

Should Wizard Hit Mommy (Vistas Supplementary Reader)

—John Updike

Chapter Analysis

Question Type & Marks	Year					
	2016		2017		2018	
	D	OD	D	OD	D	OD
SA	-	-	2	1	-	-
LA	1	1	-	-	1	1

Introduction :

In 'Should Wizard Hit Mommy ?' John Updike presents the worldview of a little child. Jo warmly responds to her father's story-telling. But she can't excuse Roger Skunk's mother for making poor little Roger smell bad again. Her hero must smell like roses and must not stink at any cost. So she wants her father to make a little change in the story. She wants him to tell a different story in which the wizard takes a magic wand and hits Roger Skunk's mommy.

Summary :

1. A Two-Year Old Custom of Story Telling

Jack used to tell stories to his daughter Jo in the evenings and for Saturday naps. Every story was a product of his head. This custom began when she was two. Each new story was a slight variation of the basic tale. Every story had a small creature usually named Roger. It could be Roger Fish, Roger Squirrel or Roger Chipmunk. In every story, Roger went to the wise owl and the owl would send Roger to the wizard.

2. Story of Roger Skunk

Today's story was about Roger Skunk. It was a new animal. They must talk about it at the nursery school. Jack had got a new hero. He started the story : "Once upon a time, in the deep dark woods, there was a tiny little creature by name Roger Skunk. He smelled very bad. He smelled so bad that the other little creatures would not play with him. They would run away from him. Roger Skunk would stand there all alone. Two little round tears would fall from his eyes. Little Jo could already guess what would be the storyline next. She asked "Won't he see the owl" ? Jack continued. There lived a big wise owl in the tiptop of a tree. Roger Skunk told him his pathetic tale. The wise owl advised him to go to the wizard.

3. Roger Skunk Meets the Wizard

At last, Roger Skunk came to a little white house after crossing the dark woods and the swamp. A little old man came out. He had a long white beard and a pointed blue hat. Roger Skunk told the wizard how all the little animals ran away from him. He smelled very bad. The wizard asked Roger not to get very close to him. Inside the house, all magic things were jumbled together in a big dusty heap. The wizard demanded seven pennies. Roger had only four. He started crying. The wizard sent him to a magic well where Roger found three pennies. He took them back to the wizard. The wizard was happy and made him smell like roses. All other little animals gathered around him. Now, he smelled so good. They played games and laughed all afternoon.

4. Roger Skunk's Mommy doesn't like the Change

Roger Skunk's mommy asked him what that 'awful smell' was. Roger replied that he himself smelled like roses. The wizard made him smell like that. She told Roger that they were going right back to "that very awful wizard". But Roger cried that he smelled so bad earlier that all other little animals ran away. The mother said that she didn't care for that. Roger Skunk would smell the way a little Skunk should smell. They went to the wizard and he made him smell very bad again.

5. Jo wants the Story Changed a Little

Jo didn't like the end of the story. Poor little Roger Skunk was made to smell bad again. She wanted her father to make a little change in the story. She wanted her father Jack to tell her that the wizard took "that magic wand and hit that mommy." She insisted on making that change in the story.

Short Answer Type Questions

[2 marks each]

(Answer the following questions in about 30-40 words each.)

Q. 1. Why did Roger Skunk want to change ?

[Outside Delhi Set-II, 2014]

Ans. Roger Skunk used to smell very bad. Because of this, no animal would play with him and he had no friends. He, thus, wanted to change his smell. 2

Q. 2. Why did Roger Skunk go to the owl ? What advice did he get ? [Delhi Set III, 2015]

OR

Why did Roger Skunk visit the owl ? What did the owl advise him ?

[CBSE, SQP I, 2013, Delhi Comptt., 2010]

Ans. Roger Skunk visited the wise owl to get some wise idea for help. The owl advised him to go to the wizard. 2

Q. 3. Why did Roger Skunk go to see the owl ? [Outside Delhi Set-I, 2014]

Ans. Value Points : To get rid of his foul smell.

[CBSE Marking Scheme, 2014] 2

Detailed Answer : Roger Skunk was an animal who was avoided by his friends due to his bad smell. So he went to see the old owl, expecting that he might help him with the problem.

Q. 4. Why did Roger Skunk go in search of the wizard ?

[Comptt., Delhi Set-I, II & III, 2012, SQP 2013, 2011]

Ans. Roger Skunk went in search of the wizard because everyone made fun of him as he emanated a bad smell. He was very upset about this as he wanted to play with the other little animals. He met the owl who advised him to go to the wizard who would help him and give him a pleasant smell. 2

Commonly Made Error

- A few of the students write the reason for which Roger Skunk went to see the owl and not the wizard.

Answering Tips

- Roger Skunk went to see the wizard to get rid of his problem on the advice of the owl.

Q. 5. How did the wizard help Roger Skunk ?

[Delhi Set-I, II & III, 2012]

Ans. Value Points : Removed his foul smell with the magic spell / gave him the pleasant smell of roses / helped him in having many friends.

[CBSE Marking Scheme, 2012] 2

Detailed Answer : Roger Skunk told the wizard his problem that all the little animals ran away from him because he smelled very bad. The wizard agreed to help him. He took a magic wand in his hand and asked Roger Skunk what he wanted to smell like. Roger Skunk thought for a while, then said he wanted to smell like roses. The wizard used a magic spell. Suddenly, the wizard's house was full of the smell of roses.

Q. 6. Why does Jo call the Skunk's mommy stupid ? [HOTS] [Comptt., 2015]

OR

Why did Jo want Roger Skunk's mother to be punished for ? [CBSE, SQP 2014-15]

Ans. Value Points :

Jo finds mum stupid :

- mum should not have spanked wizard
- wants Skunk to get back smell of roses
- mum to be punished
- as insensitive, cruel, unfair

[CBSE Marking Scheme, 2014-15] 2

Detailed Answer: Jo, being a child, considers Skunk's mother to be stupid as she spanked the wizard for giving Skunk the smell of roses. Jo wants Skunk to get back the smell of roses and his mother to be punished as she thinks his mother to be insensitive, cruel and unfair.

Q. 7. Why does Jo want Wizard to hit Mommy ?

[Comptt., Outside Delhi Set-III, 2017]

OR

What did Jo want the wizard to do when Mommy Skunk approached him ?

[Delhi Set-I, II & III, 2013]

OR

Why did Jo insist that her father should tell her the story with a different ending ?

[Outside Delhi Set-I, II & III, 2013]

OR

How does Jo want the story to end and why ?

[Comptt., Delhi Set-I/II, 2017]

[Comptt., Delhi 2015] (NCERT)

[Outside Delhi Set-I, II & III, 2012,

Delhi Comptt. Set-I, II & III, 2011]

Ans. Value Points : Mommy forced the wizard to return foul smell/angry with Mommy as Roger left without friends/to assert that the young also have an opinion. (Any one)

[CBSE Marking Scheme, 2017] 2

Detailed Answer : Jo wanted the story to end with the wizard hitting Roger's mommy with his magic wand for not understanding Roger's feelings. The wizard should punish the mother. She wanted to dream of a magical and beautiful world devoid of ugliness and stink. She wants the baby Skunk to smell good, so that he can play with other animals. She doesn't want Roger to feel sad and lonely for no fault of his.

Q. 8. How was the Skunk's story different from the other stories narrated by Jack ?

[HOTS] [Delhi Set-I, 2014]

Ans. Value Points : Other stories had a happy ending, Skunk's story did not / Jo (Jack's daughter) had not opposed the ending of any story earlier / she had never challenged Jack's authority / had not



so much interrupted the narration earlier / Jack wanted to prove through this story that parents always know what is right / only story in which the animal visited the wizard twice / the story had a twist / the ending of the story remained unresolved. [CBSE Marking Scheme, 2014] 2

Detailed Answer : Roger Skunk's story was different from the other stories narrated by Jack because in all the other stories, the family lived happily after meeting the wizard. But in Skunk's case, his mother was not satisfied with the change that the wizard had brought in him with his magic wand and she took him back to the wizard to get his usual smell back. Another difference was that Jo liked all the stories but she got a little upset after hearing this story and insisted that her father should change the story and tell that the wizard took a stick and hit the mommy.

Commonly Made Error

- Some students confuse the question as asking about how Jo wanted the story to end.

Answering Tips

- The students must carefully read and understand the question before proceeding with the answer.

Q. 9. How does Jo want the story to end ?

[Comptt., Delhi 2015]

[Comptt., Delhi & Outside Delhi, 2014]

Ans. Value Points : Jo wants the wizard to refuse to change the Skunk's smell / to hit mommy on her head / a happy ending of the story / Roger Skunk enjoying the smell of the rose and being acceptable as a friend to all other animals.

[CBSE Marking Scheme, 2014] 2

Detailed Answer : Jo wants the wizard to hit mommy on her head and refuse to change Skunk's smell of roses as then he would be accepted by his friends happily. Jo wanted a happy ending.

Q. 10. What do you think is a better ending of Roger Skunk's story, Jo's or her father's ? Why ?

[Delhi Set I, 2015]

Ans. I think that her father's ending is better. It is because one should be proud of one's originality and not be ashamed of it. Our friends should also accept us the way we are rather than changing our basic characteristics and qualities. Keeping this in mind, Roger Skunk's mommy was right in getting him with the way he was earlier. 2

Q. 11. What was the basic plot of each story told by Jack ?

[Delhi Set I, 2017]

Ans. Value Points : — a small creature named Roger
— has a problem
— goes to the owl for solution
— directed to the wizard who solves problem for a fee

— sent to a well to get some pennies to pay the fee
— creature went home happy- family dinner

[CBSE Marking Scheme, 2017] 2

Detailed Answer : The basic plot of each story narrated by Jack was that a small animal, usually named Roger, with some problem went to the wise owl and the owl advised him to go to the wizard, who solved Roger's problem.

After having his smell changed to that of roses Roger skunk was very happy and played with the other animals. On returning home, his mother complains of a horrible smell, takes her son, hits the wizard on the head and demands that he change his smell back. The wizard obliges and they return home. While putting Roger to bed, she kisses him and says that he now smells like her baby, like a skunk. The mother skunk thus gets Roger's smell changed back, and insists that he is perfect just as he is and that he should only smell like a skunk.

[Topper's Answer 2017]

Q. 12. What is mother Skunk's role in the story ?

[Outside Delhi Set I, 2017]

Ans. Value Points : make Roger Skunk realise importance of originality/individuality /identity
— Roger Skunk should not be ashamed of his natural attributes
— role of a decisive and protective parent (hits the wizard on the head)

[CBSE Marking Scheme, 2017] 2

Detailed Answer : Mother Skunk's role in the story is to convince the reader about the narrator's belief that we should never disobey our parents as they know what is best for us. Mother Skunk told Roger never to forget his distinct identity.

Q. 13. Having got rid of his stink, what problem did Roger Skunk face ? [Delhi Set II, 2017]

Ans. Value Points : — did not have the seven pennies that he had to pay as fee
— had to go to the well to get them
— had to face mother's anger at his changed smell
— was taken by the mother back to the wizard to get his old smell back (Any two)

[CBSE Marking Scheme, 2017] 2

Detailed Answer : Having got rid of his stink, Roger skunk now had his mother's wrath to face. When she found out Roger smelt of roses, she scolded him badly. Mommy skunk told Roger to embrace himself as he was born and be happy with it. She dragged Roger skunk back to the wizard and forced the latter to give Roger his original stink back.

Q. 14. Give an example to show that Jo was a sensitive child. [Foreign Set I, 2017]

Ans. Value Points : — she was upset that Roger Skunk had no friends
— mother had hit wizard.

[CBSE Marking Scheme, 2017] 2

Detailed Answer : Jo was a very sensitive child because she was upset that Roger Skunk had no friends. She also expressed her unhappiness when Skunk's mother hit wizard for giving him the smell of roses.

Q. 15. How are Jack's views on life different from those of Jo ? [HOTS] [Comptt., Delhi Set-III, 2017]

Ans. Value Points : Jack views — mother knew best/ the authority of the parent should prevail/ Jo wanted mother be hit by wizard/ the young should have their way

[CBSE Marking Scheme, 2017] 2

Detailed Answer : Jack being a parent thought that the mother knew what was best for Roger Skunk, while Jo thought that Roger Skunk should also have a say in how he wished to smell. Since, he now smelled bad again, he would lose all his friends.

Q. 16. What was Roger Skunk's problem ? What did he do to solve it ? [Comptt., Outside Delhi Set-I, 2017]

Ans. Value Points : problem - foul smell
solution- went to the wizard

[CBSE Marking Scheme, 2017] 2

Detailed Answer : Roger Skunk used to emanate foul smell so every one made fun of him. To solve the problem he, took the wise owl's advice and went to the wizard who made him smell of roses.

Q.17. What story did Jo want to hear the next day and why? What was father's reaction to it?

[SQP 2018-19]

Ans. Value Points :

- Jo wanted her father to tell the same story but change the ending-wizard would hit the mommy and give back the rose smell to Roger
- could not bear the thought of Roger with his foul smell and without any friends
- father angry with Jo for interfering in his story-refused to change the ending-wants her to learn to respect parents and their decisions

[CBSE Marking Scheme 2018-19] 2

Detailed Answer : Jo was not happy with the ending of the story narrated by her father. She wanted her father to tell her the same story the next day but with a changed ending in which the wizard would hit the mommy and give back the smell to Roger. She wanted the story in this manner because she could not bear the thought of Roger Skunk's friends not playing with him. But her father, Jack was angry with Jo for interfering in his story. He refused to change the ending. In fact, he wanted her to learn to respect parents and their decisions.

Long Answer Type Questions

[6 Marks each]

Q. 1. How did Jack end the Roger Skunk story ? How and why did Jo want to change it ?

[Outside Delhi Set II, 2016]

Ans. Value Points :

- ended story by saying that Mommy Skunk took little Skunk to the wizard and changed the smell back to its original stinky one
- mother knew what was right for Roger Skunk

According to Jo :

- it was a 'stupid mommy'
- couldn't digest the statement that little Skunk's mother hit the wizard on his head and restored his original smell
- mother had no right to deprive Skunk of its happiness
- was happy that Skunk earned a lot of friends by changing smell
- suggested another ending where mother would be hit by the wizard
- wanted mother to be punished

[CBSE Marking Scheme, 2016] 6

OR

Jack ended the Roger Skunk story by saying that when the ~~mother~~ skunk's mother comes to know about the wizard changing her son's smell, she goes to wizard and hits him on the head. She asks him to revert back her son's smell. So the wizard obliges and the Roger skunk starts smelling awful again.

Jo does not agree with the ending of the story. She wants the wizard to hit back the mommy and not to change Roger's sweet smell of roses.



she says so because she is touched by the plight of the skunk. According to her, the + mommy was stupid. She empathises with Roger skunk as the other creatures didn't play with him because he smelled bad. This depicts the difference in perspectives of a child and an adult. As a child, Jo only sees the facts. But Jack wanted to convey a moral to Jo. He wanted to emphasise the fact that what parents' decisions for the children are always right.

[Topper's Answer 2016]

Detailed Answer : According to Jack's ending of the story, Roger 's mother hit the wizard with an umbrella. He, then, acts as she wishes and Roger Skunk starts smelling bad again. Jo wants the ending of the story to be the other way. She wants the wizard to hit on the head of the 'stupid mommy'. She wants the wizard to refuse to make Roger smell bad again.

Children look at this world from a different perspective. They look at people and things quite differently than the way adults do. Their perspective on life reflects simplicity and innocence. Jo has deep sympathy for Roger Skunk. Roger's bad smell kept all the little animals away from him. The little Skunk stood alone and wept. The wizard made Roger smell of roses. He was happy. Other little animals were now attracted towards him. They now played and danced with him.

Jo's main anger is against the "stupid mommy" of Roger Skunk. It was she who forced the wizard to make Roger Skunk smell very bad again. The hero of the story is always a role model for children. The tender-hearted Jo is shocked at the attitude of that 'stupid' mommy. She wants Roger's mommy to be punished. The wizard must hit on her head hard with his magic wand.

Q. 2. How does Jo show her independent thinking in the story, 'Should Wizard Hit Mommy' ?

[Comptt. Delhi / Outside Delhi 2018]
OR

How did Jo want the Roger Skunk story to end ? Why ? [Delhi Set I, 2016]

Ans. Value Points :

- she suggests the animal whose story her father was to create, (skunk)
- she keeps interrupting the story with suggestions about the animals, the skunk was going to meet, (owl, wizard etc.)
- asking whether magic spells were real

- she is in a reality phase – asks her mother whether spiders really ate bugs as suggested by her father
- catching her father when he mentions Roger Fish instead of Roger Skunk
- protesting when the mother in the story gets the smell of roses changed to the foul smell of the Skunk
- insists wizard hits the mother (any 6)

[CBSE Marking Scheme 2018-19] 6

Detailed Answer : The world of children is quite different from that of adults. Their world is a dreamy and magical world. It is a world of fantasy and romance. There is no place for ugliness and stink in their world. Roger Skunk is the hero of the story. Jo never wanted her hero to be so ugly and stinky. It offends her fairness and justice. Therefore, Jo disapproves of Jack's ending of the story of Roger Skunk. She wants her father, Jack, to tell the same story in a different way. The wizard must take his magic wand and hit Roger's mommy hard for not understanding Roger's feelings. Little Jo wants 'that stupid mommy' to be punished. Her crime is that she went to the wizard and compelled him to make her son smell bad again. Jo wants him to smell nice so that he can play with other little animals. She doesn't want Roger to feel sad and lonely for no fault of his. 6

Q. 3. Why did Jo feel that the Skunk's mommy was stupid ? [Foreign, Set-I, II & III, 2014]

OR

Why does Jo want that the wizard should hit the mommy? Does her stand reflect a child's perspective on life ? What is your choice ?

Ans. Value Points : She insisted on the Skunk smelling the way Skunks did, though she knew he would have no friends / was angry with the wizard for changing him / hit the wizard and got the smell changed. [CBSE Marking Scheme, 2014] 6

Detailed Answer : Children look at this world from a perspective which is different from that of an adult. Their perspective on life reflects their fantasy and innocence. Jo considers little Roger Skunk the hero of the story. She has a deep sympathy for Roger Skunk. Her expressions while listening to the story of poor Roger reflect her feelings. Roger faced segregation. His bad smell kept all little animals away from him. The little Skunk stood alone and wept. When the wizard made Roger smell of roses, he was happy. Other little animals were now attracted towards him. They played and danced with Roger who smelled like roses now.

Jo's main anger is against the "stupid mommy" of Roger Skunk. It was she who forced the wizard to make Roger Skunk smell very bad again. The hero of the story is always a role model for children. The tender-hearted Jo is shocked at the attitude of that 'stupid mommy'. She wants that Roger's mommy must be punished. The wizard must hit on her head hard with his magic wand.

Children think like stories and always want happy endings whereas adults know that in real life, there may not be always a happy ending.

Q. 4. The same situation can be viewed through two different perspectives. How does "Should Wizard Hit Mommy?" establish this point through the views of Jack and Jo?

[HOTS] [Outside Delhi Set-I, 2014]

Ans. As the child grows into maturity, his perspective and vision of life change gradually. A child views things at a superficial and sensory level but a grown up's vision is realistic, reflective, philosophical and even psychological. Viewed from the study of the story "Should Wizard Hit Mommy?" Jo, a child of four, like most children of her age, prefers to live in dreams and fantasies. She is hostile by nature and would like to wreak vengeance on Skunk's mother and wants the wizard to retaliate.

She is annoyed because her father refuses to accept her suggestion. The father has a mature perspective and sees beyond the surface and explores the philosophical and moralistic aspect of the entire situation. According to her father the wizard had unwillingly interfered with nature and had, thus, done a great deal of harm and deserved to be punished. According to him, the punishment meted out to the wizard is well-merited and retaliation is out of the question.

Thus, the story makes it clear that the perspective of a child and that of an adult is totally different. 6

Commonly Made Error

- Some students are not able to understand what is being asked in the question and end up writing summary of the story.

Answering Tips

- The answer must cover the general comments on the difference in perspective of a child and an adult to the same situation and relate it with the perspectives of Jo and Jack respectively.

Q. 5. A child's standpoint invariably is different from that of an adult. Justify the statement with reference to the story, 'Should Wizard Hit Mommy'.

[HOTS] [Comptt., Outside Delhi Set-I, II & III, 2012]

OR

An adult's perspective is different from that of a child. Why? Answer with reference to the story "Should Wizard Hit Mommy."

[HOTS] [CBSE, SQP II, 2012] (NCERT)

Ans. Roger Skunk was awful smelling. No one wanted to come close to him. Therefore, he went to a wizard to make him smell sweet. The wizard made him smell like roses. Roger Skunk's mother did not like that and asked the wizard to make him the way he was. The wizard did the same. When the child heard this, she did not like the way her father had ended the story. She wanted Roger Skunk to be very sweet smelling and the mother to be punished. This shows that the opinion of adults and children differ.

The world of a child is quite different from that of an adult. It is a world of fantasy and wonder. There is no place for ugliness in their world. An adult's perspective is different from that of a child's because the adult has experience of life. On the other hand, the child's mind is not developed. The child is curious and inquisitive about things around him. The child's imaginary power is exemplary. He wants to get more and more knowledge about the things described to him. It is the duty of the adult to mould the behaviour of a child. Adults should give them the knowledge that things are not as they are seen. There is a difference of perspective regarding life between the two only because of mature and immature minds. 6

Q.6. At the end of the storytelling session, why does Jack consider himself 'caught in an ugly middle position'? [Delhi / Outside Delhi 2018]

Ans. Distribution of marks:

Content: 3 marks

Expression: 3 marks

grammatical accuracy, appropriate words and spelling [1½ marks]

coherence and relevance of ideas and style [1½ marks]

- Jack possessive about the details his story
- does not take kindly to Jo's suggested changes
- 'the wizard hitting mommy'
- upset with daughter questioning parental authority
- felt to be in a position similar to that of his wife (in a cage with her)
- yet no sympathy for his wife
- could put neither his daughter to sleep nor help his wife paint the fence

Note- minimum one point for the daughter and one for the wife

[CBSE Marking Scheme 2018] 6



Detailed Answer : Jack was 'caught in an ugly middle position' because he was caught between two difficult situations. He was unable to escape the harsh realities of life rather he tried to habituate himself to the prevailing situation. He had to manage his family with two children, his daughter Jo and his son Bobby. And hence, Jack was entangled between two worlds. The first world belonged to Roger Fish, Roger Squirrel or Roger Chipmunk where he is telling the story of a wise owl and the Wizard with a magic wand.

The world upstairs consists of his children. Jo had raised a question about whether the Wizard should hit the mommy Skunk or not. Jack was unable to satisfy her as he was very cautious about the downside world where his wife Clare was painting. The house was not well kept and the household items were scattered. They were expecting a baby and he was supposed to go and help her as she was working hard to make both the ends meet. In this way, Jack was caught in an ugly middle position between the romantic world and the real world upstairs-downstairs.

