

Short Stories - 6.

The Third and Final Continent

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Q. 1 Indicate the details that tell us that the narrator was not very financially comfortable during his stay in London.

Answer:

The details that tell us that the narrator was not financially comfortable during his stay in London were the narrator stating his travel in a third-class cabin of the ship. The narrator also tells about his stay in London along with many other friends sharing one room he explains in the story that he shares his room with three or more Bengali friends. He also talks about curry pots and dining table covered with newspaper. The narrator also describes the weekend events such as walking barefoot, strolling and drinking tea which again indicate his financial status.

Q. 2 How did the narrator adjust to the ways of life first in London and then in Cambridge, U.S.A.?

Answer:

The narrator talks and describes his ways of adjusting to the lifestyle in London and then in U.S.A in the story by stating incidents, he tells his readers that in London he was a bachelor and used to work in a library so that he could meet his bare minimum expenses. Narrator then describes that he used to attend the LSE lectures after his work. He also clearly describes his living conditions were not that great as to he had to share his room with many other friends, eating egg curry repeatedly, dining table covered with newspaper, soaking dirty curry pots in the bathing tub, walking on the streets over the weekends barefoot he in the story states his stay and living in London to be lazier also not earning



well. In the later, half of the story he moves to U.S.A after getting a permanent job in the university. He then states to get married, travels by flight from London to U.S.A, he then describes the YMCA apartment to be noisy and small with less air ventilation. There were rules of no cooking which resulted him in eating cornflakes and milk day and night. He also tells that he was financially not were well off hence continued to stay in a student expenses.

Q. 3 What do you understand of the character of Mrs. Croft from the story?

Answer:

Mrs. Croft played a prominent role in the story. There was a change in her behavior as time passed on. Initially when the narrator met her she sounded to be stricter with her rules and stubborn voice. The character in the beginning was more towards being authoritative. Mrs. Croft as soon as she met the narrator asked him questions whether he was a Tech or Harvard which states she was a hypocrite. She also was very demanding as she told the narrator she expects him to pay the rent on time and didn't like any delays. Her authoritative quality was also seen when she instructs him about closing the door and she not liking any female guest ignoring the fact narrator was try to convey that he was married. Later with time passing she becomes subtler and with getting to know her age narrator develops affection.

Q. 4 What kind of a relationship did Mrs. Croft share with her daughter Helen?

Answer:

The relationship between Mrs. Croft and her daughter Helen was more practical unlike the normal relation between a mother and daughter that is filled with love and emotions. Mrs. Croft had chosen to share the relationship in a way which was based on results and reasoning. She carried out the responsibility of being a mother by providing all the



needed help and guidance in a practical way following a fixed time schedule.

Q. 5 How does the narrator bring out the contrast between the Indian way of life and American society? Do you think his wife Mala adjusted comfortably to the new way of life?

Answer:

The narrator brings out the contrast between the Indian way of life and the American society by the dressing style after he sees another Indian lady walking down the child in a pram a stumbling around. Mala initially had trouble adjusting comfortably to the new way of life as the lifestyle of the two countries were completely different from each other. Mala when she moves to U.S.A becomes home sick. But, later with the time passing on she gets adjusted.

Q. 6 How does the bond of affection between Mrs. Croft and the narrator evolve?

Answer:

The bond of affection between Mrs. Croft and the narrator evolves when he used to make the old lady soup for dinners and used to take care of her. The bond also is seen when he introduces Mala for the first time to the old lady and she appreciates.

TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT

Q. 1 Discuss in pairs or in small groups. Living abroad is challenging in many ways.

Answer:

When one shifts from their home country to another country there are initial challenges one has to go through. As the first and foremost issue that arises is the nativity of the person isn't the same. There will be certain language barriers that one has to cope with. Living abroad also



invites trouble for financial issues also as one will take time to stabilize him/ herself when living in abroad. There will be the difference in culture. The other most common challenge is social environment changes as there are a lot of differences in the mindset of people of west and Indians. The eating habits take time to settle. The other important issue that arises is the climatic and geographic differences. The education and the medical aspects also take time for one to adapt to. As every country has its own set of laws and regulations it becomes challenging to quickly adapt to the new set of rules. Hence, living abroad invites for many challenging issues one has to cope with time.

Q. 2 Discuss in pairs or in small groups. The Indian family system offers more security to the aged than what is found in the West.

Answer:

The basic root of Indian culture comes from the fact that we respect and regard our elders. Indians consider their adults to be the path guiders and give them a lot of honor. In India, families believe in living in a joint family with everyone under one roof sharing and caring for each other. During the old age in India we believe in giving the aged a very relaxed and peaceful living providing them all the comfort they require. They are given all the best of the best privileges in the family to lead a life without any worries. Indian culture believes leaving their aged parents on their own to live alone or in an old aged home a taboo. Aged people in India are never taken for granted instead are also the people whom we seek advice and knowledge. Their experiences gained over the years matter to a great extend to their children. Whereas, on the other hand in the West after the parents are aged they are often sent to old aged homes as they have mood swings and temper tantrums which are not appreciated. If not, they are left alone to fend for themselves.

Q. 3 Discuss in pairs or in small groups. The eccentricities of the old are often endearing.



Answer:

The eccentricities of the old age are most of the time endearing and they are stress busters bringing a smile on to one's face. Old age is often said to be second childhood of a person in his/ her entire journey of life. As childhood is fun old age is also endearing. When in old age people tend to develop forgetfulness it results in creating many fun moments. During the period of old age people also become adamant which sometimes is not appreciated by all but if one takes the temper tantrums and mood swings with positivity all moments become enduring. Their tantrums and wants become like a child which again is very relaxing.

APPRECIATION

Q. 1 Discuss the manner in which the author interweaves details of the narrator's family with the flow of the main narrative.

Answer:

It is important to know and understand the details of the narrator's family as this would enable us to know the mannerism of the narrator. He in the story tells us that he had a very troubled childhood but has efficiently fulfilled all the responsibilities of being an elder son till her last rights. He also states in the story that he shared a very lovable and special bond with his mother. He in the story also clearly remembers all small incidents connected to his mother. When he gets to know the age of Mrs. Croft he senses a feeling of love towards her and starts to create a bond with her. He then on starts taking responsibilities of Mrs. Croft.

Q. 2 'Mrs. Croft's was the first death I mourned in America, for, hers was the first life I had admired; she had left this world at last, ancient and alone, never to return'—how do these lines encapsulate the bond that is possible between two strangers?

Answer:



Narrator staying alone in a different country has developed no love or relation for anyone. He has been staying by himself and surviving for himself as his family was in India. But, in the story he meets Mrs. Croft and develops a bond with her after coming to know that she was 103 years old staying all alone. He was also feeling inspired that she lived alone in a big house and was able to do all her chores by herself with the help of her daughter. He after coming to know of her age started to feel responsible and started to help her with help daily chores like making her soup. Thus, the bond was created between the two.

Q. 3 Examine the pieces of conversation in the story. How do they reflect the worldview of each of the speakers?

Answer:

There are many conversations in the story which depict the worldview of each of the speaker for an instance the attitude of Mrs. Croft for the first time when she spoke to the narrator she was more adamant and demanding. But with the time passing she became politer and vulnerable. Her ways of being an extremist are easily seen when she objects to a lady and man conversation in private to be a chaperone. The worldview is also reflected when the daughter of the old lady has a casual attitude towards her mother's injury. But, with the time processing even with a lot of differences among each other the narrator and Mrs. Croft share a special bond for each other.

Q. 4 There are many instances of gentle humor in the story. Point out some of these and state how this contributes to the interest of the narration.

Answer:

The instances in the story that point towards gentle humor in the story were the first one being Mrs. Croft first meeting with Mala. She was being polite and kind to Mala and commented that she was the right wife for the narrator. The second instance was when the old lady keeps



repeatedly telling the narrator about the American flag being the first to be on the moon.

LANGUAGE WORK

Q. 1 ‘Don’t expect an English cup of tea’—how does this phrase bring out the contrast between the English and American attitudes?

Answer:

The phrase ‘Don’t expect an English cup of tea’ states that American’s are different in many fields when compared to British’s. American’s are not very welcoming and polite when compared to Britishers. American’s lifestyle is more hectic and demanding when compared to the people of British.

Q. 2 How did the narrator learn to distinguish between ‘a flask’ and ‘a thermos’?

Answer:

The narrator learns to distinguish between ‘a flask’ and ‘a thermos’ when he moves to U.S.A recently and for the first time visits a store near by he then buys tea bags and looks around the store for find a flask so that he can fill hot water later the store keeper tells him that a flask is referred to a container to store whisky. For hot water it is called as a thermos.

Q. 3 It took the narrator quite some time to understand that what he heard as ‘piper’, in fact, meant ‘paper’ and the phrase ‘mind the gap’ in the Tube. What do you think caused the problem?

Answer:

It took the narrator quite some time to understand the differences in the words the problem for not understanding the language was he was not a native of U.S.A he belonged to Bengal where his mother tongue was



Bengali and when he stayed in London he picked up British English which again is different from the American English.

Q. 4 Make a list of items that are referred to differently in British and American English, for example, 'lift' (BE) 'elevator' (AmE).

Answer:

The list of items that are referred to differently in British and American English are given below

Cinemas (BE) is referred as Movies in (AmE)

Flask (BE) is referred as Thermos in (AmE)

Flat (BE) is referred as apartment in (AmE)

Living room (BE) is referred as lobby in (AmE)

Colour (BE) is referred as color in (AmE)

Aeroplane (BE) is referred as airplane in (AmE)

Sweets (BE) is referred as candy in (AmE)

Q. 5 See if you understand what the following words that parts of a house are mean. Look up the dictionary if you don't.

Palour, foyer, lounge, porch, lobby, attic, portico

Answer:

Palour means a living area or any area for making the guest sit.

Foyer means an entrance area or a hall for receiving a guest.

Lounge means an area in the house where one could sit and relax.

Porch means a covered area in front of the entrance.

The lobby is a space in the house that generally connects one room to the other.

The attic is the space between the ceiling and the wardrobes.



Portico is a structure in a house that is supported by pillars.