

Page Number: 17

Reading with Insight

1. The story is a satire on the conceit of those in power. How does the author employ the literary device of dramatic irony in the story?

Answer.

The story “The Tiger King” is a satire on the self-admiration of those in power. It is also the best instance of dramatic irony in a situation where the entire significance of a character’s talk is obvious to the readers but is not known to the characters present in it. The Maharaja, because of the prediction that he would meet his death from the hundredth tiger that he killed, screamed a warning to all the tigers. He explained the act of killing tigers as ‘self-defence’. The state banned the hunting of tigers by anyone in the state except the Maharaja. The Maharaja tried his utmost best to distort the prediction of the astrologers since his kingdom astrologer had foretold the Maharaja’s death by a tiger. He was to be more careful of the hundredth tiger. Instead, the courtiers spent their time living luxuriously and comfortably off the taxes of the people and in foolish pursuits. Even the courtiers took extreme advantage of their power. The story is full of situations of irony that expose the foolishness of dictatorial rulers who neglected nature and bent laws to suit their selfish wishes. The author manipulates dramatic irony in the story with a twist of fortune when the bullet of the Maharaja failed to kill the hundredth tiger and he remains unaware of it. The irony lies in the point that the tiger which caused the death of the Tiger King was a wooden tiger. One of its tiny slivers pierced into the right hand of the king. An infection flared and a suppurating sore spread all over the arm. In vain struggles to prove the astrologer wrong, the Maharaja had killed 100 tigers, but by failing to kill the last tiger and celebrating his ‘triumph’ over his fate, Maharaja had invited death as he was ironically killed by a little wooden toy tiger.

2. What is the author’s indirect comment on subjecting innocent animals to the willfulness of human beings?

Answer.

Through this satirical story, the author incorporates some humour and also explains how humans kill innocent creatures or animals just to show their supremacy and desires to fulfil their whims and fancies. The Maharaja’s wild killing of 99 tigers had led to their destruction in many forests, but he was unaware of the severe results his foolish actions would lead to. To save his life and lead a satisfactory one, the Maharaja mercilessly drove the helpless animals to extinction just to show his power and legacy and to prove the astrologer wrong. He wished to show his superiority as a human being, strength over nature and his destiny and exercised his power to kill hundred luckless tigers.

3. How would you describe the behaviour of the Maharaja’s minions towards him? Do you find them truly sincere towards him or are they driven by fear when they obey him? Do we find a similarity in today’s political order?

Answer.

The Maharaja’s servants were remarkably subservient and loyal to his every command. Most of them were terrified of the Maharaja and decided to keep him in good humour by following his orders. They did not dare resist him as his anger could mean the loss of their jobs or even the loss of their lives. The astrologer was afraid of predicting his death, but the Maharaja had asked him to talk without any fear. The Dewan, who was his close advisor, could not stop him from killing tigers, fearing his anger, and he arranged the Maharaja’s marriage to a princess as per his wishes. Since he was scared of losing his post, he even planted an old tiger to pacify the King’s anger and please him. Likewise, the hunters chose not to notify him of the survival of the 100th tiger and instead killed it themselves, fearing that they might lose their jobs. Finally, the shopkeeper, who sold the wooden tiger to the King, quoted a higher price to avoid a penalty. So it is obvious that the king’s servants were driven by fear rather than by any feelings of justice towards their king.

Yes, today's political order is very similar to that of the Maharaja's story. It means there's no difference. Most people these days occupy various positions of political power based individually on their influence and power.

4. Can you relate instances of game-hunting among the rich and the powerful in the present times that illustrate the callousness of human beings towards wildlife?

Answer.

Even in the present time, one can see that game-hunting is as popular as it was in the past among rich and powerful people across the world. India banned and condemned poaching, hunting, and selling animal body parts across the country. But these laws are not executed properly, so hunters and poachers hunt illegally, and trade animal parts across the border to get crores of cash. As a consequence, many species have become extinct, and others are endangered. Strict penalties and punishment must be set on the offenders of the laws passed to preserve wildlife. We must join hands to protect those animals and also should spread awareness of crimes inflicted on helpless animals.

