








The Tragedy of Birlstone

Unit-5 : Solutions of Questions on Page Number : 99

Q1 : Look at the picture below and list some phrases and words that come to your mind when you look at it.

Answer :

A man, probably dead, is lying on the floor.

The three men, taking a look at the dead man, are probably detectives.

The man's hands are cuffed. His death is possibly a murder.

He has been brutally beaten to death as there is lot of blood on the ground.

The man was hit by a rod, which is lying beside him on the ground.

The victim is either a burglar who broke into the house or the owner himself. He must have got killed in a brawl with the other one.

Q2 : Did the man die a natural death or was he murdered?

Answer :

It is difficult to say that the man died a natural death. He seems to have been killed. His hands are cuffed and there is blood on the floor. There is a rod beside him, probably he has been hit on the head and brought to death.

Q3 : Was the dead man rich or poor?

Answer :

It is difficult to say on the basis of the photograph alone whether the man was rich or poor. His body is lying near the mantelpiece. Maybe he broke into the house where his body was found, as he possibly got killed in a brawl with the owner of the house. It is also possible that a thief broke into the house and killed the owner in a scuffle.

Q4 : Who is the man bending over him?

Answer :

The man bending over with the other two men is possibly a detective who is investigating the murder mystery. He is taking a keen look of the body and the other two men possibly are his assistants accompanying him to solve the case.

Q5 : Here are a police constable's notes of his investigation of the murder at Manor House. After reading the notes, discuss where the murder could have taken place. What was the motive behind the evil act? How was the act committed?

Answer :

According to the notes the murder took place at the Manor House, Birlstone, on January the sixth. It is hard to conclude who died as the notes only say that the man was horribly injured and had terrible marks. There is no further information provided about the man. Yet it is possible that the lord died as the servants were white faced. The butler also seemed really frightened. There is no information of where the lord was. So possibly the lord died. There is no remark that reveals the motive behind the murder. Even the cause of death or how the murder took place is not known yet. All that is known so far is that there is a state of wild confusion and alarm at the Manor House.

Q6 : The only change in Birlstone in years has been _____.

- a. the opening of a few shops.
- b. the timbered cottages.
- c. an improvement in its picturesque appearance.
- d. a number of well-to-do residents have settled there.

Answer :

- d. a number of well-to-do residents have settled there.

Q7 : The Manor House stood out because of its _____.

- a. diamond-paned windows.
- b. huge beech trees.
- c. drawbridge and windows.
- d. residents.

Answer :

- b. huge beech trees.

Q8 : John Douglas had won quite a reputation for himself in Birlstone because of his _____.

- a. genial temperament.
- b. Manor House.
- c. his wealth.
- d. his beautiful wife.

Answer :

- c. his wealth.

Q9 : Cecil Barker's first reaction at the sight of the dead Douglas was to _____.

- a. inform Mr Woods.
- b. stop Mrs Douglas from seeing the dead body.
- c. call for help.
- d. observe the open door.

Answer :

- b. stop Mrs Douglas from seeing the dead body.

Q10 : In B.3 you read an eye-witness account of a robbery. On the basis of your reading of the Birlstone tragedy, in about 125 words, write Dr Wood's account of the discovery of John Douglas's body.

A model answer has been provided for students' reference.

It is strongly recommended that students prepare the answer on their own.

January 6th, it was half past eleven, the Manor House in Birlstone, a gun shot was fired and Mr. Douglas was dead; as told by Cecil Barker. The Douglas family had only two members, the husband and the wife. The only outsider who was a welcome visitor was Cecil Barker. At the time of murder, Barker was in his bedroom. On hearing the fire, he rushed down the staircase and after him came Mrs. Douglas on hearing the same sound. C Barker's immediate reaction was to stop Mrs. Douglas from seeing the dead body. The door was open, as told by C Barker. Also the draw bridge was raised at 6 o'clock and was up all the night. So, if anyone came from outside, he/she must have got across the bridge before six and had been hiding ever since. The person was waiting and shot Douglas when he/she could. As Barker said, the diamond panned window was open to its full extent. He speculated that it was not a suicide; the murderer probably escaped by the window and wadded across the moat. It is hard to point out anyone from the House or if it was a burglar who broke into and killed Douglas. Investigation is still going on.