

Short Stories - 2.

A Pair of Mustachios

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Q. 1 What do you understand of the natures of Ramanand and Azam Khan from the episode described?

Answer:

Ramanand is a grocer and a moneylender, whose main priority is his business. He is known for building up his business on the maxim that the customer is always right. He is clever and cunning and always puts his business above his pride. Azam Khan, on the other hand, is filled with pride. He is short-tempered and arrogant. His pride costs him all that he owns, and he is tricked smartly by Ramanand.

Q. 2 Identify instances in the story that show the business acumen of Ramanand.

Answer:

Ramanand's business acumen can be seen from his encounter with Azam Khan. He is a clever business person who tricks Azam Khan into mortgaging all his properties. He readily agrees to lower the one tip of his moustache which makes Azam Khan lose his temper and act in a haste. He acts on the pride of his customers for the benefit of his business.

Q. 3 Both Ramanand and Azam Khan seem to have very fixed views. How does Ramanand score over Azam Khan towards the end of the story?

Answer:

Both Ramanand and Azam Khan belong to a society which is classified by different styles of a moustache. Ramanand belongs to the shopkeeper

class and wears the goat moustache whereas Azam Khan belongs to the tiger class moustache. Ramanand scores over Azam Khan by provoking him with his closely imitated moustache and gets Azam Khan to mortgage all his properties.

TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT

Q. 1 Discuss the following in groups of three or four

The episode has been narrated in a light vein. What social mores does the author seem to ridicule?

Answer:

The author ridicules the pride and the short-sightedness of the people. The pride of belonging to a certain class of society has blinded them and makes them lose all sensibility. Azam Khan is one such example who is ready to mortgage all his possessions for the sake of his pride and his past glory. Ramanand on the other hand is more evolved and rises above the society's conventions to put his business interests above his pride.

Q. 2 Discuss the following in groups of three or four.

What do you think are the reasons for the references made to the English people and the British monarchy?

Answer:

The author makes references to the English people and the British monarchy in an attempt to indicate the unfortunate reality where Indians take pride in being slaves to the monarchy. This is clearly implied when the author states that the lion moustache was worn by the maharajas and nawabs, the same style of moustache worn by the British army generals. The Indians still hold the English people with high respect even though they have exercised their authority in a foreign land.

Q. 3 Discuss the following in groups of three or four.

What do you think is the message that the author seems to convey through the story?

Answer:

The author is trying to portray the importance of evolving with time. The values and perceptions must grow as time passes and one should try and stay practical. One should not be blinded by age-old ideologies and values. Staying in the present is far more important than hanging on to the past.

Compare your group's views with that of the other groups.

APPRECIATION

Q. 1 Comment on the way in which the theme of the story has been introduced.

Answer:

The author begins the story with a detailed narration of the society's state of affairs and how it has been classified based on moustaches. However, the story later proceeds with a dialogue, bringing some variation to the initial style of narration. The overall theme has been introduced in a detailed but light-manner.

Q. 2 How does the insertion of dialogue in the story contribute to its interest?

Answer:

Insertion of dialogue in the story brings some variation to the story and helps in expressing the true intention of the author. It also adds a comical side to the narration and helps in keeping the readers engaged.

Language Work

Q. 1 Nouveau riche and bourgeoisie are French words. Collect from newspapers, magazines, and other sources some more French words or expressions that are commonly used in English.

Answer:

Depot, Genre, Bouquet, Chauffeur, entrepreneur

Q. 2 Locate expressions in the text which reflect the Indian idiom, for example, the pride of the generations of his ancestors.

Answer:

Oily lentil-eaters

The seed of a donkey

Q. 3 We 'draw up a deed'. Complete the following phrases with appropriate words

- a. one's word
- b. one's will
- c. ends meet
- d. a loan
- e. a deaf ear to

Answer:

- a. To give one's word
- b. Carry out one's will
- c. To make ends meet
- d. To lend a loan
- e. Give a deaf ear to