INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR

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| Class: XII | Department: ENGLISH | **Short answers and Long answers** |
| **TERM 2** | **Topic: THE RATTRAP** |  |

**CLASS XII- QUESTION BANK**

**THE RATTRAP-Selma Lagerlof**

* Selma Ottilia Lovisa Lagerlöf was a renowned Swedish author.
* She was born with severe injuries to her hip, and as a child she was unable to walk.
* This often kept her inside and she was unable to involve herself in activities with other children. She therefore developed a passion for reading and writing from a very young age.
* She is famous for having been the first ever female writer to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1909.
* A universal theme runs through all of her works- a belief that the essential goodness in a human being can be awakened through understanding a love.
* She was a campaigner for women’s suffrage and intervened with the Swedish government and royal family to help individuals escape from Nazi Germany to Sweden.

## Message:

The message of "The Rattrap" revolves around the transformative power of compassion, empathy, and the potential for personal change. Selma Lagerlöf weaves together various themes and narrative elements to convey this central message. Here are some key points that elaborate on the story's message:

**1. The Capacity for Redemption:** The story suggests that every individual, regardless of their past actions or circumstances, has the capacity for redemption and transformation. The vagabond, who initially sees himself as a victim trapped in a rattrap-like world, undergoes a change of heart through the kindness and compassion shown to him by Edla Willmansson. This transformation emphasizes the inherent goodness within people and their ability to break free from negative patterns.

**2. The Power of Kindness:** Kindness has a profound impact on the human spirit. Edla's genuine acts of kindness towards the vagabond, such as providing him with shelter, food, and companionship, challenge his cynical worldview and inspire him to question his own behaviour. The story highlights the potential ripple effect of a single act of kindness, as it can spark change and encourage others to re-evaluate their own actions.

**3. The Destructive Nature of Materialism**: The story critiques the pursuit of material wealth as a source of happiness and fulfilment. The vagabond's desire for riches and his thieving tendencies symbolize the trap of materialism, which ultimately leads to dissatisfaction and a sense of entrapment. Lagerlöf suggests that true contentment lies in human connections, empathy, and a genuine appreciation for the simple joys of life.

**4. The Importance of Empathy and Understanding:** "The Rattrap" emphasizes the significance of empathy and understanding in bridging divides and fostering change. Edla's ability to see beyond the vagabond's outer appearance and treat him with compassion demonstrates the power of empathy to break down barriers and challenge preconceived notions. The story encourages readers to look beyond surface judgments and engage in genuine connections with others.

**5. The Influence of Perspective**: Lagerlöf highlights the impact of one's perspective on their experiences and actions. The vagabond's cynical worldview, shaped by his past hardships, leads him to engage in dishonest behaviour as a means of survival. However, Edla's compassionate perspective challenges his beliefs and opens up new possibilities for him. The story suggests that by shifting one's perspective and embracing empathy, individuals can change their own narratives and transform their lives.

In essence, the message of "The Rattrap" is that compassion, empathy, and a willingness to see beyond appearances can break down barriers, inspire personal growth, and lead to redemption and positive change. It encourages readers to reflect on their own actions, challenge societal traps, and embrace the transformative power of kindness in creating a more compassionate and understanding world.

The Rattrap is a story about a rattrap seller who leads a very poor life as his earnings are very low. He has to resort to thievery and begging to make both ends meet.

He is alone in this whole world and leads a miserable life. So he starts knitting up various kinds of thoughts. One of these thoughts is of supposing the whole world as a big rattrap. His views are that the world offers us various types of baits in the form of comforts of life. This in return traps us into the rattrap of the world and leads us to various types of miseries.

Every night, the peddler had to search for shelter as he has no home. One evening he was offered shelter by an old crofter. The next morning he stole the crofter’s money which he had earned by selling his cow’s milk. To safeguard himself, the peddler chose the path through the forest which was secluded, but soon found himself trapped in the forest as he wasn’t able to find the way out of the dense forest. Later on, he finds a way to a forge and takes shelter there. Something unusual happens. The ironmaster mistakes him as an old friend and invites him to his house. The poor peddler rejects the offer due to the fear of being caught. Soon he is invited by the ironmaster‘s daughter. The next morning he is somehow stopped by the ironmaster’s daughter for Christmas Eve even after being caught that he was a peddler and not Captain Stahle.

The next day after Christmas, when the iron master and his daughter visit the church, they come to know that the man is a thief who had stolen money from the old crofter. The iron master and his daughter repent for sheltering a thief and wonder at what all things he would have stolen by that time. Here comes a twist as instead of stealing, the peddler gifts the ironmaster’s daughter a rattrap. She finds a letter of thanks and the stolen money inside the rattrap. The peddler thanks Edla for her kindness and requests her to return the stolen money to the crofter.  This story gives us the message that goodness in a human being can be awakened at any time with your own good deeds.

**Short Answer questions:**

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

Ans: The peddler was a poor man who tried to make both ends meet by selling rattraps. His mind was always occupied with the making and selling of rattraps. Hence one day, as he thought about the world , he found a similarity between the two. To him, the riches, joys, food, shelter, clothing etc. worked as baits to trap people.

1. **Why was the peddler amused by the idea of the world being a rattrap?**

Ans: The world had never treated the peddler kindly. Hence, he was full of bitterness and malice against it. When he visualized the whole world to be a rattrap ready to ensnare anybody who would succumb to his temptation and touch the bait of richness and joys, he felt very amused. Many people he knew had already been ensnared and many others were still circling around the bait.

1. **Why did the crofter show the thirty kronor notes to the peddler?**

Ans: The crofter was very satisfied and happy to be able to earn thirty kronor in one month. He had no one to share his joy with, hence he took the opportunity to show the amount to the peddler and express his happiness. Moreover, he suspected that his guest did not seem to believe him when he spoke about his earnings.

1. **What made the peddler accept Edla’s invitation?**

Ans: The peddler declined the ironmaster’s invitation for fear of being caught for stealing the crofter’s money. However, he accepted Edla’s invitation as her warmth, friendliness and compassion instilled his confidence in her. He was so touched by the sincerity in her voice. He consented to ride to the manor house when Edla assured him that he would be allowed to leave as freely as he had come.

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

Ans: Edla was happy because the peddler had respected the faith shown in him by her by retaining him in the house even after knowing his real identity. Rather than walking off with their silver ware, his gesture proved that the goodness in him had been awakened and he behaved like a real dignified captain.

1. **Why did the peddler sign as Captain von Stahle?**

Ans: The peddler was touched by the kind treatment Edla gave him. She had treated him like a real captain in spite of knowing his identity. It was now his turn to show Edla that the guest she had honoured was as honourable as a captain and not merely a petty thief. The latent goodness of his heart was awakened and he actually behaved in a dignified manner. So he signed as Captain von Stahle because had he not been elevated to the rank of a captain, he would not have escaped the world’s rattrap.

1. **What is the message of the story?**

### Ans. Sympathy, love , affection and  a humanitarian treatment can purify a man’s soul and transform him into a good human being .

Q1- How does the peddler interpret the acts of kindness and hospitality shown by the crofter, the ironmaster and his daughter?  
  
**A1- The peddler was a rattrap seller. He was leading a life of misery. He was homeless. Moreover, he didn’t have enough money to survive. So, he had to depend upon begging and thievery. He was once offered shelter by an old crofter. He wanted company and showed kindness towards the peddler by sharing his porridge and tobacco. In return, the peddler betrayed him and stole his money.**

**The ironmaster mistook him as his old companion Captain Von Stahle; he showed his kindness to him and invited him to his house for Christmas Eve. The peddler knew that the ironmaster was making a mistake by thinking him to be his old friend but here also he did not clear the air and simply accepted the invitation. He did this so that the ironmaster may give him some money out of pity.**

**Edla Willmansson who was the iron master’s daughter invited him to their house in a very friendly way. Also, she insisted her father to let him stay for Christmas Eve even after it was revealed that he was not Captain Von Stahle. The kind nature of Elda changed the peddler and he not only thanked her by gifting a rattrap for being so kind and caring but also requested her to return the stolen money to the old crofter.**

Q2- 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?

**A2- The character of both ironmaster and his daughter were totally different from each other.  
The iron master was a proud man. When he saw the peddler, he mistook him as an old regimental comrade and tried to help him out of his sense of pride. When he realized that he had mistaken the poor man for his friend, he called the peddler dishonest and also warned him of calling the sheriff. Not only this, he worried about his silver spoons when he comes to know that peddler was a thief. On the other hand, the ironmaster’s daughter was a kind lady, who really wanted to help the peddler. She treated him with respect and it was her kind nature which changed the peddler and made him a good person.**

Q3- The story has many instances of unexpected reactions from the characters to others’ behaviour. Pick out instances of these surprises?

**A3- The story has many instances of unexpected reactions from the characters to others’ behaviour. For example:  
One evening when the peddler knocked at the door of a little hut, he was not disappointed by the owner, rather he welcomed him and tried to be a good host to him by offering him food and playing cards with him. In another instance when the peddler went inside a forge to seek shelter, there he was invited by the iron master to his house as he mistook him as one of his old regimental comrade. But when the iron master realized that he had invited some unknown person to his house, he asked him to leave. At his time, he was allowed to stay by his daughter Edla out of kindness.**

Q4- What made the peddler finally change his ways?

**A4- Edla Willimansson’s kindness reformed the peddler. Her kindness, compassion and generosity killed the thief in him. He gifted her a rattrap. Also, he returned the three ten kronor notes that he had stolen from the crofter’s house. He requested her to return the money to the old crofter. He wrote a letter to her, thanking her for treating him well just like she would have treated a real captain.**

Q5- 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?

**A6- We can see the peddler’s sense of humour when he compares the world with a rattrap. Whenever he gets caught due to his own knitted stories, he tries to prove his innocence by believing that he has fallen into the trap of this world which actually is like a rattrap. This lightens the seriousness of the story and makes the reader sympathize with him.**

**Additional short answer questions:**

1. Briefly describe the rattrap seller.
2. How did the world treat the peddler?
3. How did the ironmaster interpret the peddler’s refusal to accept his invitation to the manor house?
4. How did the tramp make his living?
5. Describe the evening that the tramp spent with the crofter.
6. Why did the peddler have to keep to the woods after leaving the cottage? How did he feel?
7. What were the peddler’s feelings as night fell in the woods?
8. Who was the owner of the ironworks and what sort of a person was he?
9. Who did the ironmaster mistake the peddler to be? Why did the latter not reveal his identity? How did his true identity come to light?
10. What were the peddler’s feelings as he was being taken to the manor house?

**Long answer questions: (Solved)**

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

**Ans: The** metaphor of the rattrap reveals man’s helplessness and restlessness in the face of situations that pursuit of joys and luxuries land him in. Just as the bait of cheese and pork tempt and trap a rat, the peddler yields to his temptations at the crofter’s cottage and then runs like mad to escape. The only difference is that for the peddler the world is a big rattrap. Though one can’t see the bars and wires, this trap ensnares individuals like him so securely that one can’t escape at all. All aims and ambitions of attaining great heights remain unfulfilled and one finds himself incapable of wriggling out of pettiness and trivialities. Many a times, one is not even aware of having been trapped and thus goes on receding deeper and deeper into the trap and loses all chances of deliverance.

1. **The peddler got two chances to steal ,once in the crofter’s house and the other when Edla and her father went to the church for service. Why did he resist the chance of stealing in Edla’s house?**

**Ans.** Undoubtedly, the crofter was generous and offered food, shelter and warmth to the peddler , but somewhere and somehow in his speech he was boastful and talked about his own self , his cow and his earning. On the contrary, Edla did not do so. The reality about the peddler’s identity was revealed before Edla BUT the crofter did not know who the peddler was. Hence, the greatness of Edla was proved before the peddler . Her request to the peddler to visit her house again the next Christmas if he wanted to take rest safely, left the peddler in boundless amazement. He was surprised to see the matchless hospitality, generosity, compassion, affection and humanitarian heart of Edla Willmansson. That’s why, despite getting a chance to steal, he resisted the temptation.

1. **The story is both entertaining and philosophical. Discuss.**

Ans. The entertaining points in the story are:

1. The peddler’s sense of humour and his tendency to philosophize, despite odds.
2. The suspense created whereby every moment the reader waits for what would happen next. There are many surprising twists and turns in the tale.
3. Third, the situations are comical such as the revelation of the peddler’s identity after the valet had bathed him.

The philosophical points are:

1. The entire theory that life is one big rattrap.
2. Also, the tale tells us something about second chances, stating that everyone should get another chance.

**Additional questions:**

1. The story ‘The Rattrap’ focuses on human loneliness and the need to bond with others. Comment. (Discuss this answer with reference to ALL the characters)
2. The story is both entertaining and philosophical. Discuss.
3. 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?
4. Describe how the story shows that basic human goodness can be brought out by understanding and love.
5. How did the peddler get out of the rattrap he had fallen into?
6. The story ‘The Rattrap’ explores the idea that human beings possess the innate tendency to redeem themselves from their dishonest ways given the right motivation. Discuss.
7. Despite all odds the reader’s sympathies lie with the peddler in the story. Elucidate.

**Value Based Questions:**

1. **The peddler in ‘The Rattrap’ is a thief, dishonest, but there was something gnawing his conscience. He always resented taking to evil ways, felt guilty of stealing and blamed and cursed himself. He could reform because he had the desire. When there’s a will, there’s a way. Keeping this in mind, write an article in 100 words on this topic.**

**Value points:**

* Everyone wishes to be successful in life-but in the path that leads to success one should not forget the battle
* When we feel the dire need of something, we make all efforts to achieve it
* If one has strong will power, no obstacles, no opposition can shake it
* What is required is - will power coupled with optimism
* For success one has to continuously struggle and not give up.

1. **Edla had immense faith in the goodness of man and believed that each one has a core of humanity, that can be awakened . Her faith proved true and the peddler showed an inclination to reform. It was her faith that transformed the peddler. Keeping this in mind, write an article in about 100 words on ‘The Virtue of Faith’.**

**Value points:**

* Faith is the sum and substance of life
* It is the driving force which leads to the fulfillment of each human endeavour
* It is the only power that inspires a human being in despair
* But if a person loses faith during the period of struggle, he succumbs to unfavourable situations
* A man having faith in God has faith in himself

1. **The peddler’s instance speaks on a general level to the entire society, urging for a different outlook towards those maligned individuals who can be redeemed by compassion and understanding. The rehabilitation programmes at the prisons follow the same value. In the light of the instance mentioned above, how do you think society can help juvenile delinquents from falling prey to petty crimes or bad ways?**

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