chest of drawers. The bureau was new so now with her father's death, she wishes to possess it before her sister comes and Henry is not that greedy and suggests that his wife must discuss it with her sister before taking it away. Later he gets persuaded by his dominating wife.

- (c) *What is the reason for the Jordans taking a long time to get to the house of the Slater's? What does it show about the attitude of the two sisters towards each other?*

Ans. Mrs Jordan took a lot of time to reach the home of the Slater's because she wanted to get a complete new mourning dress before coming. Both the sisters are not

grief-stricken at the death of their father but are trying to outshine each other in wearing their best mourning dresses. For the sisters grief is to be depicted through mourning-dress and not through the feelings in one's heart.

- (d) *What does Mrs Jordan describe as 'a fatal mistake'? What is the irony on the comment she makes on Mrs Slater's defence?*

Ans. Mrs. Jordan believes that not sending for the doctor at her father's death was a 'fatal mistake'. Mrs Slater clarifies immediately that since it was Mr Pringle who had always attended on her father, it would be against professional etiquette to call someone else. Mr Pringle was out of town so they didn't call anyone else.

- (e) *Ben appreciates grandfather saying "it's a good thing he did". Later he calls him a 'drunken old beggar'. Why does he change his opinion about grandfather?*

Ans. Ben appreciates the grandfather for paying the premium of his insurance policy. When he hears that grandfather had not gone that day to pay the premium, he changes his stand and calls him a 'drunken old beggar' since the grandfather had gone to 'Ring-O-Bells.'

- (f) *What change does the grandfather make in his new will? What effect will it have on his daughters?*

Ans. The grandfather decides that he will change his will. He decides to leave all the things to whomsoever he's living with when he dies. The daughters get agitated and consider it unfair. Both of them compete with each other to keep grandfather with them. None of them wanted to be deprived of their share.

- (g) *What are the three things that grandfather plans to do on Monday next?*

[C.B.S.E., 2011 (T-1)]

Ans. The grandfather plans to alter his will, pay his premium of the insurance policy and get married to John Shorrock's widow.

6. Answer the following in detail :

- (a) *How does the spat between the two daughters leads to the grandfather discovering the truth?*

Ans. Abel Merryweather recognises his bureau and wants to know the reason for its shifting. Mrs Slater had already told her sister that the bureau belonged to them. This lie is enough to set tongues wagging and tempers

escalating. Mrs Jordan accuses her sister of stealing her father's things, thinking him to be dead. That is when Abel discovers that they had gathered there for the official mourning of his death.

- (b) *Compare and contrast Henry's character with his wife:*

Ans. Henry is timid and honest by nature. Soft at heart, he tends to get bullied by his dominating wife. Initially he protests against stealing the grandfather's slippers and bureau but when Mrs Slater forces him, he gets carried away. He is a worried looking man who believed what his wife says and ends up supporting her. Mrs Slater by contrast is vain, pretentious and greedy. She makes the plans and he executes them with his wife's help of course.

SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the significance of the title of the play. Bring out the irony inherent in it?

[C.B.S.E. 2011 (T-1)]

Or

In what way is the play satirical? Comment on the nature of its characters.

[C.B.S.E. 2011 (T-1)]

Ans. The title is very appropriate and packed with great irony and wit that makes a farce of all relationships that are most intense and pious. Children like the Slaters and the Jordans are a blot on humanity and on the bonds of love and affection. Both Amelia and her sister consider their father Abel Merryweather a burden and his death is no loss to them. The father is taken lightly. Immediately after Abel's supposed death, the elder daughter pinches his slippers, clock and his bureau. For both the daughters,

father's death is a kind of competition to outshine each other. There is no mourning in their hearts, but both the daughters vie with each other to wear the best mourning dress. Mrs Jordan wants to have her tea and snacks rather than looking at her dead father. Accusations are hurled at each other, death announcement is planned but no one spares a thought for the father. An obituary should reflect their feelings, that are non-existent. It is only the grand daughter Victoria, who is a sole witness to this game of pinching things and benefits. In a lighter tone, Abel Merryweather had sensed the mercenary nature of his daughter so he outwits them in their planning. He finds a widow to marry who would look after him better. The lesson ends on a humorous note but outlines a very tragic and pathetic concern – care of the elderly that is a glaring and ugly reality of today's world.

REFERENCE TO CONTEXT – MCQs

Read the following extracts and choose the correct option.

1. *Mrs Slater : "I'm amazed at you, Victoria, I really am. How can you go gallivanting about in the street with your grandfather lying dead and cold upstairs, I don't know. Be off now, and change your dress before your Aunt Elizabeth and your uncle Ben come. It would never do for them to find you in colours."*

(i) **Mrs Slater is angry with Victoria because**

- (a) she is moving around too much
(b) she is wasting time in the street
(c) she hasn't changed her dress

- (d) she's not bothered about her grandfather's death

(ii) **Aunt Elizabeth and Ben are paying a visit to**

- (a) offer condolence for the old man's death
(b) check upon the old man
(c) lay their hands on his belongings
(d) to show to Mrs Slater their sorrow over the death

(iii) **Mrs Slater appears to be a lady who is very particular about**

- (a) ceremonies
(b) relatives

- (c) condolence
- (d) mourning dresses on death

Answer : (i) (c) (ii) (d) (iii) (d)

2. *Mrs Slater : My heart's fit to break when I see the trifles that belonged to grandfather lying around, and think he'll never use them again.*

Here! you'd better wear these slippers of grandfather's now : It's lucky he'd just got a new pair.

- (i) **Mrs Slater is very disturbed because**
 - (a) her father is dead
 - (b) his things are lying scattered
 - (c) she has to make arrangements
 - (d) she cannot afford to have his things wasted
- (ii) **Mrs Slater is very resourceful as**
 - (a) she manages to make all the arrangements
 - (b) she is able to use her father's slippers
 - (c) she has managed to inform her sister
 - (d) she has managed to get tea ready for relatives
- (iii) **From the above statement it is clear that Mrs Slater was**
 - (a) resourceful
 - (b) miserly
 - (c) greedy
 - (d) vain

Answer : (i) (d) (ii) (b) (iii) (c)

3. *Victoria : Are we pinching it before Aunt Elizabeth comes?*

Henry : (Shocked) No, my child. Grandpa gave it to your mother before he died.

- (i) **Victoria's remarks reflect upon the behavior of the adults that they are**
 - (a) hypocrites
 - (b) mercenary
 - (c) greed-driven
 - (d) clever
- (ii) **Henry proves to be _____ from his statement.**
 - (a) submissive
 - (b) gullible
 - (c) hen-pecked
 - (d) vulnerable
- (iii) **Such pretensions and manipulative behaviour ends up _____ the lives of children like Victoria**
 - (a) benefitting
 - (b) guiding
 - (c) harming
 - (d) confusing

Answer : (i) (a) (ii) (c) (iii) (d)

4. *Mrs Slater : I could never fancy buying ready-made things.*

Ms Jordan : No? For myself its such a relief to get

into the black.

(i) **The above conversation reveals that both the daughters are not _____ at the death of their father.**

- (a) emotional
- (b) grief-stricken
- (c) sad
- (d) concerned

(ii) **Death has become an occasion for only**

- (a) sad expressions
- (b) flaunting mourning dresses
- (c) funeral services
- (d) prayers

(iii) **The above conversation reveals that both the sisters are**

- (a) Jealous
- (b) Competitive
- (c) Vicious
- (d) Concerned

Answer : (i) (b) (ii) (b) (iii) (c)

5. *Mrs Jordan : I like 'Never Forgotten'. Its refined Henry : Yes, but it's rather soon for that.*

Ben : You couldn't very well forget him the day after.

(i) **Do you believe the conversation taking place above is**

- (a) emotional
- (b) authentic
- (c) genuine
- (d) pretentious

(ii) **The comment of Ben is**

- (a) humorous
- (b) pretentious
- (c) ironical
- (d) satirical

(iii) **The relatives above are discussing about _____ to be given in the newspaper.**

- (a) obituary
- (b) announcement
- (c) tribute
- (d) notice

Answer : (i) (d) (ii) (d) (iii) (a)

6. *'She's never been here since grandfather brought it. If it was only down here instead of in his room, she'd never guess it wasn't our own.'*

[C.B.S.E. 2011 (T-1)]

(i) **These words are said by**

- (a) Victoria
- (b) Amelia
- (c) Elizabeth
- (d) Henry

(ii) **The word 'it' referred to here is**

- (a) the ornaments
- (b) the clock
- (c) the chest of drawers
- (d) bureau

(iii) **The speaker is planning to**

- (a) steal the clock before her sister comes
- (b) bring the bureau down

- (c) send the child up to bring the keys
- (d) sell the old chest of drawers

Answer : (i) (b) (ii) (d) (iii) (b)

7. (*Chirpily*) “Now, Amelia, you mustn’t give way. We’ve all got to die sometime or other. It might have been worse.” [C.B.S.E. 2011 (T-1)]

(i) Who speaks these words?

- (a) Ben (b) Mrs. Slater
- (c) Mrs. Jordan (d) Victoria

(ii) The speaker is prompted to utter these words to Amelia so that / because

- (a) she should not cry.
- (b) she need not show off.
- (c) he knew her real nature and wanted to caution her that when they would face such a situation, it would be still worse.
- (d) He wanted to be lively and humorous in that grim situation.

(iii) The literary device used in the given lines is :

- (a) Personification (b) Irony
- (c) Alliteration (d) Metaphor

Answer : (i) (a) (ii) (c) (iii) (b)

REFERENCE TO CONTEXT – NON-MCQs

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow :

1. “It would never do for them to find you in colours.”

(i) Identify the speaker and the listener.

Ans : The speaker is Mrs. Slater and the listener is her daughter Victoria.

(ii) Who is referred to as ‘them’ in the above statement?

Ans : ‘Them’ refers to Mrs. and Mr. Jordan.

(iii) Explain – ‘in colours’.

Ans : Victoria is wearing colourful clothes, whereas she should be wearing a mourning dress.

(iv) What is the context of the above remark?

Ans : Victoria’s grandfather is supposed to be dead.

2. “Elizabeth’s that sharp she’ll see I’m after it and she’ll drive a hard bargain over it. Eli, what it is to have a low money grubbing spirit?”

(i) What is Elizabeth’s relation with the speaker?

Ans : Elizabeth is the speaker Mrs Slater’s sister.

(ii) What bargain is being discussed here?

Ans : The plan of shifting the grandpa’s bureau before Elizabeth arrives.

(iii) Explain – low money grubbing spirit.

Ans : It refers to money-mindedness, or greed to possess things.

(iv) What do the above remarks reflect about the speaker’s attitude and nature?

Ans : The speaker herself is very mean, manipulative and clever.

3. “No, my child, Grandpa gave it to your mother before he died.”

(i) Identify the speaker and the listener.

Ans : The speaker is Henry Slater and he is addressing his daughter.

(ii) What does ‘it’ refer to?

Ans : ‘It’ refers to the ‘bureau’

(iii) What impression do you form of the speakers from the above statement?

Ans : Both the Slaters are greedy and great hypocrites.

(iv) What do you think will be the impact of the above statement on the listener?

Ans : Victoria will end up losing respect for her parents.

4. “He is too honourable to have gone without paying his premium.”

(i) Who is the speaker and who is the listener?

Ans : Mrs. Jordan is the speaker and her sister is the listener.

(ii) Who is “He” in the above statement?

Ans : ‘He’ is Abel Merryweather, Mrs Slater and Mrs Jordan’s father.

(iii) What is the speaker’s relation with the person mentioned.

Ans : She is Abel’s daughter.

(iv) What is the speaker’s conception of ‘honour’?

Ans : ‘Honour’ refers here to ‘paying one’s insurance premium.’

5. *“I like ‘Never Forgotten’. It’s refined.”*

(i) **Who is the speaker?**

Ans : Mrs Jordan is the speaker.

(ii) **What is the context of the above remark?**

Ans : The discussion is regarding the obituary to be put in the newspaper.

(iii) **For whom is ‘Never forgotten’ used?**

Ans : For Abel Merryweather.

(iv) **Point out the irony inherent in the above remark.**

Ans : It was only in words that he was not forgotten in its reality both the daughters had forgotten him already.

6. *“He’s done it on purpose, just to annoy us.”*

(i) **Identify ‘He’ and ‘us’.**

Ans : ‘He’ is Abel Merryweather and ‘us’ means the Jordans and Slaters.

(ii) **Mention the context of the above remark.**

Ans : The discussion is whether Abel has paid his insurance premium or not.

(iii) **What mistake has the person mentioned made?**

Ans : Abel appears to have deliberately messed out paying the premium.

(iv) **Do you think the speakers and the others like him deserve that kind of treatment?**

Ans : Yes, they do because they are all very greedy.

7. *“Drat me if that isn’t my clock too. What the devil’s been going on in the house?”*

(i) **What is the confusion regarding the clock?**

Ans : Abel Merryweather’s clock has been pinched by his daughter.

(ii) **What exactly has been going on in the house?**

Ans : Mrs. Slater, the daughter, thought that her father was dead and she was taking away his things.

(iii) **Who is the speaker and whom is he addressing?**

Ans : The speaker is Abel and he is addressing his daughters.

(iv) **What do the above remarks reflect about the listeners?**

Ans : The listeners are very greedy and not attached to their father.

8. *Mrs Jordan, “You know father, it’s quite time you come to live with us again we’d make you very comfortable.”*

(i) **What has brought about the above change**

in the speaker’s attitude?

Ans : The father’s new terms for the will has brought about this change.

(ii) **What about the above turn of events?**

Ans : Abel has announced that his money will go to the daughter with whom he would be staying at the time of his death.

(iii) **Who is instrumental in this change and why?**

Ans : The greedy nature of his daughters has brought this change.

(iv) **What does it reflect about Mrs Jordan’s character?**

Ans : Mrs. Jordan is very mercenary, greedy and opportunistic.

9. *I felt I was bit of a burden to you, so I found someone who’d think it a pleasure to look after me.*

(i) **For whom is the speaker supposed to be a burden?**

Ans : Abel is supposed to be a burden for his daughters.

(ii) **Who is the speaker and who are the listeners?**

Ans : Abel is the speaker and both the daughters and their husbands are the listeners.

(iii) **Who has the speaker found to look after him?**

Ans : Abel has found a widow, Mrs Shorrock, to look after him.

(iv) **How does the speaker’s decision affect the listeners?**

Ans : The daughters are denied all the rights to the property and money of their father.

10. *I’ll tell you what I’ve got to do. On Monday next I’ve got to do three things.*

(i) **Who is the speaker?**

Ans : Abel Merryweather, the father.

(ii) **What has he decided to do?**

Ans : He has decided to marry Mrs Shorrod, a widow, who runs a school in the neighbourhood.

(iii) **Why did he take such a decision?**

Ans : He took such a decision so that Mrs. Shorrock would take care of him. His own daughters were very greedy and were not attached to him.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Why does Mrs Slater instruct Victoria to change her dress?

Ans : Mrs. Slater is very particular about mourning dresses. Since her father has expired, she instructs her daughter Victoria to quickly change her colourful dress into something sober, before the guests and relatives arrive.

2. Why were Mr and Mrs Jordan visiting the Slaters after so many years?

Ans : Since Mr Abel Merryweather had expired, Mrs. Jordan, the daughter, was visiting her sister's family, to look after the arrangements to be made for the father's death.

3. Henry says, "I suppose it's in the family." Why does Henry make this comment and what does it reflect about the two sisters?

Ans : Henry is well aware that both the sisters Mrs Slater and Mrs. Jordan are very mean and calculative, so they will not lose any chance to pinch things belonging to their family. When his wife brings the new slippers of her father and gives to Henry, he makes this humorous comment.

4. "Mother and me is going to bring grandfather's bureau down here." Who makes this remark and in what context? What does this reflect about the speaker?

Ans : Henry Slater tells his daughter Victoria that they were shifting grandfather's bureau down because he had gifted it to them. Victoria cannot believe it. This remark depicts that Henry is not only a hen-pecked husband but also a hypocrite, who just does what his wife tells him. He has no individuality of his own.

5. "For myself it's such a relief to get into the black." Who makes the above remark and what is the context?

Ans : Mrs Jordan makes the above remark because she got delayed due to a new mourning dress for herself. She was not bothered about her father but worried about appearing in a new mourning dress. This indicates her pretentious nature without any thought for her father.

6. Mrs Slater says, "he must have gone round to the 'Ring-O-Bells' afterwards, for he came in as merry as a sand boy" regarding Abel Merryweather. Do you think this remark is a prediction of the things to come?

Ans : Yes, this remark is a death-knell on the plans forged by the two sisters to grab their father's money. The fact that Abel is going there too often and is looking

extremely pleased is a prediction of the future course of things.

7. Mrs Jordan, "we want a verse that says how much we loved him and refers to all his good qualities and says what a heavy loss we're had." Point out the irony in this remark.

Ans : Mrs. Jordan, the daughter, wishes to show to the world how much they all loved their father, by choosing such words for his obituary. But the irony is that in reality, they do not love him nor do they care for any of his good qualities.

8. "After all I've done for him, having to put up with him in the house these three years. It's nothing short of swindling" who makes this remark and what does this reflect about the speaker's attitude?

Ans : Mrs. Slater makes the above remark in great agitation when Abel states that his entire property will go to the person with whom he would be staying, at the time of his death, Mrs. Slater feels cheated. She believes that looking after her father for these years has not benefitted her at all.

9. Describe the reaction of all Slaters and the Jordans when Abel Merryweather walks in the parlour?

Ans : Both the Jordans and the Slaters are too shocked. There are no gasps of relief, none of them heaves a sigh of happiness. Both the sisters are displeased to see their father alive. They had spent quite some money on their mourning dresses. Mrs. Jordan had made this visit only because of her father's death.

10. Why are Amelia and Elizabeth reluctant to tell the truth to their father regarding their mourning dresses? What stories do they cook up to convince their father?

Ans : Abel Merryweather is shocked to see his daughters in mourning dresses and when he wishes to know the reason, he is told that Ben's brother has expired. They further tell lies that the brother was in Australia and he was older by five years.

11. Why does Mr Abel Merryweather decide to make another will? What is the reaction of the others?

Ans : Abel notices how his things are pinched away and his daughters are wearing mourning dresses, without even going and looking him up. Mrs Slater is shocked and even after keeping father for three years, Abel has decided to gift his money to the daughter, who will be with him at

the time of his death. Both the daughters fight with each other to keep him.

12. **What is the most surprising announcement made by Mr Abel in the end? How does it affect the other characters?** [C.B.S.E. 2011 (T-1)]

Ans : Abel makes a very dramatic announcement in the end that he is going to marry Mrs. Shorrocks who keeps the 'Ring-O-Bells'. Moreover he is going to take away his things and leave nothing for his daughters.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. **You are a neighbour of Mrs Slater on Upper Cornbank Street. You have witnessed the indifferent and insensitive manner in which Mrs Slater looks after her father and how the poor father contrives ways to stay out of the house. Write a letter to a friend expressing your grave concern at the way in which the elderly people are neglected.**

Ans : Post Carter Road,
Mumbai
30 March, 2010
Dear Alina,

With a heavy heart, I am writing this letter as I fear for our advancing age. The Slaters are our neighbours and Mrs. Slater treats her father so badly, that I fear how our old age will fare. The old father is very sporting, friendly and happy-go-lucky and still treated badly. He is not the demanding type, but still Mrs. Slater is always cribbing about keeping him. Mr Abel, that is his name, hardly stays at home and goes about to visit people even when he is sick and should be tended. His granddaughter Victoria is the only one who cares for him but a child cannot have her way. Mrs Slater is always trying to take away Mr Abel's things, one way or the other. These days he appears to be looking better because I have heard in the neighbourhood, that he is apparently seeing some old widow Mrs. Shorrocks. At least there is some light in his life, some flicker of hope. God save us from such children. I hope we do not face any such problems. Do write to me.

Your sister,
Agatha.

2. **Discuss the character-sketch of Mrs Jordan and Mrs Slater as opposed to the characters of their husbands.**

Ans : Mrs Slater is clever, manipulative and mean, much like her sister Mrs. Jordan. Their aim in life is to do nothing for their father and derive maximum benefit. If Amelia takes away her father's slippers, bureau and clock, Elizabeth wants to take away her father's watch. Both the

ladies spare no thought for their father and worry about outdoing each other in wearing mourning dresses. For them the death of their father is like a drama that needs to be staged with best outfits. Both the husbands are henpecked and they go according to their wives. Henry knows that his wife is an opportunist but he assists her in carrying the bureau down. The husbands have no individualities except to pamper the whims of their wives.

3. **Victoria is the only one who loves her grandfather. She is also a witness to the manipulations and the mercenary behaviour of her parents and her aunt and uncle. She writes a diary expressing shock at their attitude and the emotional loss she would undergo after her grandfather's departure.** [C.B.S.E. 2011 (T-1)]

Ans : Dear Diary,

Today is the worst day of my life, when Grandpa was supposed to have passed away. I am deeply shocked at the behaviour of my mother and father, who are pinching the belongings of my Grandpa. Imagine none even went to look up Grandpa. I know Grandpa was not happy living with us, I tried my best but mummy never listens. Even papa supports her. I am so ashamed to see their hypocrisy. I don't know how they will expect respect from me, when they have behaved so abominably. I pity Grandpa for this treatment. Oh! how I wish I was grown up enough to look after him.

Victoria.

4. **Many years have elapsed. Mr Abel Merryweather passed away some years back. Mrs Slater is old and she realises how greedily she had behaved with her father. She is grief-stricken and regrets her actions. She unburdens her self in a diary-entry. Compose this on her behalf.**

Ans : Dear Diary,

I am so depressed because for a long time I have not received any letter from Victoria. Victoria has always

been cold and unresponsive towards me. I know she will never forgive the treatment I gave to my father. The minds of young children are impressionable and she will never change her opinion or learn to respect me. I am sick, old, and I need care but do I deserve any care, after the way I treated my father. On God! I feel so guilty. I wish I could turn the clock back. I made my father most unhappy so ill-luck and misery has to happen to me. I wish I could make amends.

Amelia

5. **You are Abel Merryweather. Express your ideas/feelings after you wake up and come to know about your daughter's feelings/greed and intentions.**

Or

Abel in "The Dear Departed" is very upset at the behaviour of his family. He expresses his feelings to a close friend in a letter. As Abel, write this letter. [C.B.S.E. 2011 (T-1)]

Ans : Dear Anthony,

You must be surprised to get my letter after such a long time. But frankly speaking I did not find anyone in this whole world to become a witness to my marriage with Mrs. Shorrock, a widow, running a school in our

neighbourhood.

Don't get shocked to hear about my marriage at this ripe age when I have a full fledged family of two children and grand children. I myself never thought of taking such a drastic step had I not got over drunk one night and slept till late in the morning. That was a blessing in disguise, I could see the hypocrisy of my daughters. My supposed death was no loss to them since they considered me a burden. My death became a kind of competition for both of them. They outshone each other in wearing the best mourning dresses and took away the things from my room in the presence of my supposed dead body and started accusing each other. It is only my granddaughter who has some feelings for me.

Sensing the mercenary nature of my daughters, I have taken a stern decision, to spend the fag end of my life in good care. I have outwitted all of them and have planned to Marry Mrs Shorrock who would look after me better. Moreover, I am going to take away all my things and leave nothing for them. I hope you will appreciate my decision. Do come to St. Wilson church on Monday, the day I am getting married, at 11 a.m.

Yours very own

Abel Merryweather.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

1. **It is an undeniable fact that the best classroom in the world is at the feet of grandparents. They have an endless treasure of stories to tell their grandchildren. They have silver in their hair, gold in their hearts. They have a life-time of experience to bestow on their grandchildren. Write a short character-sketch of your grandfather, highlighting the special qualities you have learnt from him.**



2. **Mr Mohan Mehra is 80 years old. He is weak, emaciated and neglected by his children. Financially also, he has to depend on others. Prepare a short speech to be delivered in your colony, requesting people to come to provide him physical and mental support.**



3. Compose a short poem on the special bond shared by grandparents and grandchildren.



4. Ponto is very naughty. Every time he loves playing pranks on his 'dadajee'. Imagine his pranks and write a short story titled "Naughty Ponto and His Dadajee."

