

Chapter 3

The Letter

Q.1 Look at the picture of the old man given below:



Working with your partner note down the feelings of the old man.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Answer :

- Sad
- Gloomy
- Repentant
- Disappointed

Q. 2 Can you think of reasons for these feelings? Discuss with your partner and note down possible reasons.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Answer :

- He is sad due to poverty, loss of a family member etc.
- He is gloomy due to his misfortunes and loneliness
- He is repentant due to past inactions and unsolved conflict
- He is disappointed because he has lost much in his life, he is limited by old age

Q. 3 Now read the story given below. Your teacher will use a variety of techniques for different parts of the story e.g.

- Silent reading
- One student reading aloud to the whole class
- Students reading in small groups
- Dramatised reading in small groups

Ans.: Please read from the book.

Q. 4 A Ali's walking to the Post Office daily even in biting cold weather shows his _____.

- A. courage
- B. optimism
- C. foolishness
- D. strength of will

Answer :

optimism, enabled by faith and hope for the letter which may never arrive.

Q. 4 B The Post Office is referred to as Ali's "place of pilgrimage" as he _____.

- A. visited it daily
- B. came there to pray for a letter from his daughter
- C. went there with faith and hope
- D. believed God would bless him if he went there

Ans.: went there with faith and hope. This is because he had limitless faith and patience that he would receive a letter from his long-lost daughter one day.

Q.4C The Post Master's rudeness to Ali reveals his _____.

- A. lack of empathy
- B. preoccupation with his work
- C. preconceived notions
- D. sensitivity

Ans.: lack of empathy, because the Post master believed that men like Ali were madmen who lived in a world of their own. So he behaved rudely and insensitively to Ali for annoying him.

Q. 4 D Ali did not come to the Post Office for several days as _____.

- A. he had given up hope
- B. he was upset by the Post Master's rebuke
- C. he was unwell and not able to walk to the Post Office
- D. he was busy hunting

Ans.: He was unwell and not able to walk to the Post Office. This is revealed when he turns up suddenly, struggling to breathe and close to death.

Q.4E "Tortured by doubt and remorse, he sat down in the glow of the charcoal sigri to wait."

The Post Master was waiting for_____.

- A. a letter from Miriam
- B. a letter from his own daughter
- C. a letter from Ali
- D. Ali to deliver Miriam's letter to him.

Ans.: A letter from his own daughter, because he had finally realized that he had misunderstood Ali's anxiety and pain when he was alive and was now suffering from the same anxiety. He was waiting anxiously for his own ill daughter's letter.

Q.5A Answer the following questions briefly.

Who was Ali? Where did he go daily?

Ans.: Ali was an old man who wore tattered clothing and walked with the support of an old staff.

He went to the Post Office at 4 o'clock daily to wait for a letter from his daughter, Miriam whom he had not heard from for five years, no matter the weather, or season.

Q.5B Answer the following questions briefly.

"Ali displays qualities of love and patience". Give evidence from the story to support the statement.

Ans.: Ali, a feeble old man was the embodiment of love and patience because he walked to the Post Office daily, at 4 o'clock every day, for the last five years. He did not care if the weather was bad, because when the story begins, we see that it is was a chilly winter morning and Ali was wearing tattered clothing, with no shawl for protection against the cold. The only thing that kept him going was his firmness of purpose, and boundless determination to receive a letter from his daughter whom he loved.

Q.5C Answer the following questions briefly.

How do you know Ali was a familiar figure at the post office?

Ans.: Ali was a familiar figure at the post office because he was nicknamed 'Coachman Ali' by the clerk for his persistence and undying patience in waiting for a letter which had not come for the last five years. The clerk told the postmaster that Ali was a madman who used to arrive every day for the non-existent letter. Everybody used to laugh at Ali for occupying the same bench(for the last five years) to wait for the letter and the postmen began to call out his name for fun to watch him rush to the door eagerly only to come back empty-handed.

Q.5D Answer the following questions briefly.

Why did Ali give up hunting?

Ans.: Ali was a skilled hunter with amazing eye-sight and clever enough to spot his prey before his hunting dogs could smell it. He was very devoted to his sport and grew more skilled daily. When he neared his old age, his only daughter Miriam, married a soldier and left to live in his regiment. He was left alone and miserable since he had no news of her for the last five years. He lost interest in hunting. The earlier pleasure that he felt while hunting along with his skills were also forgotten because the pain of separation had made his life meaningless. He began to reflect deeply and focused on nature to find solace in his loneliness.

Q.5E Answer the following questions briefly.

What impression do you form of the postmaster after reading the story 'The Letter'?

Ans.: The post-master was a man who looked sad and dull most of the time. He appeared to be arrogant, impatient, haughty, insensitive and ill-mannered because he behaved rudely with Ali, irritated by his presence. He could not understand why Ali was so persistent in waiting for his daughter's letter and appeared to be insensitive to his plight. When he

heard news of his own daughter's ill health, his trauma, anxiety, and impatience to hear from her made him sympathize with Ali because he was suffering from the same anxiety from separation. He felt remorseful for his behaviour to Ali and realized the emotions conveyed in the letters and postcards.

Q.5F Answer the following questions briefly.

The postmaster says to Ali, "What a pest you are, brother!" Do you agree with the statement? Give reasons for your answer.

Ans.: Ali is by no means a 'pest'. His firmness of purpose, sheer determination, undying hope and patience, strong faith, endurance, deep love for his daughter is admirable and create a deep impression on the readers. Ali was old, feeble, and isolated but his love for his daughter and desire to receive news of her well-being in her letter gives him a purpose in his life. His remaining years and existence depend on receiving his daughter's letter which would give hope to his meaningless life and heal his suffering and pain. He does not give up, despite all odds and hopelessness, and returns to the post office daily to wait for his letter, even if he is hurt by the postmaster's rebuking and jeering of others. When he nears his final days, he begs the clerk to deliver his letter to his grave.

Q.5G Answer the following questions briefly.

"Ali came out very slowly, turning after every few steps to gaze at the post office.

His eyes were filled with tears of helplessness, for his patience was exhausted, even though he still had faith." Why were Ali's eyes filled with tears of helplessness? What had exhausted his patience but not his faith?

Ans.: Ali realized that he was nearing his death. He was exhausted and his patience was running out. His body was weak and incapable of travelling on foot to the post office daily. He had waited patiently for his daughter's letter but now his final day had come. He still had faith,

however, that his daughter would send him the letter after he died, so he travelled to the post office, one last time, to beg the postmaster to note down his daughter's name in the register, but he was turned away by the postmaster who was indifferent to his plight, so his eyes were full of tears of helplessness.

Q.5H Answer the following questions briefly.

"Tortured by doubt and remorse, he sat down in the glow of the charcoal sigri to wait." Who is tortured by doubt and remorse? Why? What is he waiting for?

Ans.: The postmaster was tortured by doubt and remorse. He was currently waiting for a letter from his daughter who was ill and lived far away from him. He was feeling remorseful because he had been unsympathetic and indifferent to a father's anxiety and suffering from the separation that he was currently suffering from. Ali had waited patiently for a letter from his daughter for five long years in spite of his old age, poor health, weather, constant disappointment and hopelessness, and pain of isolation but the postmaster had rudely rejected the old man's efforts and endurance. Now he felt doubtful of his daughter's health and the arrival of her letter because he was haunted by grief and regret.

Q.6 The writer carefully builds up an atmosphere of loneliness and grief in the story. Working in groups, pick out words/ phrases from the story that builds up the atmosphere. Copy the following table in your notebook and complete it.

Loneliness	Grief
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An old man was walking through the town, now and again drawing his tattered clothes tighter to shield his body from the cold and biting wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the whole town was wrapped in deathly silence.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • his lonely way 	
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Ans.:

Loneliness	Grief
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An old man was walking through the town, now and again drawing his tattered clothes tighter to shield his body from the cold and biting wind • his lonely way • supporting himself on his old staff • The old man went back slowly to the bench on which he had been accustomed to sit for five long years, • The dragged along a cheerless existence • he would become lost in the admiration of the green cornfield • he doesn't get many letters • To my grave • I have had no letter from her, • he sat down in the glow of the charcoal sigri to wait 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the whole town was wrapped in deathly silence. • a false friend lulls his chosen victim with caressing smiles • The sky was darker now and the cold more intense, for the the wind was blowing straight along the road, on which they fell like frozen snow • He could no longer enjoy the sportsman's pleasure • forgetting his sport • the grief of separation is inescapable • wept bitterly • went away empty-handed • inexpressive as a pumpkin • no • a glimmer of animation in his features • His eyes were filled with tears of helplessness • suffering father's heart • another night of restless anxiety

Q.7 Complete the table by explaining the following phrases/ sentences in your own words:

Ans.:

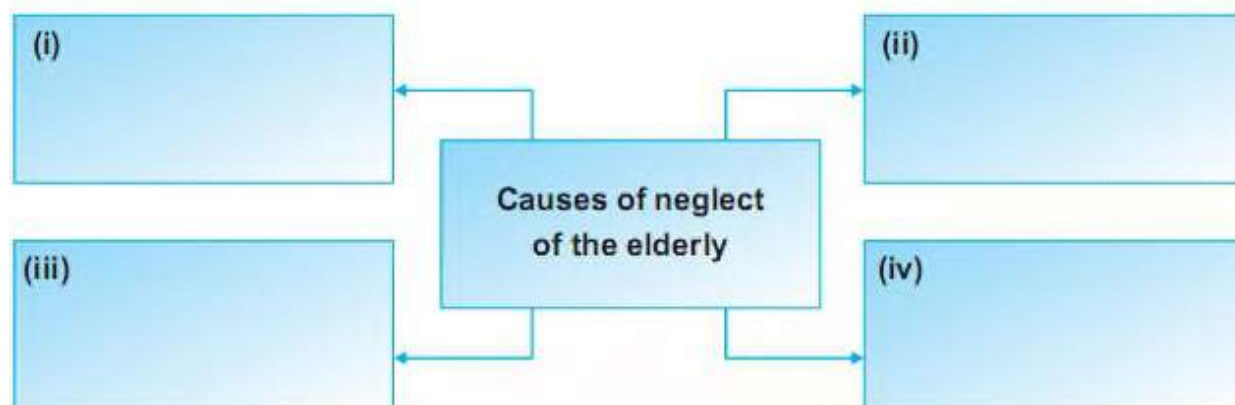
Phrases	Meanings
happy memories light up a life that is nearing its close	Near the end of one's life, happy memories of time spent with loved ones lights up an individual's passing and relieve him of suffering and pain usually associated with death.
The cold used to sleep to extend its sway overall things even as a false friend lulls his chosen victim with caressing smiles	In the winter season, cold is Intense and sleep is deeper. The winter cold made the village inhabitants extend their sleep, with the risk of freezing to death just like a false friend who entices you to believe him and later betrays you.
when the evening of his life was drawing in, he left his old ways and suddenly took a new turn	When Ali became old, he stopped his hunting activities which formed a major part of his youth. He took a new turn in his life because his daughter married and left him alone. He had realized the meaning of love and separation.
The whole universe is built up through love and that the grief of separation is inescapable	Upon his daughter's departure, Ali reflected deeply on the meaning of life and realized that love was the primary element that held the universe together, and grief of

	separation is inevitable and part of life.
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the post-master, a man with a face as sad and as inexpressive as a pumpkin, would be seen sitting on his chair inside	A cold-hearted, unexpressive man who is unsympathetic to the plight of others
And so the clerk, like a worshipper of Vishnu, repeated his customary thousand names	The clerk fulfilled his customary duties at the post office.
The haughty temper of the official had quite left him in his sorrow and anxiety and had laid bare his human heart	The postmaster was left magazine and grief-stricken by the temper of the office just as Ali had been at his. (post master's behaviour)

Q.8 Now you are going to listen to an article about the break-up of the Joint Family system in India.

As you listen to the passage complete the boxes given below.



Answer :

(i) Breaking apart of the family due to marriage and conflicts

(ii) Changing environment and house

(iii) poverty and loss of livelihood, pending pension

(iv) lack of sympathy

Q.9 Tortured by doubt and remorse, the postmaster sits in the glow of a charcoal sigri that night, waiting for news of his daughter. As he sits, he writes his diary.

As the postmaster, write a diary entry in about 150 words outlining your feelings about the day's events.

Ans.: It has been 3 months since Ali passed away and I can't help but think about the plight of that poor lad. I wish I had been kinder to him and more sensitive to his condition. The prolonged separation from his daughter had caused severe depression and loneliness in that man's life. He died waiting for the news of his daughter and I could not even understand the pain in his heart. Now I feel a lot of regrets and am repenting my earlier actions. May God bless his soul so that he may rest in peace. Now, I understand the pain of loneliness and separation because his face was torn stained. My insensitivity has brought on this guilt in my heart and now I too must suffer the anxiety that Ali went through. I only wish that the news of my daughter arrives soon.

Q.10A The postmaster believes that he saw Ali. What do you think? Discuss with your partner and present your views in front of the class.

Ans.: The postmaster believed that Ali was a madman because he came to the post office daily to wait for his daughter's letter and repeat this routine for five years. He was astonished one day to find that Ali's daughter had indeed sent him a letter. He waited patiently for Ali to arrive

so that he could deliver his letter himself. When Ali arrived he realized that it had been Ali's ghost. It must have been a figment of the postmaster's imagination arising from his guilty conscience and his regret of his earlier insensitivity to Ali's suffering.

Q.10B The postmaster was anxiously waiting for his ailing daughter's news. On not getting any news he visits his daughter's town. Now construct a dialogue between the postmaster and his daughter and enact it.

Ans.: Postmaster- Hello my child! How are you doing?

Daughter-(sitting up abruptly) Oh Father! I am fine. You look very anxious. What is the matter?

Postmaster- You did not send a letter so I was very worried about your health. I could not sleep for many nights.

Daughter-(holding his hand in hers, smiling) Father, I am feeling much better now. The doctor said that it was a normal fever, nothing too serious. Do not worry anymore.

Postmaster- I am your father, my dear. I feel worried all the time for my only child. You are the apple of my eye and my bundle of joy. I was very anxious when I didn't hear any news from you, so I hurried to see you.

Daughter- I am sorry for not writing. I did not want you to worry by doing so, but as a result, you had to rush over instead. Don't worry now, it is not serious.

Postmaster- I am relieved now since I have seen you myself. But please, in the future, do not hesitate to write to me whenever you are in trouble or have fallen ill. Your health and well-being is my highest priority. You are very dear to me.

Daughter- Alright, I promise Father. Please cheer up now.