

Page Number: 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 peddler was a man who walked around selling small wire rat traps. He was living the lonely and monotonous life of a vagabond. He knocked at the door of the crofter's cottage. The crofter was an old man without a wife or children. He showed him kindness and hospitality, which the peddler had not anticipated. However, the peddler took his thirty-kroner. As a result, he betrayed the crofter's trust in him.

The ironmaster, remembering Captain Von Stahle as an old acquaintance, extended kindness to him and invited him to spend Christmas Eve with him. But the peddler reasoned that if he said he was the one in the mind of the ironmaster, he would be rewarded with more kroner.

Edla Willmansson, in a very compassionate and friendly manner, asked the peddler to come to her house. He then decided to accept the invitation. However, while riding to the manor's house, he felt very guilty about whatever he had done. As a result, he resolved to correct his error. He accomplished this by leaving Edla a gift containing the thirty kroner he had stolen from the crofter's house. He had written in the note that he would return the crofter's money.

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 is rash, whereas his daughter is logical, kind, and considerate. In a hazy light, he misidentifies the stranger as an old regimental comrade. He invites him to his home and takes care of his feeding, clothing, and other needs. When he sees him in broad daylight, he accuses him of being dishonest, demands an explanation, and threatens to summon the sheriff. His daughter is more perceptive. She notices the stranger's fear and suspects him of being a thief or a fugitive prisoner. Despite this, she treats him with gentleness, kindness, and friendliness. Even though she is aware of the mistake in identity, she treats him with respect.

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

Answer:

The first example is the crofter's hospitality to the peddler. The rattrap peddler, expecting to be denied permission to spend the night in the cottage, is surprised by the crofter's friendliness. The peddler was also taken aback by the ironmaster's unexpected invitation, which shocked him the next day when he realized his error in recognizing the peddler. Edla's agreement to seek the peddler's presence for Christmas is another unexpected reaction for both the peddler and the ironmaster. The peddler, on the other hand, has an unexpected reaction when he leaves the package and the letter for Edla, expressing gratitude for the girl's hospitality and respect for her.

4. What made the peddler finally change his ways?

Answer:

Edla Williamson was friendly with the peddler. She was courteous and considerate to him. When her father was about to kick him out of the house, she prayed for him. Even after learning the truth about the peddler, she continued to entertain him. She greeted him with a Christmas gift and invited him to spend the following

Christmas with them. Her love and compassion caused the peddler to communicate with his inner soul, and he changed his ways.

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

Answer:

Thinking about his rattraps, the peddler concluded that the entire world was nothing more than a giant rattrap. Its sole purpose was to lure people in. It offered riches and joys, shelter and food, heat, and clothing, just as the rattrap offered cheese and pork, and as soon as one allowed oneself to be tempted by the bait, it closed in, ending everything. The peddler became disoriented in the forest after stealing the crofter's money. Then he considered the world and the rattrap once more. It was now encircling him. He had been duped by temptation and had been caught. The forest's undergrowth encircled him like a prison from which he could never escape. The peddler also told the ironmaster that the entire world was a giant rattrap. All of the good things that were offered were nothing more than cheese rind and bits of pork, all of which were designed to entice people into trouble. None of them escaped from the trap. The rattrap metaphor highlights the human predicament when, in the end, the peddler leaves the rattrap as a Christmas present and writes in his letter to Elda that this present was from a rat that would have been caught in this world's rattrap if he had not been treated respectfully and kindly as a captain.

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 does not come across as a humorous person, but there is a subtle sense of humor in the way he sees the world as a giant rattrap. He is ecstatic about this thought because it allows him to think 'ill' of the world that isn't kind to him. It is clear that whenever he is caught off guard, in the web of deception spun by his cunning mind, he hides behind the thought that the world is a rattrap and he is merely prey. As a result, he lightens the mood and theme of the story and endears us to him.