

CBSE Class 12 English Core

NCERT Solutions

CHAPTER 4

The Rattrap

Page No: 32

1. Notice these expressions in the text. Infer their meanings from the context.

Keep body and soul together: To manage to keep alive/ to survive

Hunger gleamed in his eyes: One's face and eyes reveal that the person is very hungry.

Plods along the road: Moves along the road slowly but deliberately, to walk with a heavy feet

Unwonted joy: Unusual pleasure or happiness

Impenetrable prison: Impassable confinement

Nodded a haughty consent: arrogantly allowed the man to enter/ arrogant approval

Eased his way: Moved himself slowly and carefully

Fallen into a line of thought: Considered a matter in a particular way/struck by an idea

Things have gone downhill: To decline or grow worse and worse

Page No: 34 Think As you Read

1. From where did the peddler get the idea of the world being a rattrap?

Answer : One day the peddler was thinking of his rattraps. Suddenly he was struck by an idea that the whole world with its lands and seas, its cities and villages was nothing but a big rattrap. It offered riches and joys, shelter and food as baits in the same manner as the rattrap offered cheese and pork. As soon as someone touches the bait, he finds himself in the trap.

2. Why was he amused by this idea?

Answer : The peddler believed that the world with all its riches and joys, food and shelter appears as a rattrap to tempt people. The world had never been kind to him. It gave him unusual pleasure to think ill of it. So he was amused to think about the people who were already caught in the trap and others circling around the bait.

3. Did the peddler expect the kind of hospitality that he received from the crofter?

Answer : No, the peddler did not expect the kind of hospitality that he had received from the

crofter. This was because he was usually greeted by 'sour' and unfriendly faces whenever he knocked on doors and requested for shelter.

4. Why was the crofter so talkative and friendly with the peddler?

Answer : The crofter was an old man without wife and children. He was living a monotonous and dull life in solitude. He welcomed his guest very warmly. He offered him food and shelter. Naturally, he was happy to get someone to talk to in his lonely life. So he was talkative and friendly with the peddler.

5. Why did he show the thirty kronor to the peddler?

Answer : The crofter was very proud of his cow that gave him enough milk to support him. He told peddler that he had got thirty kronor last month as payment by supplying the milk to creamery. The peddler seemed doubtful about it. So, in order to assure his guest he showed thirty kronor to the peddler.

6. Did the peddler respect the confidence reposed in him by the crofter?

Answer : No, the peddler did not respect the confidence and trust reposed in him by the crofter. In fact, he betrayed his trust by robbing the thirty kronors from him. However, later in the story, his conscience was awakened by his stay with the Willmanssons and he decided to return the money.

Page No: 37

1. What made the peddler think that he had indeed fallen into a rattrap?

Answer : After stealing the crofter's money, the peddler believed that it was not safe to walk on the public highway. So he went into the woods. But it was a big and confusing forest. He walked and walked but could not get out of it. The forest having its trunks, branches and thickets appeared to be a big rattrap for him. Then he realized that he had fallen into the rattrap.

2. Why did the ironmaster speak kindly to the peddler and invite him home?

Answer : In the uncertain reflection from furnace, the ironmaster mistook the peddler as his old regimental comrade, Captain Von Stahle. His condition was very miserable. As he was an old acquaintance, he wanted to help him. He also wanted his company on Christmas Eve. So the ironmaster spoke kindly to the peddler and invited him home.

3. Why did the peddler decline the invitation?

Answer : The peddler knew that the ironmaster had mistaken him as his old regiment comrade. The invitation by the ironmaster did not please the peddler since he had the stolen money in his pocket. He thought that it would be like throwing himself voluntarily into the lion's den. He was feeling guilty and frightened. So he declined the invitation.

Page No: 41

1. What made the peddler accept Edla Willmansson's invitation?

Answer : Edla Willmansson had better power of persuasion. She looked at the peddler quite compassionately. She knew he was afraid. So she assured him that no harm would come to him and he would be allowed to leave just as freely as he came. Her friendly manner made the peddler feel more comfortable. He thought he could confide in her and accepted the invitation.

2. What doubts did Edla have about the peddler?

Answer : When Edla went to the iron mill to fetch the peddler, she noticed that he was frightened. She had doubts that the peddler had stolen something or had escaped from prison. His appearance and behaviour also left her in doubts whether he was actually an educated man, as claimed by her father.

3. When did the ironmaster realise his mistake?

Answer : The ironmaster realised his mistake the next day when the peddler turned up at breakfast. The valet had bathed the peddler, cut his hair, shaved him and given him clothes. The ironmaster realised that he had mistaken to recognise the person as his old friend because of the reflection of the furnace, the previous night.

4. What did the peddler say in his defence when it was clear that he was not the person the ironmaster had thought he was?

Answer : The ironmaster came to know the reality about the peddler the next morning. The peddler in his defence explained that he never pretended to be what he was not. He showed himself as a poor trader. He only desired to sleep in the forge for the night. He had declined the ironmaster's invitation again and again.

5. Why did Edla still entertain the peddler even after she knew the truth about him?

Answer : The peddler's true identity came to light the next morning. But Edla served the peddler not as her father's old comrade. Even after knowing the reality about the peddler she wanted him to stay with them on Christmas Eve and enjoy a day of peace. In her view it was not proper to chase away a person whom they had invited on Christmas.

Page No: 42

1. Why was Edla happy to see the gift left by the peddler?

Answer : When Edla opened the package of gift left by the peddler she felt very happy. She found a small rattrap with three wrinkled ten kronor notes and a letter addressed to her. He had left the 30 kronors for its rightful owner. He was not a thief but his circumstances made him so. She was happy to note that after all he had changed.

2. Why did the peddler sign himself as Captain von Stahle?

Answer : The peddler was a vagabond. When he was invited by the ironmaster, he behaved like a real captain. In this role, he raised himself above the petty temptation. Kindness and hospitality shown by Edla had transformed him completely. He wanted to behave nicely with them. So he signed himself as Captain Von Stahle.

Page No: 43 Understanding the Text

1. How does the peddler interpret the acts of kindness and hospitality shown by the crofter, the ironmaster and his daughter?

Answer : The different ways in which the peddler repaid the three people correspond to the way he interpreted the kindness of the three people. The peddler realized that for the crofter it was his craving for company that led him to offer his hospitality. The ironmaster's hospitality apparently was limited to his acquaintances. It was only the daughter who genuinely offered warmth and goodness to the peddler. He was touched by Edla's kindness and it made him want to act differently. He repaid her good treatment with a gesture of true gratitude.

2. What are the instances in the story that show that the character of the ironmaster is different from that of his daughter in many ways?

Answer : The ironmaster failed to know the actual identity of the peddler. He took him for an old acquaintance, whereas his daughter could make out that the man was scared. This

suggested that he had stolen something. Though the father and the daughter expressed compassion for the vagabond, both did so for different reasons. The ironmaster was sure to help the vagabond get over his tramp manners because he had taken the latter for his old comrade. The daughter however wished to feed him and welcome him in spite of knowing that he was not Captain Von Stahle. The father acted impulsively and casually and invited him without confirming the stranger's identity. On realizing his mistake he recklessly wanted to hand him over to the sheriff. When he was threatened to be ensnared by the rattrap of this world, he thought otherwise. Edla on the other hand showed a strong sense of observation. She rightly judged him to be a tramp without any education. She persuaded her father to let him stay because they had promised him Christmas cheer. When the blacksmith's daughter infected the protagonist with her true altruism the peddler's inner soul experienced a rapid transformation from an ugly duckling to a dazzling swan.

3. The story has many instances of unexpected reactions from the characters to others' behaviour. Pick out instances of these surprises.

Answer : The first instance is that of the crofter's hospitality to the peddler. The rattrap peddler, used to being shooed away, was surprised at the friendly behavior of the crofter. The peddler was also surprised at the sudden invitation given by the ironmaster, who was himself shocked to realise his mistake after recognizing the peddler the next day. Another unexpected reaction, for both the peddler and the ironmaster, is Edla's intervention to seek peddler's presence for Christmas. However, the most unexpected reaction is from the peddler when he leaves the package and the letter for Edla, showing gratitude to the girl's hospitality and respect for him.

4. What made the peddler finally change his ways?

Answer : Edla Willmansson treated the tramp in a friendly manner. She was nice and kind to her.

She interceded on his behalf when her father was about to turn him out. She still entertained the peddler even after knowing the truth about him. She offered him the suit as Christmas present and invited him to spend the next Christmas with them. Her love and understanding aroused the essential goodness of the peddler and he changed his ways.

5. How does the metaphor of the rattrap serve to highlight the human predicament?

Answer : The metaphor of the rattrap signifies that the world exists only to trap people by setting baits for them. Whenever someone is tempted by the luxuries, he ends up being

caught in a dangerous trap. The author, thus, makes a much deeper comment on the woeful plight of those in pursuit of the worldly pleasures, which often lead them to unfortunate situations. The story helps in realising the importance of general goodness and kindness. The peddler is saved from the snare of the huge rattrap called world only when he appreciates the kindness to him by Edla.

6. The peddler comes out as a person with a subtle sense of humour. How does this serve in lightening the seriousness of the theme of the story and also endear him to us?

Answer : The peddler doesn't come across as a humorous person, although one can locate a subtle sense of humour in the way he thinks about the world as being a giant rattrap. He is singularly pleased by this thought of his because it provides him with the opportunity of thinking 'ill' of the world that is not kind to him. It is clearly visible that whenever he gets caught unaware, in the web of deceit spun by his scheming mind, he hides behind the thought that the world is a rattrap and he is merely a prey. Thus, he lightens the mood and theme of the story and makes us endear him.

Talking about the Text

Discuss the following in groups of four. Each group can deal with one topic. Present the views of your group to the whole class.

1. The reader's sympathy is with the peddler right from the beginning of the story. Why is this so? Is the sympathy justified?

Answer : From the beginning, the rattrap seller is shown as a victim of his situation and not a downright evil character. The peddler had to resort to beggary and stealing because his business was not profitable enough to make both ends meet. His condition of penury does not allow him to be fully righteous. Moreover, we find that he lacks friends and guide to steer him in the right path. The sympathy is justified because in the end we find out that the peddler is capable of appreciating genuine goodness and hospitality. When he is treated with respect and kindness, he reciprocates the same in the best way he can.

2. The story also focuses on human loneliness and the need to bond with others.

Answer : The Rattrap deals with the issues of human loneliness and the need to bond with others. Not only the peddler but also other characters like the crofter, the ironmaster and Edla emphasise this fact.

The peddler's conscience had left him because he had been lonely in his predicament, for a long time. But Edla's kindness and hospitality changed him. The crofter, on the other hand, is

a lonely fellow whose craving for company leads him to give shelter to a vagabond, and he ends up getting robbed. Even, the ironmaster and his daughter suffer from loneliness. They crave company on Christmas Eve and are excited when they get the opportunity to serve a guest.

3. The story is both entertaining and philosophical.

Answer : The story is told in the form of a fairy tale with a happy ending. The narrative is interesting with many surprises and attention-grabbing dialogues. The twists and the unexpected reactions of the characters often astonish the reader making the story entertaining.

However, the author has carefully managed to weave philosophical elements into the storyline. The rattrap peddler's comparison of the whole world with a giant rattrap makes this an interesting commentary on how such people end up getting trapped in the giant chasm. The story also makes an observation on the inherent goodness of people. It also showcases how goodness and kindness shown by some people can change others' perspective.

Working with Words

1. The man selling rattraps is referred to by many terms such as “peddler, stranger” etc. Pick out all such references to him. What does each of these labels indicate of the context or the attitude of the people around him?

Answer :

| | Labels | Contexts |
|---|----------|---|
| 1 | Peddler | As he peddles or sells the rattraps |
| 2 | Vagabond | Used to describe his nomadic lifestyle |
| 3 | Stranger | Used to refer to the peddler when he was at the crofter's place, possibly to emphasise the fact that the crofter was compassionate to an unknown man |
| 4 | Guest | He is treated with compassion, especially at the ironmaster's house where he was invited to spend the Christmas |
| 5 | Intruder | When the peddler trespasses and enters the iron mill |
| 6 | Tramp | When the peddler asks for lodgings at the iron mill; also when the ironmaster, mistaking him for his old regimental comrade plans of helping him drop his tramp ways and begin a new vocation |
| | | |

| | | |
|----|------------------------|--|
| 7 | Ragamuffin | When the ironmaster first notices him wrapped in rags and in the state to utter destitution |
| 8 | Old regimental comrade | The ironmaster mistakes him for his old friend when he first meets the peddler at his iron mill |
| 9 | Poor hungry wretch | Used only once when the author mentions the fact that Edla was excited about the prospect of getting a chance to help an unfortunate fellow on Christmas |
| 10 | Rat | The peddler calls himself a rat and thanks Edla for helping him escape the rattrap with her kindness and compassion |

2. You came across the words, **plod, trudge, stagger** in the story. These words indicate movement accompanied by weariness. Find five other such words with a similar meaning.

Answer : Other words are lurch, stumble, slog, hike, clump, traipse and stomp.

Page No: 44 Noticing Form

1. He made them **himself** at odd moments.
2. He raised **himself**.
3. He had let **himself** be fooled by a bait and had been caught.
4. ... a day may come when you **yourself** may want to get a big piece of pork.

Notice the way in which these reflexive pronouns have been used (pronoun + self)

In 1 and 4 the reflexive pronouns “himself” and “yourself” are used to convey emphasis.

In 2 and 3 the reflexive pronoun is used in place of personal pronoun to signal that it refers to the same subject in the sentence.

Pick out other examples of the use of reflexive pronouns from the story and notice how they are used.

Answer :

| Examples | Usage |
|---|---|
| “...would be like throwing himself voluntarily into the lion’s | used in place of personal pronoun to signal that it |

| | |
|--|--|
| den” | refers to the same subject in the sentence |
| “...except my oldest daughter and myself ” | used in place of personal pronoun to signal that it refers to the same subject in the sentence |
| “...he laughed to himself .” | used in place of personal pronoun to signal that it refers to the same subject in the sentence |
| “...better powers of persuasion than he himself ” | used to convey emphasis |
| “stretched himself out on the floor” | used in place of personal pronoun to signal that it refers to the same subject in the sentence |
| “He could not bring himself to oppose her.” | used to convey emphasis |

Thinking about the Language

1. Notice the words in bold in the following sentence.

“The fire boy shovelled charcoal into the **maw of the furnace** with a great deal of clatter”.

This is a phrase that is used in the specific context of an iron plant.

Pick out other such phrases and words from the story that are peculiar to the terminology of ironworks.

Answer : Other such phrases could be as follows:

1. ‘a hard regular thumping’
2. ‘hammer strokes’
3. ‘a large plant with smelter, rolling mill and forge’
4. ‘pig iron’
5. ‘coal dust’
6. ‘put on the anvil’

2. **Mjolis is a card game of Sweden.**

Name a few indoor games played in your region. ‘Chopar’ could be an example.

Answer : Some indoor games are chess, ludo, table tennis, playing cards, billiards, etc.

3. **A crofter is a person who rents or owns a small farm especially in Scotland. Think of other uncommon terms for ‘a small farmer’ including those in your language.**

Answer : Some other terms are peasant, plowman, cultivator, krishak, kisan etc