

Comprehension Passages

Passage 1

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

At Denver there was an influx of passengers into the coaches on the eastbound B. & M. express. In one coach there sat a very pretty young woman dressed in elegant taste and surrounded by all the luxurious comforts of an experienced traveler. Among the newcomers were two young men, one of handsome presence with a bold, frank countenance and manner; the other a ruffled, glum-faced person, heavily built and roughly dressed. The two were handcuffed together.

As they passed down the aisle of the coach the only vacant seat offered was a reversed one facing the attractive young woman. Here the linked couple seated themselves. The young woman's glance fell upon them with a distant, swift disinterest; then with a lovely smile brightening her countenance and a tender pink tingeing her rounded cheeks, she held out a little gray-gloved hand. When she spoke her voice, full, sweet, and deliberate, proclaimed that its owner was accustomed to speak and be heard.

"Well, Mr. Easton, if you will make me speak first, I suppose I must. Don't you ever recognize old friends when you meet them in the West?"

The younger man roused himself sharply at the sound of her voice, seemed to struggle with a slight embarrassment which he threw off instantly, and then clasped her fingers with his left hand.

"It's Miss Fairchild," he said, with a smile. "I'll ask you to excuse the other hand; 'it's otherwise engaged just at present."

He slightly raised his right hand, bound at the wrist by the shining "bracelet" to the left one of his companion.

Question 1.

Describe the young woman in the coach.

Answer:

In one of the coaches there sat a young woman who was very pretty and dressed in elegant taste and surrounded by all the luxurious comforts of an experienced traveller. When she spoke her voice was full, sweet, and deliberate, proclaiming by its tone that its owner was accustomed to speak and be heard.

Question 2.

What is strange about the way the two men are travelling? Why do you suppose they are like this?

Answer:

The two men who entered from Denver were an odd pair. One had a handsome presence with a bold, frank countenance and manner; the other was a ruffled, glum-faced person, heavily built and roughly dressed. And what was really strange about them was that they were handcuffed together.

Question 3.

Why does the author call the two men as the 'linked couple'?

Answer:

The author addresses the two men as the linked couple because they are handcuffed to each other and so linked like a couple.

Question 4.

What was the reaction of the young women to them initially? Why did her manner change?

Answer:

Initially the young woman glanced at them with a distant and swift disinterest, but then her manner changed when she recognised one of them as an old friend, Mr Easton.

Question 5.

Why was Mr Easton embarrassed when the young woman recognised him?

Answer:

Mr Easton was embarrassed because he was handcuffed and he felt she would not appreciate seeing that he was in that condition.

Passage 2

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

Easton, with a little laugh, as if amused, was about to speak again when the other forestalled him. The glum-faced man had been watching the girl's countenance with veiled glances from his keen, shrewd eyes.

"You'll excuse me for speaking, miss, but, I see you're acquainted with the marshal here. If you'll ask him to speak a word for me when we get to the pen he'll do it, and it'll make things easier for me there. He's taking me to Leavenworth prison. It's seven years for counterfeiting."

"Oh!" said the girl, with a deep breath and returning color. "So that is what you are doing out here? A marshal!"

"My dear Miss Fairchild," said Easton, calmly, "I had to do something. Money has a way of taking wings unto itself, and you know it takes money to keep step with our crowd in Washington. I saw this opening in the West, and—well, a marshalship isn't quite as high a position as that of ambassador, but—"

Question 1.

How did the young woman react when she saw the handcuffs on her friend's wrist?

Answer:

When the young woman saw the handcuffs on her friend's wrist the glad look in her girl's eyes slowly changed to a bewildered horror. The glow faded from her cheeks. Her lips parted in a vague look of relaxing distress and she was evidently mortified.

Question 2.

What is the relationship between Mr. Easton and Ms. Fairchild?

Answer:

They seem to be old friends and are even slightly flirtatious.

Question 3.

What was the crime of the prisoner? And what is the punishment.

Answer:

The crime of the prisoner was counterfeiting. And the punishment was imprisonment for seven years.

Question 4.

Where was the prisoner being taken.

Answer:

The prisoner was being taken to Leavenworth prison.

Question 5.

What did the glum faced man tell the young woman ? What effect did it have on her?

Answer:

The glum faced man told the young woman that Mr Easton was a marshal and he was taking him to the prison that is why they were handcuffed. When the girl heard the man she was relieved. She took a deep breath and colour returned to her cheeks.

Question 6.

Easton states that, "Money has a way of taking wings unto itself, and you know it takes money to keep step with our crowd in Washington". What does Mr. Easton mean by the idiom, "taking wings unto itself," and what does this tell us about both Mr. Easton and Miss Fairchild's former lives in Washington?

Answer:

Mr. Easton is referring to the idea that money goes too quickly and their lives in Washington were expensive. This can also be connected to the other man's comment that. "It's seven years for counterfeiting" because the life in Washington could have led someone to counterfeit to have enough money to fit in.

Passage 3

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

"So that is what you are doing out here? A marshal!" "My dear Miss Fairchild," said ' Easton, calmly, "I had to do something. Money has & way of taking wings unto itself, and

you know it takes money to keep step with our crowd in Washington. I saw this opening in the West, and—well, a marshalship isn't quite as high a position as that of ambassador, but—" "The ambassador," said the girl, warmly, "doesn't call any more. He needn't ever have done so. You ought to know that. And so now you are one of these dashing Western heroes, and you ride and shoot and go into all kinds of dangers. That's different from the Washington life. You have been missed from the old crowd." The girl's eyes, fascinated, went back, widening a little, to rest upon the glittering handcuffs. "Don't you worry about them, miss," said the other man. "All marshals handcuff themselves to their prisoners to keep them from getting away. Mr. Easton knows his business." "Will we see you again soon in Washington?" asked the girl. "Not soon, I think," said Easton. "My butterfly days are over, I fear."

Question 1.

What reason does Easton give for not keeping up with their crowd in Wahington?

Answer:

Easton tells Miss Fairchild that he had shifted to the west and had lost touch with his rich friends in Washington because he did not have enough money.

Question 2.

Easton says, "it takes money to keep step with our crowd in Washington." What do you suppose he means by this?

Answer:

These words by Mr Easton means that their friends in Washington were very rich and as he did not have that much money he was not fitted to be in their crowd.

Question 3.

What does Mr Easton say to Miss Fairchild to confirm that he is a marshal?

Answer:

Mr Easton in an attempt to remove all doubts about himself tells Miss Fairchild that he saw an opportunity to occupy a position of respect so he took the job of a marshal. He says, '—well, marshalship isn't quite as high a position as that of ambassador, but..'

Question 4.

Why do marshals handcuff themselves to their prisoners?

Answer:

All marshals handcuff themselves to their prisoners to keep them from escaping.

Question 5.

What does Mr Easton mean by the phrase, "My butterfly days are over, I fear."

Answer:

When Mr Easton says " My butterfly days are over," he is hinting at his future imprisonment. Miss Fairchild, however, thought he was referring to his social days.

Question 6.

Give three similarities between Mr Easton and a butterfly.

Answer:

Mr. Easton is now a marshal, he has gone from living on the East coast to living in the West, and he has a possibility of a relationship with Miss Fairchild. This is similar to a butterfly because of the metamorphosis a caterpillar goes through to become a butterfly, the migration butterflies take on, and how they search for other butterflies. Mr. Easton could also mean that he is not as fancy anymore since moving to the west where things are less refined. He is also has to wear handcuffs instead of being "free to fly" so to speak.

Passage 4

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

"I love the West," said the girl irrelevantly. Her eyes were shining softly. She looked away out the car window. She began to speak truly and simply without the gloss of style and manner: "Mamma and I spent the summer in Deliver. She went home a week ago

because father was slightly ill. I could live and be happy in the West. I think the air here agrees with me. Money isn't everything. But people always misunderstand things and remain stupid—" "Say, Mr. Marshal," growled the glum-faced man. "This isn't quite fair. I'm needing a drink, and haven't had a smoke all day. Haven't you talked long enough? Take me in the smoker now, won't you? I'm half dead for a pipe."

The bound travellers rose to their feet, Easton with the Same slow smile on his face. "I can't deny a petition for tobacco," he said, lightly. "It's the one friend of the unfortunate. Good-bye, Miss Fairchild. Duty calls, you know." He held out his hand for a farewell. "It's too bad you are not going East," she said, reclothing herself with manner and style. "But you must go on to Leavenworth, I suppose?" "Yes," said Easton, "I must go on to Leavenworth."

The two men sidled down the aisle into the smoker. The two passengers in a seat near by had heard most of the conversation. Said one of them: "That marshal's a good sort of chap. Some of these Western fellows are all right." "Pretty young to hold an office like that, isn't he?" asked the other. "Young!" exclaimed the first speaker, "why—Oh! didn't you catch on? Say—did you ever know an officer to handcuff a prisoner to his right hand?"

Question 1.

Why is Fairchild heading east?

Answer:

Miss Fairchild is heading east because her father is ill and now she is going to join her parents.

Question 2.

What does the glum faced man want to do and how does Easton take leave from Miss Fairchild?

Answer:

The glum faced man wants to smoke as he has not smoked the whole day. Mr Easton excuses himself from Miss Fairchild saying that he could not refuse the other man's request to smoke and he had to do his job of guarding the man.

Question 3.

What does the other passenger conclude about Easton?

Answer:

The passenger says that the marshal seems a decent guy but seems young to hold such a position.

Question 4.

What ironical twist is revealed by the other passenger in the end?

Answer:

In an ironical twist the other passenger in the end reveals the true identities of Mr. Easton and the marshal when he says that a marshal always cuff's prisoners to their left hand. The passenger says, 'did you ever know an officer to handcuff a prisoner to his right hand.' Thus we realize that Easton is not the marshal, he is the criminal.

Question 5.

Why is it ironic when Fairchild says, "people always misunderstand things and remain stupid —"?

Answer:

Yes it is ironic because she herself had not understood that Mr Easton was the criminal and not a marshal. She had been gullible and stupid not to realize the truth about her friend, reather she kept talking about him as if he was a hero. She had been fooled by appearances .

Assignment

Question 1.

What is the conflict and twist to the short story "Heart and Hands"?

Answer:

In "Hearts and Hands," the conflict and twist revolve around two men who are handcuffed to one another on a train in Denver. One of them is young and handsome, the other is older and glum-looking. They sit down across from a pretty young woman dressed very elegantly. Her name is Miss Fairchild. She recognizes the younger man as someone who used to run in the same social circles, Mr. Easton. Miss Fairchild implies that she used to have romantic feelings or attraction to Mr. Easton. There is a hint that Mr. Easton feels uncomfortable and embarrassed that she has recognized him and started talking to him.

Before he can say much else, the glum faced man stops him and tells the girl that Mr. Easton is a United States marshal, who is taking the glum faced man to prison at Leavenworth. He has been sentenced to seven years for counterfeiting. Miss Fairchild seems to be impressed by Mr. Easton's new job because he is now a "dashing Western hero."

The girl starts talking about irrelevant and fluffy things, and Mr. Easton seems to be becoming more and more uncomfortable. The glum faced man asks Mr. Easton to take him out to the smoker car for a smoke, which he complies with. The excuse allows the men to leave Miss Fairchild. When

they leave, the point of view shifts to two different passengers who had been listening to the conversation between Miss Fairchild, Mr. Easton, and the glum faced man. One of them remarks on how young the marshal is, and the other corrects the man. It was actually the glum faced man who was the marshal, and Mr. Easton who was going to prison for seven years for counterfeiting money. The detail was that Mr. Easton's right hand was cuffed to the marshal's left hand, when both men were right handed. Clearly, the marshal would choose to cuff his non-dominant hand to the prisoner's dominant one.

The twist comes at the end when we learn that the unnamed man is, in fact, the true marshal, and that Easton is the one heading to prison. The marshal does not want to humiliate Easton in front of an old friend by showing Miss Fairchild that Easton is the true convict.

A second twist comes at the very end when passengers who overheard the conversation, recognize that a marshal would never handcuff a man to his right hand. O'Henry shows us how we often ignore seemingly obvious details when the information is not appealing to us — two complete strangers picked up on Easton's character much quicker than an old friend.

Question 2.

Discuss theme of kindness and compassion in "Hearts and Hands" by O. Henry?

Answer:

In our society people generally hold the universal romanticized wish that people are intrinsically good and unselfish. This wish is exploited in the short story "Hearts and Hands." In fact, the title of this story suggests the theme that people will display "heart," or kindness, for others with no self-interest.

After they are seated across from the pretty young woman, the glum-faced man identifies the younger man handcuffed to him as the marshal. Miss Fairfield, who has recognized this younger one as her old friend, is relieved to know that he is no prisoner.

This glum-faced man asks Miss Fairfield to entreat the marshal to speak on his behalf when they reach Leavenworth prison. But, that it is he who possesses an unexpected kindness becomes known only in O. Henry's ironic reversal. For, two other passengers remark upon what has occurred about the two men who are handcuffed together. The 'one, who has overheard the glum-faced man identify the younger man as the marshal, remarks to the other about the kindness of this man:

"That marshal's a good sort of chap. Some of these Western fellows are all right."

"Pretty young to hold an office like that, isn't he?" asks the other man.

The first one exclaims with disbelief, "Young!...didn't you catch on? Say—did you ever know an officer to handcuff a prisoner to his right hand?"

Ironically, it has been the glum-faced man who is the marshal. But, he has extended kindness and "heart" to his prisoner by pretending to be the convict who is going to prison.

Question 3.

What is the primary purpose of "Hearts and Hands" by O. Henry?

Answer:

"Hearts and Hands" is a wonderful example of O. Henry's signature literary style of irony. It is like watching a magician performing sleight of hand.

There are three characters: a U.S. marshal, a fugitive, and a proper young lady. They have a chance meeting on a railroad car.

The young lady goes to shake hands with the younger of the two, for she recognizes him as a former acquaintance. He shows great regret at the need to take her hand with his left hand, as his right is tethered to that of the grizzled older man. It is her assumption that her well-mannered, stately friend is the marshal, thus leading to the assumption that the glum man is the fugitive.

It is only as the two exit to the smoker's car that another passenger points out the obvious. A marshal always keeps his right hand unshackled. It is at this point that O. Henry quite artfully points out that you cannot judge a book by its cover.

Question 4.

Discuss the theme of the story 'Hearts and Hands.'

Answer:

"Hearts and Hands" is a wonderfully ironic story by O. Henry. In the story, a passenger on a train in Denver named Miss Fairchild is seated across from an old acquaintance named Mr. Easton. She notes that Mr. Easton is handcuffed to an older, less attractive man, and the less attractive man asks her to intervene with the marshal, indicating Mr. Easton. Miss Fairchild believes that Mr. Easton is a marshal, a man of the law, and they have a conversation about old times. In the end, strangers on the train note that a marshal would never handcuff a man to his right hand. In other words, Mr. Easton is the prisoner, and the other man, older and heavier, is the marshal.

In many of his stories, O. Henry holds the universal romanticized wish that people are intrinsically good and unselfish. This wish is exploited in the short story "Hearts and Hands." In fact, the title of this story suggests the theme that people will display "heart," or kindness, for others with no self-interest. After they are seated across from the pretty young woman, the glum-faced man identifies the younger man handcuffed to him as the marshal. Miss Fairfield, who has recognized this younger one as one of her society, is relieved to know that he is no prisoner.

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Ironically, it has been the glum-faced man who is the marshal. But, he has extended kindness and "heart" to his prisoner by pretending to be the convict who is going to prison.

The other theme of the story is that appearances can be deceiving. Miss Fairchild believes that her old friend must be a marshal because she knows him and because he is young and attractive. However, the reality is quite different, as he is a prisoner. O. Henry suggests that people often jump to conclusions that aren't true.

When they leave, the point of view shifts to two different passengers who had been listening to the conversation between Miss Fairchild, Mr. Easton, and the glum faced man. One of them remarks on how young the marshal is, and the other corrects the mistake. It was actually the glum faced man who was the marshal, and Mr. Easton who was going to prison for seven years for counterfeiting money. The detail was that Mr. Easton's right hand was cuffed to the marshal's left

hand, when both men were right handed. Clearly, the marshal would choose to cuff his non-dominant hand to the prisoner's dominant one.

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