

# **Columbia Foundation Sr. Sec. School**

## **Class - XII**

### **The Rattrap**

**Question.1. In what sense was the world a big rattrap according to the peddler? (Compartment 2014)**  
or

**Why did the peddler think that the world was a rattrap? (All India 2009)**

**Answer.** The peddler was a very poor man who earned his living by selling rattraps he made himself from the materials he got by begging. His mind, thus, was always preoccupied with rattraps. One day, he suddenly thought of the whole world was a big rattrap. He felt that the shelter, food, clothes, riches and joys that the world provided were all baits set to entrap man just as a rattrap offered cheese or meat to entrap rats. As soon as one was trapped, everything came to an end.

**Question.2. Why did the peddler derive pleasure from his idea of the world as a rattrap? (Delhi 2014; Modified)**

**Answer.** The world had never been kind to the poor peddler. Wherever he went, he was greeted with sour faces and was turned or chased away. Therefore, he derived pleasure from thinking ill of the world in this way. Moreover, he perhaps envied those whose lot was better than his, and was rather amused to think that some day they too would be tempted by the bait and be caught in the Tattrap.

**Question.3. Why did the peddler knock on the cottage by the roadside? How was he treated by the Owner Of the cottage? (Compartment 2014)**

**Answer.** The peddler knocked on the cottage by the roadside to seek shelter for the night. The owner of the cottage was a crofter who lived there alone. He regarded the peddler as welcome company and treated him quite hospitably. He not only put him up for the night, but also offered him food and played cards with him.

**Question.4. Why did Edla plead with her father not to send the vagabond away? (All India 2014; Modified)**  
or

**Why did Edla still entertain the peddler even after she knew the truth about him? (NCERT)**

**Answer.** Edla had always thought the peddler to be a poor, homeless tramp. Therefore, she didn't feel cheated when his true identity was revealed. Instead, she felt very bad for him and his miserable condition, and pleaded on his behalf. She and her father had promised him Christmas cheer, and she felt that it would be wrong to send him away.

**Question.5. What conclusion did the ironmaster reach when he heard that the crofter had been robbed by the peddler? (Compartment 2014)**

**Answer.** It was at the church that the ironmaster and his daughter heard that the crofter had been robbed by a peddler, who, no doubt, was the one they had sheltered at the manor house. The ironmaster at once concluded that the peddler would probably have stolen all his silverware in their absence, and ran away.

**Question.6. What was the content of the letter written by the peddler to Edla? (Foreign 2014)**

**Answer.** The peddler had written that since Edla had treated him like a captain, he wanted to be nice to her in return. He did not want her to be embarrassed at Christmas by a thief. He had requested that the crofter's money that he had stolen be returned. He further wrote that the rattrap was a Christmas present from a rat who would have been caught in the world's rattrap, if he had not been raised to the status of captain, which motivated him to reform himself.

**Question.7. What were the contents of the package left by the peddler as Christmas gift for Edla Willmansson? (Compartment 2014)**

**Answer.** The package left by the peddler as a Christmas gift for Edla Willmansson comprised a small rattrap with three wrinkled ten kronor notes in it, which the peddler had robbed from the crofter. It also contained a brief letter for Edla explaining the peddler's conduct.

**Question.8. Why did the peddler decline the invitation of the ironmaster? (Delhi 2012)**

**Answer.** The ironmaster has mistaken the peddler for an old regimental comrade and invited him home. The peddler declined the invitation because he was carrying the money he had stolen from the crofter. He knew that if the ironmaster discovered his identity, he would hand him over to the police. Therefore, for him, going to the manor house was like walking into a lion's den.

**Question.9. Who was the owner of Ramsjo iron mills? Why did he visit the mills at night?**  
(All India 2012)

**Answer.** The owner of the Ramsjo iron mills was an ex-army man and an ambitious and prominent ironmaster. He was very particular about the quality of his products, and visited the mills even at night to make sure that good iron was shipped out from his mills.

**Question.10. How did the ironmaster react on seeing the stranger lying close to the furnace?**  
(All India 2012)

**Answer.** When the ironmaster saw a stranger in rags lying close to the furnace, he went near him and removed his slouch hat to get a better view of his face. Due to dim light in the forge and the peddler's dirty appearance, he mistook him to be Nils Olof, an old acquaintance of his regiment. He was delighted to see him and invited him home for Christmas.

**Question.11. Why did the stranger not tell the ironmaster that he was not Nils Olof? (All India 2012)**

**Answer.** The stranger did not tell the ironmaster that he was not Nils Olof because he thought that if the gentleman believed that he was an old friend or acquaintance of his, then he might take pity on him and help him with some money.

**Question.12. Why was the crofter so talkative and friendly with the peddler? (Delhi 2012)**

**Answer.** The old crofter was lonely and leading a dreary existence as he had no wife or children. He was happy to get someone to talk to and share his thoughts with, even though it was a tramp. So he welcomed the peddler who was quite a patient listener, and extended his hospitality to him.

**Question.13. Why was the peddler surprised when he knocked on the door of the cottage?**  
(All India 2011)

**Answer.** The peddler had never been treated kindly by the world. He was meted out cold treatment wherever he went. He was pleasantly surprised when the crofter greeted him with warmth and hospitality. Ordinarily, he always met 'sour faces' when he knocked for shelter and food, and was usually turned away.

**Question.14. Why did the peddler keep to the woods after leaving the crofter's cottage? How did he feel? (All India 2011)**

**Answer.** After stealing the money from the crofter's, the peddler was cautious to avoid the public, highway lest he be identified and caught. He got into the woods but finally realised that it was a big and confusing forest. The end of the forest was nowhere in sight and he felt lost. That's when he recalled his thoughts about the world being a rattrap and he realised that he had indeed become a victim of a rattrap.

**Question.15. What made the peddler finally change his ways? (All India 2010)**

**Answer.** The peddler believed in giving back to the world what he received from it. He was always treated with contempt and hostility and so he never did anything good. However, Edla's kind and caring behaviour finally changed him. She had treated him with love and respect befitting a captain, even after realising that he was a poor vagabond. The trust that Edla showed in him made him change his ways and he decided to live with dignity and respect.

**Question.16. Why was Edla happy to see the gift left by the peddler? (All India 2010)**

**Answer.** Edla felt very dejected when she came to know about the theft of the crofter's money by the peddler, but the gift left behind, which consisted of a small rattrap and three wrinkled ten kronor notes, restored her faith in him. She felt happy because her trust in him had been justified. Her kindness had finally changed the peddler and brought out his essential goodness.

**Question.17. "Edla sat and hung her head even more dejectedly than usual." Which two reasons forced her to behave in that manner? (Foreign 2010)**

**Answer.** Edla had shown kindness to the peddler even after knowing that he was not a captain. This was the reason why she felt all the more dejected when she came to know that the peddler whom she had sheltered was actually a thief, who had recently robbed a crofter. Secondly, she also felt bad because the peddler had disproved the faith which she had shown in him.

**Question.18. Why did the peddler sign himself as Captain von Stahle? (All India 2009)**

**Answer.** The peddler owed his transformation to the kind treatment meted out to him by Edla. In spite of knowing the truth about him, she had honoured and treated him like a captain. She had awakened the latent goodness in his heart. He

wanted to repay Edla for her kindness. His signing himself as Captain von Stahle shows that he wanted to retain the dignity and respect accorded to him.

### **Long Answer Type Questions (6 Marks, 120-150 words)**

**Question.1. How did the peddler feel after robbing the crofter? What course did he adopt and how did he react to the new situation? What does his reaction reveal? (Delhi 2013)**

**Answer.** The crofter had treated the peddler with hospitality, and had even reposed his trust in the poor vagabond. Still the peddler robbed him and was quite pleased with his smartness. However, the fear of getting caught haunted him. So, he avoided the public highway and turned into the woods. It was a big and confusing forest, and due to the approaching darkness, the peddler lost his way. He got exhausted moving around the same place, and was filled with despair. He began to feel that the forest was like a big rattrap and the thirty kronor he had stolen were like a bait set to tempt him. His reaction reveals that he was feeling guilty for having stolen the crofter's money. His heart was filled with remorse and self-loathing for his act of weakness. However, his thoughts are perhaps also a way of justifying his crime.

**Question.2. The story, 'The Rattrap' is both entertaining and philosophical. Do you agree with this statement? Why/Why not? (Foreign 2011)**

**Answer.** The story, 'The Rattrap' is indeed, both entertaining and philosophical. The fast-paced narrative in the third person, generous use of dialogue by the author and different characters belonging to different mindsets and locales make the story interesting and entertaining. Besides, the author has managed to keep up the suspense till the end. The incidents in the forge, with the ironmaster coming at midnight, hold our attention. The peddler's incessant refusals to the ironmaster to accompany him, but his accepting Edla's invitation in one go, the ironmaster's realisation of his mistake, and Edla's sympathy and generosity, all make the story quite gripping. While all the above events make the story interesting, there is also an element of philosophy in the story. Somewhere, the peddler's theory of the world being a rattrap is true. One feels caught up like a rat in the entrappings of the world. Some people fall into this trap never to come out of it again. The story teaches us that, as human beings, we are not above temptations.

**Question.3. The story focuses on human loneliness and the need to bond with others. Explain. (Delhi 2010)**

**Answer.** All the characters in the story suffer from loneliness and are dreary souls. First of all, the tramp appears to lead a sad, monotonous existence, left to his own musings. He is always greeted by sour faces and cold words. The old crofter's fate has been somewhat kinder to him. Bereft of his wife and children, he lives all alone in a cottage by the roadside, and is rather happy to have visitors around. We also have the ironmaster and his daughter, Edla, who have no company for Christmas. The ironmaster's wife is dead and his sons are settled abroad. He, with his daughter, are happy to play hosts for his friend. Thus, all of them have a strong desire for bonding and comradeship. The crofter is happy to be friends with the peddler, although only for a night. It is the bonding with the ironmaster's daughter that transforms the peddler. The love, understanding and dignity that he gets from the girl makes him leave his dishonest ways and redeem himself.

**Question.4. Give examples from the story, 'The Rattrap' to show how the ironmaster is different from his daughter. (Delhi 2009)**

**or**

**Compare and contrast the character of the ironmaster with that of his daughter.**

**(Delhi 2008)**

**Answer.** The character of the ironmaster was very different from that of his daughter. He was an ambitious and arrogant man. When he saw the peddler, he mistook him for his old regimental comrade, and invited him home, but this was more out of his sense of pride than out of sympathy or generosity. When the ironmaster realised that he had been mistaken, he called the peddler dishonest and threatened to call the Sheriff. When he learnt that the peddler was a thief, he was 'worried about his own silverware. On the other hand, Edla, the ironmaster's daughter, was a kind and compassionate lady who was really sympathetic and considerate towards the peddler right from the beginning. She treated him with respect and dignity even after knowing that he was not a captain. It was her generous attitude which finally changed the peddler, bringing out the essential goodness of his nature.

## **KEEPING QUIET**

### **About the Poet - Pablo Neruda**

Pablo Neruda (1904 – 1973) was the 'pen name' and later, 'legal name' of this famous Chilean poet – diplomat – politician. He won the Nobel prize for literature in the year 1971. He wrote in green ink which was his personal symbol for desire and hope. His writings are simple, wherein lies their beauty.

Originally written in Spanish, the essence of this poem is based on introspection and retrospection. The poet feels that some soul – searching is needed for us to be at peace with ourselves and others.

#### **First stanza**

Now we will count to twelve  
and we will all keep still.  
For once on the face of the Earth  
let's not speak in any language,  
let's stop for one second,  
and not move our arms so much.

#### **Explanation**

- I. The poet asks everyone to count up to twelve in their mind. The number twelve represents the hours of the day or the months of a year.
- II. He wants all of us to be calm and still.
- III. People across the nations have to unite together, so, they shall not speak their own languages, rather they all shall keep quiet and speak the language of silence.
- IV. This will bring unity among all the humans on the face of the Earth.
- V. For at least one moment, no one shall move his arms either to signal, or to fight, or argue with each other.

#### **Second stanza**

It would be an exotic moment  
without rush, without engines,  
we would all be together  
in a sudden strangeness.  
Fishermen in the cold sea  
would not harm whales  
and the man gathering salt  
would look at his hurt hands.

#### **Explanation**

When everything will come to a standstill, it will be a rare situation.

- I. No one will be in a rush, there will be no engines running.
- II. Everyone will be calm and quiet, united with each other in a strange atmosphere.
- III. It will be strange because it has never happened earlier.
- IV. No person would be harming any other living being either for food or to earn his livelihood.
- V. All the people who work endlessly will get some time to look at their injuries and the damage they have caused to their body.

#### **Third stanza**

Those who prepare green wars,  
wars with gas, wars with fire,  
victory with no survivors,  
would put on clean clothes  
and walk about with their brothers  
in the shade, doing nothing.  
What I want should not be confused  
with total inactivity.  
Life is what it is about;  
I want no truck with death.

## Explanation

- I. The people who exploit the green wealth of nature by deforestation, or mining, or fishing in the deep seas and the soldiers who use weapons to kill fellow human beings need some time to introspect into the consequences of their actions. They are merely doing their job or following orders.
- II. He wants them to put on 'new clothes' i.e. to adopt a new approach towards life and to realize that killing so many people is not a victory.
- III. He wants all of us to be united as one, consider our enemy to be our brother.
- IV. He is promoting brotherhood, peace and unity.
- V. He does not want us to stop our works but to take some time and analyze the results of our deeds.

### Fourth stanza

If we were not so single-minded  
about keeping our lives moving,  
and for once could perhaps a huge silence  
might interrupt this sadness  
of never understanding ourselves  
and of threatening ourselves with death.

### Explanation

- I. All human beings work endlessly with the aim of completing all their tasks.
- II. They are driven by the target of survival and the threat of death.
- III. So they are in a mad rush to accomplish all their works.
- IV. He says that perhaps, if they pause for a while, they can appreciate their achievements and their lives would become happier.
- V. He suggests that by keeping quiet, we will be able to understand the true purpose of our life.

### Fifth stanza

Perhaps the Earth can teach us  
as when everything seems dead  
and later proves to be alive.  
Now I'll count up to twelve  
and you keep quiet and I will go.

### Explanation

The poet suggests us to take a teaching from nature.

- I. As the Earth undergoes changes, in winter, everything freezes, becomes lifeless but after some time, the season changes again, and everything comes back to life.
- II. Similarly, taking a pause and introspecting into our lives will give it a new meaning. We will be able to understand the purpose of our life. It will be like a re birth of the soul.
- III. The poet has conveyed to all the people the purpose of his message and so, he asks them once again to take a pause, count till twelve and walks out of the scene, keeping the scene open for all the people on the Earth to experience this for times to come.

### ***What will counting upto twelve and keeping still help us achieve?***

The poet is emphasizing on the importance of taking a pause from our busy lives and to introspect within ourselves. He wants us to realize the impact of our deeds and be happy on our achievements.

### ***Do you think the poet advocates total inactivity and death?***

No, the poet says in the lines-

"What I want should not be confused  
with total inactivity.

Life is what it is about;

I want no truck with death."

It is clear from these lines that he does not advocate total inactivity or death.

### ***What is the 'sadness' that the poet refers to in the poem?***

The 'sadness' referred by the poet is the disappointment which engulfs our lives despite the fact that we are busy in completing our tasks for our survival. This is so because we are ruining our lives by our deeds. We are doing such works of destruction that we are digging our own graves of sadness.

### ***What symbol from Nature does the poet invoke to say that there can be life under apparent stillness?***

The poet uses the Earth as a symbol to depict that even when every creation of nature on the Earth becomes still, it is living beneath that stillness and after some time, once again becomes lively.