



QUESTION BANK - THE SNAKE AND THE MIRROR (2023-24)

Class: IX

Sub: ENGLISH

-
1. What does the narrator say about the room where he lived?
 - (A) It was a small rented room.
 - (B) It was not electrified.
 - (C) There were too many rats in it.
 - (D) **All the above.**

 2. What did he do with the comb?
 - (A) He cleaned it with a brush.
 - (B) He ran it through his moustache.
 - (C) He threw it away into the dustbin.
 - (D) **He ran it through his hair and adjusted the parting.**

 3. What sound did he hear while sitting on the chair?
 - (A) The squeak of a rat.
 - (B) The hiss of a snake.
 - (C) **The dull thud of something falling to the ground.**
 - (D) The sound of somebody coming into the room.

 4. What was it that had fallen at the narrator's back?
 - (A) A rubber tube.
 - (B) A big rat.
 - (C) **A fat snake.**
 - (D) A dead mouse.

 5. What happened when the narrator turned around to see what had fallen there?
 - (A) **A fat snake landed on his shoulder.**
 - (B) A fat snake fell on the back of his chair.
 - (C) A fat snake fell to the ground.
 - (D) A fat snake wriggled from his shoulder to the back of the chair.

 6. How did the narrator react when he saw a fat snake on his shoulder?
 - (A) He did not jump.
 - (B) He did not tremble.
 - (C) He did not cry out.
 - (D) **He neither jumped nor trembled nor cried out.**

 7. 'Again came to that noise from above' actually who was making that sound?
 - (A) the rats
 - (B) **the snake**
 - (C) the birds
 - (D) some insects
-

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Why did the doctor live in a small, poor house?

Ans: The doctor lived in a small, poor house because he had just started his practice and he was not earning much. He could not afford to rent a better and more comfortable accommodation with his meagre earnings.

2. “The sound was a familiar one.” What sound did the doctor hear? What did he think it was? How many times did he hear it? When and why did the sounds stop?

Ans: The doctor heard the sound made by a snake that was trying to reach the floor. He thought it was the squeaking sound made by the rats that infested his room. He heard this sound three times, after short intervals and it stopped when the snake fell down because it had reached the floor.

3. What thoughts crossed the doctor’s mind when he saw the snake looking into the mirror?

Ans: When the doctor saw the snake looking into the mirror, he thought that perhaps it too was admiring its beauty or was trying to make some important, actually frivolous decisions like growing a moustache, or using eyeshadow and mascara or wearing a vermilion spot on its forehead.

4. What did the doctor do when the snake was absorbed in looking at the mirror?

Ans: As the snake was absorbed in looking at the mirror, the doctor at once availed of the opportunity and holding his breath, rose from the chair and quietly slipped out of the room. From there he passed through the veranda and the yard and ran to finally reach the house of a friend.

5. What did the doctor think of doing if the snake bit him?

Ans: The doctor had a snake landed on his shoulder. He felt as if he was going to be bitten by the snake. He thought of some anti-snakebite medicine. But he could not. He knew that there was no medicine available for him. He called himself a stupid, foolish doctor.

6. why did the doctor say that he had to make his presence felt?

Ans: The doctor was unmarried. He was a great admirer of beauty. He believed in making himself handsome. While looking into the mirror, he adjusted his hair many times. He also decided to shave daily but keep a thin moustache.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What was the doctor’s opinion about himself? How did this opinion change after his encounter with the snake?

OR

How did the doctor lose his pride after the snake landed on his shoulder?

Ans: The doctor had a very high opinion of himself regarding both his appearance and profession. He was conscious of his looks and wanted to look even more handsome. He repeatedly looked at himself in the mirror to admire his handsomeness. He wanted to be attractive to women because he was an eligible bachelor. He was also proud of being a doctor and was arrogant because of his professional qualification.

But a short encounter with a snake, a full-blooded cobra, cured him of his pride. When the snake reached his shoulder and coiled itself around his arm, the doctor lost all arrogance and was reminded of the existence of God. Face to face with death, he realised what a weak and foolish man he was. When he recalled that there were no medicines in his room to cure him of a snakebite, he humbly and meekly regarded himself to be a stupid and helpless person. Thus, the

encounter with the snake transformed the doctor from a vain and foolish person into a humble and God-fearing man.

2. What are the similarities between the behaviour of the doctor and of the snake?

OR

Do you think both the doctor and the snake had some common qualities? Why/Why not?

Ans: The behaviour of the doctor and the snake did have certain similarities. Both of them were enamoured by their reflection in the mirror and stood looking longingly at it. However, the similarity ended at this aspect of their respective behaviour since the doctor could not ascertain confidently the reason behind the snake getting charmed by its own image. The doctor was certainly compelled by his vanity to repeatedly look at his image. So, when he notices the snake looking into the mirror, he thinks that perhaps it too was admiring its beauty or was trying to make some ‘important’ decisions just like him. But these two were as frivolous as the doctor’s decision to shave daily and keep a thin moustache.

Just like the doctor’s obsession with his looks landed him in trouble, the snake too seemed to be “taken with its beauty.” It releases its victim to have a better look at itself in the mirror. Thus, both the doctor and the snake display narcissistic tendency.

3. What kind of room was the doctor living in and why did he decide to leave that room?

Ans: The room that the doctor was living in was a small, poor, uncomfortable and unhygienic one. Since his medical practice was yet not well-established, he did not earn much and could not afford a better place. This room was without the facility of electricity and he had to depend on a kerosene lamp for studying. The room was on the outer side of the house and one of its walls opened into the yard. It had two windows; its roof was tiled and had long supporting gables. The room did not have any ceiling and it was infested with rats that kept squeaking all the time.

The doctor’s description of the room shows that he was not happy with this poor accommodation. But he decided to leave it only after his encounter with the snake. It was such a horrifying experience that he had to run to a friend’s house to save his life. Therefore, he decided not to live in the room any longer.

4. This story about a frightening incident is narrated in a humorous way. What makes it humorous?

Ans: Although the story “The Snake and the Mirror” by Vaikom Muhammad Basheer is the narration of a serious incident, it is not devoid of the element of humour. This humour is generated by way of contrasts employed by the writer. The doctor reveals his pride and arrogance by telling us how highly he rated his looks and his profession as a doctor. This pride and arrogance stand in contrast to his admittance that he felt feeble and foolish when encountered by the snake. Again, his desire to marry a fat and a wealthy lady-doctor who cannot run after him when he commits some silly mistake stands in contrast to the thin and agile lady, with the physique of a sprinter, whom he finally marries. Further, the doctor pokes fun at himself when he tells that the thief did not take away his dirty vest because he had a sense of cleanliness. His remark about the snake that perhaps it was making some decision about growing a moustache or using eyeshadow and mascara or wearing a vermilion spot on its head is also very witty and humorous.

Thus, even a serious incident is made interesting by the doctor’s witty treatment of a very dangerous situation.

5. Did the doctor find his encounter with the snake humorous or frightening or both? What aspects of human nature is revealed here?

Ans: The incident in the story is both frightening and humorous. When the snake landed on his shoulder, the doctor was so frightened that he could neither jump nor utter a cry.

The element of humour in the story is that the doctor thinks of marrying a woman doctor with good medical practice. He wishes her to be fat so that in case a silly mistake is made by the doctor, she would not be able to run after him. When the doctor realises that there was no medicine for snakebite, he calls himself a foolish and stupid doctor. The reader smiles when the doctor saw the snake looking into the mirror. He wonders if it was admiring its own beauty. He guessed if it was trying to make an important decision about growing a moustache or using eyeshadow and mascara. It shows that some people have a tendency of keeping their calm even in the worst of situations.

6. What was the final insult? Why did the doctor feel insulted? What should he have done to avoid the insult?

Ans: The doctor moved after the snake had unwound itself and crept towards the mirror. The doctor moved out of the room and ran towards his friend's house to escape from the snake without securing his possessions in the room. He rubbed oil and took a bath. Next morning when he came back with some people to find the snake and take his luggage away, he did not find the snake. In fact, he found nothing there. Some thief had cleaned his room completely. But the thief left his vest behind. It was a soiled undergarment that the fastidious thief thought below his dignity to take away.

It appeared that the thief had a better sense of cleanliness than the doctor. The doctor should have taken care of hygiene in order to avoid the insult at the hands of a thief.

REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

1. ***“Has a snake ever coiled itself round any part of your body? A full-blooded cobra?”***
All of us fell silent.
 - a) Who said this to whom?
 - b) Who is the narrator of the story?
 - c) What were they discussing?
 - d) What incident did the narrator tell?

Ans: a) The doctor said this to his friends.
b) A homeopathic doctor is the narrator of the story.
c) They were discussing about snakes.
d) The narrator described an incident in which he encountered a deadly snake.

2. ***One feels tempted to look into a mirror when it is near one. I took a look.***
 - a) Who is the speaker here?
 - b) How does the speaker describe the mirror?
 - c) Why was he tempted to look into the mirror?
 - d) While looking into the mirror, what did he do?

Ans: a) The doctor
b) It was a large mirror.
c) He was a great admirer of beauty. He believed in making himself look handsome as he was unmarried and was a doctor.
d) While looking into the mirror, the doctor picked up the comb and ran it through his hair and adjusted the parting so that it looked straight and neat.

3. ***“I didn’t jump. I didn’t tremble. I didn’t cry out. There was no time to do any such thing.”***
- a) Who is the ‘I’ here?
 - b) What happened to the speaker?
 - c) What do the words “jump, tremble, cry out” in the above line tell us?
 - d) What did the speaker do in the above situation?

Ans: a) The doctor

- b) A snake slithered along his shoulder and coiled around his left arm above the elbow. The hood was spread out and its head was hardly three or four inches from his face.
- c) These words tell us that the doctor was in an alarming situation.
- d) The speaker sat there holding his breath and was turned to stone.

4. ***“Phew! “Each of us heaved a sigh of relief. Somebody asked, “Doctor, is your wife very fat?”***
- a) Who is the speaker here?
 - b) Why did they “heave a sigh of relief”?
 - c) Why did the doctor wanted to get married to a fat woman?
 - d) Did the doctor marry a fat woman?

Ans: a) The speaker is the doctor’s friend.

- b) They “heaved a sigh of relief” as the doctor was narrating to them, an incident in which he encountered a venomous snake and how he escaped from it.
- c) The doctor wanted to get married to a fat woman because if he made some silly mistake and needed to run away, she should not be able to run after him and catch him.
- d) No, the doctor did not marry a fat woman, instead, he got married to a thin reedy person with the gift of a sprinter.