

Essays - 1.

My Watch

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Q. 1 What was the importance of the watch to the author?

Answer:

The watch seemed to be of great importance to the author. The author's watch had worked properly and flawlessly for eighteen months before he had let it run down. The watch always showed him the correct time which helped him to be punctual. The author had started to believe that the prediction made by the watch was infallible and he considered the constitution and the anatomy of his watch to be indestructible.

Q. 2 What were the attempts made by the author to get his watch repaired?

Answer:

The author's watch had worked perfectly for eighteen months before he had let it run down. The author felt devastated and tried to get his watch repaired the very next day from a chief jeweler's shop to set the watch to the correct time. The head of the establishment tried to repair it even though the author told him to leave the watch alone, but ended up worsening the condition of the watch. After that, the watch started to work faster than before and went ahead of time. After two months, the author took the watch to the watchmaker to have it regulated who kept the watch with him for a week and the speed was slowed down more than necessary. He then took it to another watch maker who said that the barrel was 'swelled' and he would need three days to repair it. The author took the watch to another watch maker who said that the king bolt was broken and repaired it and then to a different watch maker again. Then at last, the watch was taken to another watch maker who used to be a steam-boat engineer.

The author made a number of attempts to restore his watch by taking it to seven different people.

Q. 3 Why did the author finally give up on his watch?

Answer:

The author had used his watch for eighteen months before it had run down and made many attempts to repair the watch by taking it to seven different people to get it repaired. After taking the watch to so many different people for repairing, the watch could not be restored to its previous condition. So also, the watch had cost the author two hundred dollars, but the repairs had cost up to two or three thousand dollars. The author then also understood what his Uncle Williams meant when he had told him about a good horse being a good horse only till it had run away once.

Q. 4 What was Uncle Williams' comment on the 'tinkerers' of the world?

Answer:

The author had tried to get his watch repaired when it had run down after functioning efficiently for eighteen months. The author gave up on his watch after he took it to seven different people and spent around two or three thousand dollars on the repairs when the watch had cost him two hundred dollars only. He had understood then what his Uncle Williams had once said to him. Uncle Williams said that 'a good horse was a good horse until it had run away once'. Relating to it, the author realized that a good watch was a good watch only till it had run away once and then had fallen into the hands of numerous repairers. The unsuccessful tinkers in the world are not able to specialize in anything even if they may know something about many things. The author's Uncle Williams used to wonder about what would happen to the gunsmiths, shoe-makers, engineers and blacksmiths who became useless tinkers. Thus, Uncle

Williams had implied by his comment, that the tinkers were useless as they were not able to specialize in a particular skill.

Q. 5 A

Explain these lines -

‘I seemed to detect in myself a sort of sneaking fellow-feeling for the mummy in the museum, and a desire to swap news with him.’

Answer:

After working efficiently for eighteen months, the author let his watch run down. The author tried to get his watch repaired seven times by different people. When the author had given the watch to be repaired for the second time, the author got his watch back after one week. Instead of getting adjusted to the right time, the watch slowed down which resulted in the author missing his appointments and the author felt like he was going into yesterday, going even more backwards into time, feeling lonely. The author kept going back into the past and staying there because of the wrong time shown by his watch. Mark Twain tries to relate his situation to that of a mummy from the past years and says that he could relate to and could befriend a mummy lying in a museum, eager to exchange news with him.

Q. 5 B

Explain these lines -

‘Within a week it sickened to a raging fever and its pulse went up to a hundred and fifty in the shade.’

Answer:

The author possessed a watch that ran down after it worked properly for eighteen months and he took the watch to the chief jeweler to get it repaired and set it to the right time, as it had become slow and was behind the time. The head of the establishment ignored the author when

he told him to leave his watch alone. After that incident, the watch became faster than it should be and the author used symbolism when he says that the watch 'sickened to raging fever and its pulse went up to a hundred and fifty in the shade'.

Q. 5 C

Explain these lines -

‘She makes too much steam—you want to hang the monkey wrench on the safety valve!’

Answer:

The author had brought a watch and it had worked flawlessly for eighteen months, before he let the watch run down. He got the watch repaired seven times from seven different people in hopes of restoring the watch to its original condition. The last person to whom the watch was taken, had been a steam-engineer in the past. He was an old acquaintance of the author's and he wasn't a very good engineer in his days. When he saw how hopeless it was to repair the watch, he told the author 'she makes too much steam' and that he wants to 'hang the monkey wrench on the safety valve'.

TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT

Q. 1 Discuss in pairs or groups of four

Replacing old machines with new is better than getting them repaired.

Answer:

Whenever we are using an old machine, and it starts malfunctioning, we find ourselves facing an important question. Should the machine be repaired or should it be replaced?

Many a times, if the malfunctioning is on a very minimal scale, it is ignored. But if it is causing a problem, we get it repaired. An old machine had already been repaired quite a lot of times in order to

maintain it and to use the same machine instead of buying a new one. But what needs to be thought of and considered, is that sometimes machines get spoilt frequently as they get old and eventually it can be seen that more money has been spent in order to repair the old machine than what was needed to buy the machine. In order to save money and to have a more efficiently and properly functioning machine, the old machine could always be replaced by a new one, thus saving the costs for the repairing of the old machine as well as increasing the efficiency of the machine. Thus, sometimes replacing old machines with new is better than getting them repaired.

Q. 2 Discuss in pairs or groups of four

It is difficult to part with personal items like a watch which have a sentimental value attached to them.

Answer:

Sometimes, we get attached to materialistic things that we hold close to our heart, like a gift from a loved one or something you really love with all your heart. We often find these things around us all the time. If we do not find them, or if they stop functioning, it causes us pain, because we tend to get emotionally attached to that personal item and start loving it, just like people love each other. These personal things hold a lot of sentimental value to us and we cannot even think about not having them with us. For example, if a doll was gifted to a girl by her father, she could have attached to the doll and hold sentimental value for it as it was given to her by someone who loved and cared for her. If the girl grew up and was asked to separate from the doll, it could be difficult for her to do so, as she held the sentimental value of the doll close to her heart and if she separated from the doll, she could feel like she was separating from something she loved truly with her heart.

So, people often find it to be difficult to part with personal items that have a sentimental value attached to them.

APPRECIATION

Q. 1 How is humour employed to comment on the pains that the author took to get his watch set right?

Answer:

While narrating the story of how the author's watch was repaired by seven different people and still did not get repaired, the author uses humour to grab the attention of the readers and to keep them entertained. It is funny to see how all them try to repair the watches, but are unable to do so which makes them the 'Jack' of all trades, but a master of none. In their tries of repairing the watch, it was just spoilt more and more and the author understood what his Uncle Williams said about tinkers when he said that 'a good horse was a good horse until it had run away once'. The author also tries to relate his situation to that of a mummy in a museum when the watch was moving slow and was behind time.

The subtle humour employed to comment on the pains that the author took to get his watch set right keeps the story light, enjoyable and entertaining for the readers.

Q. 2 'The author's treatment of the subject matter makes the readers identify themselves with the experience.' Comment on this statement.

Answer:

The author of this story, 'Mark Twain', which is a pseudonym for 'Samuel Clemens', had not received schooling and education for more than ten years; he had worked as a steamboat pilot, a prospector and also as a printer's apprentice. The stories written by Mark Twain were such that they had a twist of humour to them, while the plot of the stories was natural; something that could easily see to be happening with any other human being. The way in which he writes his stories, makes the readers attached to it and get connected to it in a certain manner because they might've experienced the happenings of the story at some point in time,

must've seen someone else experiencing those happenings or they could easily imagine the happenings in the story due to the easy understanding of the plot as it would be related to day to day incidents occurring in people's lives.

Thus, 'the author's treatment of the subject matter makes the readers identify themselves with the experience'.

Q. 3 Identify some of the improbable images the author has used to effect greater humour.

Answer:

The author has used great humour to describe the trouble he goes through to get his watch repaired seven times from seven different people after it had run properly for eighteen months and had eventually run down. The author uses exaggeration to add humour to the story in certain places to keep the readers entertained. The author uses hyperbole to add humour when he says that he feels like he is going back in time because it is physically and practically impossible to go back in time. It is funny when he describes his watch as having a fever and is enjoying the season of snow before it had even arrived. It is hilarious that the author compares his situation to that of a bygone and old mummy lying in a museum.

Thus, the improbable images put forth in the story by the author add to the humorous element of the story.

LANGUAGE WORK

Q. 1 Make a list of the expressions that imbue the watch with human attributes.

Answer:

The following is the list of some expressions that have brought about human attributes in the watch (personification):

i). "infallible in its judgment"

ii). "she is four minutes slow"

iii). "it sickened to a raging fever and its pulse went up to a hundred and fifty in the shade"

iv). "It was away into November enjoying the snow, while the October leaves were still turning"

v). " it would go like the very mischief, and keep up such a barking and wheezing and whooping and sneezing and snorting"

vi). " She makes too much steam— you want to hang the monkey-wrench on the safety-valve!"