

A Shady Plot

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Lesson at a Glance

- Jenkins asked John Hallock to write another ghost story.
- Public wants 'horror' in stories and John must write what the public wants.
- John was not in a position to refuse Jenkins. His magazine was the only one to print his ghost stories.
- John Hallock didn't specialise in ghost stories but a ghost story had been his first fiction.
- Somehow John was able to write a ghost story for Jenkins whenever he asked for it.
- So he went home and sat down before his desk but he was not inspired to write anything.
- When he was struggling to write a voice was heard at the end of the door.
- John looked around and noticed that something was just taking shape. She was developing like the moving cartoons being put together.
- First an arm came out, then a sleeve, then a leg. Finally, a complete long and angular woman stood before his eyes. She was Helen, the ghost.
- John sat still, feeling quite helpless.
- The ghost (Helen) told John that he should stop troubling the spirits for help.
- John would not get any help or inspiration from the spirits. Nor he would get any other plots for writing a story.
- She (the ghost) told John that she was a writer in her previous life.
- She told John that she joined others like her and they organised 'The Writer's Inspiration Bureau'.
- They (spirits/ghosts) searched around until they found 'a writer without ideas and with a mind soft enough to accept impression'.
- Helen replied that from then onwards all the spirits would be on strike and John would get no help from them.
- Many people manipulated Ouija boards to talk to spirits or ghosts.
- Those who operate on Ouija boards to talk to spirits (ghosts) had troubled them too much. The spirits were always busy in answering their questions.
- She asked John to use his influence. He should persuade his friends not to use Ouija boards for talking to the spirits.
- She reminded John that they (spirits or ghosts) would again start helping him if he persuaded his friends to stop using Ouija boards.
- John heard his wife Lavinia calling him. He asked the ghost (Helen) to leave before his wife came.
- The ghost nodded and disappeared before his wife entered the room.
- The narrator's wife Lavinia bought a Ouija-board and she was thrilled to have it.

- John didn't like the foolish act of his wife.
- Lavinia told her husband that he could talk to Napoleon or Helen of Troy by talking to his Ouija board.
- The Ouija board could make writing of short stories easier.
- The narrator didn't believe in Ouija boards.
- John's cook Gladolia came. She told him that Lavinia wanted him to join the Ouija board party.
- The room was full of women who were manipulating Ouija boards.
- The ladies were sitting in couples and between each couple was a Ouija board.
- The narrator's wife requested John to help Miss Laura Hinkle as she was without a partner.
- The narrator didn't want to be a partner of flirtatious Laura Hinkle.
- Laura Hinkle bent over the Ouija board and the board spelled out loudly. "T-r-a-i-t-o-r. Traitor!"
- Laura couldn't understand and requested the Ouija board to explain himself more fully.
- The board answered : 'A-s-k-h-i-m!'
- Laura asked : "Ouija, won't you tell us who is talking?"
- Miss Laura Hinkle could again get an answer : "H-e-l-e-n".
- Soon the ladies present there started whispering. Someone giving the name of Helen had just been calling John Hallock's name.
- All the five Ouija boards were calling John by name.
- There was whispering that John was flirting with Helen on the Ouija board.
- The narrator's wife looked at her husband angrily as if he were some peculiar insect.
- At the breakfast table the next morning there was no sign of narrator's wife.
- She left a slip of paper for him. He read that she was going back to her grandmother. Her lawyer would communicate with him later.
- John was so upset that he wished he was dead.
- Then a horrible voice cried from the other end of the room.
- He found Helen, the ghost standing there.
- She had been sent there to ask John when his wife would get rid of Ouija board.
- Then John's cook Galadolia announced that she was leaving the house. She was scared of hoodoos and Ouija boards.
- John blamed Helen, the ghost. She was responsible for the loss of his wife, home, cook and peace.
- The door opened and Lavinia entered. She told him that she was leaving the house.
- The narrator didn't want his wife to see the ghost in her room.
- Lavinia accused her husband John (the narrator) of flirting over the Ouija board with Helen.
- John assured her of his honesty but he did not want Lavinia to see the ghost there.
- Lavinia said : "I will see who's behind you! Where is that Helen?"
- The ghost replied : "Me? I am Helen"
- Lavinia looked at the ghost. She was not beautiful like Helen of Troy but looked owl-eyed and not at all beautiful.
- Lavinia didn't faint but gave a broad and satisfied smile. She was not afraid of the ghost now.
- Helen, the ghost disappeared quickly.
- Lavinia fell forgivingly in her husband's arms. He kissed twice passionately.
- The narrator got an excellent plot for a ghost story.

SUMMARY OF THE LESSON

► Jenkins Asks John Hallock to Write a Ghost Story

Jenkins asked the narrator, John Hallock to write another ghost story on the supernatural. This time he wanted John to give exactly “what the public wanted.” He wanted to give them ‘the horrors’ or something really sensational. John was not in a position to refuse Jenkins. His magazine was the only one to print his stories. John didn’t specialise in ghost stories but somehow he managed to write them. He had not the shade of idea for writing another ghost story but that didn’t worry him. He hoped that as had happened in the past, he would find some plot to write a new ghost story. And somehow he would dig up something new. Moreover, John needed money for paying the landlord and the grocer. Therefore, he accepted the offer of writing a ghost story.

► Appearance of Helen’s Ghost

John sat down before his desk and waited for ideas. But nothing happened. He couldn’t get any idea or plot to develop a ghost story. He was helpless. A voice replied at the other end. John jumped up in surprise and looked around. He noticed something just taking shape. First an arm came out, then a sleeve, then a leg. And in the end there stood a complete figure of a woman. She was angular and tall. She had big fishy eyes behind big bone-rimmed spectacle. She looked solid and real. For a moment John doubted his very own senses.

► Aim of Helen, the Ghost

Helen had come there to tell him that he should stop bothering the spirits for any kind of help. He would not get any help from them in future. They were going on strike. John would not get any creative inspiration or another plot for writing a ghost story from them. The narrator asked if all his ideas and plots had been coming from them. Helen, the ghost replied that all his creative

► Jenkins, John Hallock को एक प्रेत कथा लिखने को कहता है

Jenkins ने कथाकार John Hallock को अलौकिक विषय पर एक और प्रेत कहानी लिखने के लिए कहा। इस बार वह चाहता था कि John वही लिखे “जो लोग चाहते हैं।” वह उन्हें कोई ‘खौफनाक’ या वास्तव में सनसनीखेज देना चाहता था। John इस अवस्था में नहीं था कि वह Jenkins का विरोध कर पाता। केवल उसकी पत्रिका ही उसकी (John की) कहानियाँ छापती थी। John प्रेत कहानियों का विशेषज्ञ नहीं था फिर भी वह किसी न किसी प्रकार उन्हें लिख लेता था। उसे दूसरी प्रेतकथा लिखने का कोई भी विचार नहीं आया परन्तु वह इस से चिंतित नहीं हुआ। और किसी तरह वह किसी नयी कहानी को खोद निकालेगा। इसके अतिरिक्त, उसे अपने मकान-मालिक और पंसारी का भुगतान करने के लिये पैसे की आवश्यकता थी। इसलिए उसने एक भूत-कहानी को लिखना स्वीकार कर लिया।

► Helen के भूत का प्रगट होना

John अपने डेस्क पर बैठ गया और विचारों के आने की प्रतीक्षा करने लगा। लेकिन ऐसा कुछ भी नहीं हुआ। एक भूत-कहानी का विकास करने के लिये उसे कोई विचार या विषय-वस्तु नहीं मिल पा रही थी। वह असहाय था। दूसरे सिरे से एक आवाज आयी। John आश्चर्य से ‘कूद पड़ा और चारों ओर देखा। उसने अभी-अभी किसी चीज को रूप धारण करते हुए देखा। पहले एक भुजा निकली, फिर बाँह, फिर एक टांगा और अंत में एक पूरी औरत की शक्ल वहां खड़ी थी। वह दुबली पतली और लम्बी थी। उसकी हड्डियों से बने बड़े रिम के बने चश्मों के पीछे बड़ी-बड़ी मछलीनुमा (सन्देहजनक) आँखें थीं। वह इतनी ठोस और वास्तविक लगती थी। John को क्षणभर अपनी ही इंद्रियों पर शक हो गया था।

► Helen के भूत का उद्देश्य

Helen उसे यह बताने वहां आयी थी कि वह भविष्य में भूतों (आत्माओं) से किसी प्रकार की सहायता का विचार त्याग दे। उसे भविष्य में किसी प्रकार की सहायता नहीं मिलेगी। वे हड़ताल करने जा रहे हैं। John को उनसे किसी प्रकार के रचनात्मक प्रेरणा या कोई प्रेत-कथा लिखने के लिए विषय-वस्तु प्राप्त नहीं होगी। लेखक ने पूछा कि क्या उसके सभी विचार या विषय-वस्तुएँ उन्हीं से प्राप्त हो रही थी। Helen के भूत ने उत्तर दिया कि उसको सभी रचनात्मक प्रेरणा उन जैसी प्रेत-आत्माओं से प्राप्त हो रही

inspiration and plots came from the spirits like her. He could write only because he received inspiration from them. Now the spirits were compelled to go on strike because of the troubles they received from 'Ouija board fanatics.' They (spirits) have to answer their questions. She asked John Hallock that he should persuade his friends and acquaintances to stop using the Ouija boards. If he stopped them using Ouija boards, they would start helping him.

► Ouija Board Party at Lavinia's House

John's wife Lavinia was very much excited. She bought a new thing. She called it the 'duckiest and darlingest' Ouija board. It was a spelling board. It could communicate to the dead, the ghosts or spirits. The dead spirits gave answer to the questions. John considered her wife's act just foolish. Lavinia told John that he could use her Ouija-board to write his stories. Through the Ouija board he could talk to Napoleon or Helen of Troy. John asked his wife to get rid of that Ouija board. Lavinia had no such intention. On the other hand, she had arranged an Ouija board party. There were five pairs of ladies and between each couple was a Ouija board. Lavinia asked John to join Laura Hinkle. She was without a partner. John was reluctant to be a partner of flirtatious Laura.

► John Suspected of Flirting on Ouija board

Laura Hinkle was manipulating on the Ouija board. She was bending forward and suddenly she read the spellings on Ouija board loudly : "T-r-a-i-t-o-r". Laura asked the board what that meant. The board spelled "A-s-k-h-i-m". Then Laura Hinkle asked : "Ouija, won't you tell us who is talking?" Again Laura read the spellings aloud : "H-e-l-e-n". Soon all the five Ouija boards started calling John by name. Soon gossips of the ladies started. Why was a lady giving the name of Helen calling Lavinia's husband? Soon rumours spread that John was flirting with a woman on the

थी। वह केवल इसलिये लिख सका क्योंकि उसे उनसे प्रेरणा मिल जाती थी। अब उन्हें Ouija बोर्ड पर काम करने वाली दुराग्रहीयों द्वारा दी गई परेशानियों के कारण हड़ताल पर जाने के लिये बाध्य होना पड़ा है। उन्हें (भूतों को) उनके प्रश्नों का उत्तर देना पड़ता है। उस (भूत) ने John Hallock से कहा कि वह अपने मित्रों और जानकारों को Ouija बोर्डों का प्रयोग न करने के लिये मनाये। यदि वह उन्हें Ouija बोर्डों का प्रयोग न करने के लिये मना लेता है तो वे फिर से उसकी मदद शुरू कर देंगी।

► Lavinia के घर Ouija-board की पार्टी

John की पत्नी Lavinia बहुत उत्तेजित थी। उसने एक नयी चीज खरीदी थी। वह उसे 'सबसे सुहावनी और सबसे प्यारी Ouija बोर्ड' कहा। यह एक बर्तनी (spelling) बोर्ड था। इससे मृत, भूत या आत्माओं से सम्पर्क किया जा सकता था। प्रेत आत्माएँ या भूत प्रश्नों का उत्तर देते थे। John को अपनी पत्नी का काम बकवास लगा। Lavinia ने John को कहा कि वह उसके Ouija-board का प्रयोग अपनी कहानियों को लिखने के लिये कर सकता था। Ouija बोर्ड के माध्यम से वह Napoleon या Helen of Troy से बात-चीत कर सकता था। John ने अपनी पत्नी को उस Ouija बोर्ड से छुटकारा पा लेने के लिये कहा। Lavinia की ऐसी कोई भी इच्छा नहीं थी। दूसरी ओर उसने एक Ouija बोर्ड पार्टी का आयोजन किया। औरतों के पांच जोड़े थे और हर जोड़े के बीच में एक Ouija बोर्ड रखा हुआ था। Lavinia ने John से कहा कि वह Laura Hinkle के साथ जुड़ जाये। उसका कोई जोड़ीदार नहीं था। John इश्क फरमाने वाली Laura का जोड़ीदार बनने को अनिच्छुक था।

► John का Ouija-board पर इश्कबाजी करने का संदेह

Laura Hinkle, Ouija-board पर काम कर रही थी। वह आगे बोर्ड पर झुकी हुई थी और अचानक ही उसने Ouija बोर्ड पर "T-r-a-i-t-o-r" (गद्दार) की बर्तनी (spelling) जोर से पढ़ी। Laura ने बोर्ड से उसका क्या उत्तर था, पूछा। बोर्ड पर "A-s-k-h-i-m" (उससे पूछा) लिखा मिला। फिर Laura Hinkle ने पूछा "Ouija क्या तुम मुझे यह नहीं बताओगे कि मुझसे कौन बातें कर रहा है ?" फिर Laura ने "H-e-l-e-n" की बर्तनी (spelling) जोर से पढ़ी। Helen नाम वाली एक औरत Lavinia के पति को क्यों पुकार रही है ? शीघ्र ही अफवाह फैल गयी कि John, Ouija बोर्ड पर एक औरत से इश्कबाजी कर रहा था। उसकी पत्नी ने उसकी ओर गुस्से से ऐसे देखा जैसे कि

Ouija board. His wife looked angrily at him as if he were some peculiar insect. He suffered shame and felt his ears grow crimson. He got up and fled from the room.

► John and Lavinia on the Verge of Break-up

At the breakfast table the next morning there was no sign of Laura. There came a tap at the door and a white slip of paper was slid under it. John unfolded and read it. His wife wrote that she was going back to her grandmother. Her lawyer would communicate with him later. John cried and wished he were dead. Then came a horrible voice from the other end of the room. Helen, the ghost was there. She told him that she had come to ask when his wife Lavinia was going to get rid of that Ouija board. John cursed her. He blamed that he was going to lose his wife, home and happiness only because of her. John found that his wife had come again in the room. She told him that she was leaving. John agreed that it would do her good. Change of air would be useful for her. He told her that he would join her after some time.

► John Gets the Best Plot for a Ghost Story

John was trying his best to keep Lavinia away from Helen's ghost. He knew that if she saw the ghost in her room she would be crying loudly and might faint. Lavinia suspected that John was hiding somebody in the room. She accused her husband of flirting over the Ouija board with that hussy Helen. John told her that his behaviour was quite above-board. She thrust John back forcefully and threatened to see who was behind him. She cried, "Where is that Helen?" The ghost replied, "Me? I'm Helen." Lavinia looked at that ghost, that owled-eyed phantom. She was quite unattractive in her skirt and stiff shirt-waist. Even there was no powder on her nose. John threw a protecting arm around his wife to catch her lest she should faint. Lavinia didn't swoon. Such an unattractive ghost was no threat to her or her husband.

वह एक विचित्र कीड़ा हो। उसे शर्म महसूस हुई और उसके कान सुर्ख लाल हो गये। वह खड़ा हो गया और कमरे से भाग गया।

► John और Lavinia के सम्बंध टूटने के कगार पर

अगली सुबह नाश्ते की मेज पर Laura का कोई निशान भी नहीं था। द्वार पर खटखटाहट हुई और उसके नीचे से एक सफेद कागज की पर्ची खिसका दी गयी। John ने उसे खोला और पढ़ा। उसकी पत्नी ने लिखा कि वह वापिस अपनी दादी के यहाँ जा रही है। एक वकील बाद में उससे सम्पर्क करेगा। John चीखा और कामना किया कि वह मर गया होता (तो अच्छा होता)। फिर कमरे के दूसरे सिरे से एक भयानक आवाज आयी। वहाँ Helen का भूत था। उसने John को बताया कि वह यह पूछने वहाँ आयी है कि कब उसकी पत्नी उस Ouija बोर्ड से छुटकारा पाने जा रही है। John ने उसे (भूत को) कोसा। उसने इल्जाम लगाया कि वह उसी के कारण अपनी पत्नी, घर और खुशी को खोने जा रहा है। John को पता चला कि उसकी पत्नी फिर कमरे में आ गयी थी। उसने John को बताया कि वह जा रही थी। John ने स्वीकार किया कि ऐसा करना उसकी सेहत के लिये अच्छा रहेगा। हवा का बदलना उसके लिये लाभदायक रहेगा। उसने उसे बताया कि वह बाद में आकर उससे मिल जायेगा।

► John को भूत-कहानी के लिये एक अच्छी विषय-वस्तु मिल जाती है

John, Lavinia को Helen के भूत से दूर रखने का भरसक प्रयत्न कर रहा था। उसे पता था कि यदि उसने कमरे में भूत को देख लिया तो वह जोर से चिल्लाना शुरू कर देगी और शायद बेहोश भी हो जायेगी। Lavinia को शक हुआ कि John कमरे में किसी को छुपा रहा था। उसने अपने पति पर आरोप लगाया कि वह उस इश्कमिजाज (अनैतिक) औरत Helen के साथ Ouija-board पर इश्क लड़ा रहा था। John ने उसे बताया कि उसका व्यवहार काफी खरा था। उसने John को जोर लगाकर पीछे धकेला और उसके पीछे जो छुपा था उसे देखने की धमकी दी। भूत ने उत्तर दिया, "मैं ? मैं Helen हूँ।" Lavinia ने प्रेत की ओर देखा, उस उल्लू जैसी आँखों वाले भूत की ओर। वह मोटे-रंगों वाले स्कर्ट और कमर तक के कमीज में काफी अनाकर्षक लग रही थी। उसकी नाक पर पाउडर भी नहीं लगा हुआ था। कहीं वह बेहोश होकर गिर न पड़े, इस डर से John ने अपनी पत्नी के चारों ओर रक्षात्मक भुजायें डाली हुई थीं। Lavinia को चक्कर नहीं आये। ऐसा अनाकर्षक भूत उसके या उसके पति के लिये कोई खतरा नहीं था। वह सुरक्षित थी। एक चौड़ी और सन्तुष्टिपूर्ण

She was safe. A broad, satisfied smile spread over her face. After all, this Helen was no Helen of Troy. Lavinia fell forgivingly into John's arms who kissed her passionately. Ironically, the ghost of Hellen gave John creative inspiration. He had got the 'bulliest' or the best plot for a ghost story now.

मुस्कान उसके चेहरे पर फैल गयी। आखिरकार, यह Helen कोई Helen of Troy नहीं थी। Lavinia क्षमापूर्ण अपने पति John की बांहों पर आ गिरी। जिसने वेगवश उसे चूम लिया। विडम्बनापूर्ण ही है कि Helen भूत ने John को रचनात्मक प्रेरणा प्रदान की। अब उसे एक भूत-कहानी के लिये अति उत्तम विषय-वस्तु मिल गया था।

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Shady—of dubious character, संदेहास्पद/संदिग्ध महत्त्व वाला। **Plot**—series of events which form the story, कथा-वस्तु। **Supernatural**—paranormal/that can't be explained by science, अलौकिक। **Live**—which is alive, जीवित। **Propositions**—ideas/matters, विचार/वस्तुएँ। **Contradict**—oppose, विरोध करते हैं। **Precisely**—exactly, ठीक (वैसे ही)। **Shade**—(here) not even a little, थोड़ा सा भी नहीं। **Mysterious**—full of mystery, रहस्यमय। **Specialize**—having a special ability, विशेषज्ञ होना, गुण में अति विशेष होना। **Curious**—very eager, इच्छुक। **Chased**—pursued/followed, पीछा किया। **Inspiration**—encouragement/stimulation, प्रेरणा। **Uncanny**—(here) extraordinary, असाधारण। **Pestering**—troubling, सता रहा था। **Dunned**—persistently asked for something, बार-बार आग्रह किया। **Dig up**—(here) find out from the deep, खोदकर निकालना। **Bit**—a little, थोड़ा सा। **Cocky**—overconfident, अतिविश्वासी। **Sucked**—keeping in mouth and pull on it with lips, चूसना। **Pretty soon**—very soon, जल्दी ही। **Wander off**—(here) stray, भटकना। **Unghostly**—not like a ghost/real, जो भूत के समान न हो/असली। **Material**—solid, ठोस। **Alarming**—which causes concern, चिन्ताजनक। **Tendency**—inclination/bent of mind, मनोवृत्ति, झुकाव। **Fad**—craze/something that people are interested for a short time, फैशन, प्रचलन। **Staring**—looking intently, घूर कर देखते हुए। **Ceiling**—top inside surface of a room, कमरे की अन्दर वाली छत। **Sarcastically**—satirically, व्यंगात्मक रूप से। **Imbecility**—foolishness, मूर्खता।

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Twilight—(here) evening time, गोधूलि वेला/संध्या। **Stiff**—hard, कठोर। **Plaid**—a type of thick cloth with lines and squares, डिजाइनदार मोटा कपड़ा। **Angular**—lean and thin, दुबली-पतली। **Enormous**—huge, विशाल। **Fishy eyes**—suspicious eyes, संदेहजनक आँखें। **Wad**—a mass of soft material, नरम, गद्देदार चीज। **Jaw**—the mouth and teeth, जबड़ा। **Glared**—looked in anger, गुस्से में देखा। **Positively**—definitely, निश्चित रूप से। **Gaping at**—looking surprised with mouth open, मुँह खोलकर, आश्चर्य से देखते हुए। **Swallowed**—(here) moved the muscles of throat, (थूक) निगला। **Absolutely**—completely, पूर्ण रूप से। **Merely**—only, केवल। **Sections**—(here) in different parts, विभिन्न भागों में। **Crisped**—gave a quick and confident answer, तेज तर्रार जबाब दिया, हाजिर जबाब दिया। **Nodded**—shook the head, सिर हिलाया। **Drivelling**—speak nonsense, बकवास की।

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Bothering—caring, worrying, चिन्ता करते हुए। **Assistance**—help, सहायता। **Yell**—cry, चीखना। **Humbly**—in a humble manner, विनम्रता से। **Draped**—sat in an indolent manner, lolled, आराम से लेटना/बैठना। **Leaned**—bent over, झुकी। **Reminiscent**—with one's mind full of

memories, पुरानी यादों से भी। **Purgatory**—any place of or state of suffering/hell, नर्क। **Scout around**—looked searching here and there, खोजने के लिये इधर-उधर देखना। **Assigned**—appointed, नियुक्त कर दिया। **Groaned**—cried in pain, दर्द में चीखी। **Clutched**—held tightly, भींच कर पकड़ा। **Scarecrow**—a figure made to look like a person to frighten birds away, डरावा। **Shivered**—trembled in cold, ठंड में काँपना। **We're through**—we have finished, हमने समाप्त कर लिया है।

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Grateful—thankful, कृतज्ञ। **Ouija board**—a board with signs alphabets used to receive messages from the dead, मरे हुए व्यक्तियों से संदेश लाने वाला डिजाइनदार बोर्ड। **Fanatics**—men with rigid views, कट्टर। **Haunting**—(here) searching, ढूँढ़ना। **Amusement**—fun, आनंद। **Entirely**—completely, पूर्ण रूप से। **Pitying**—expressing pity, दयापूर्ण। **Exert**—put, डालना। **Demobilize**—disappear, गायब। **Evaporate**—(here) disappear into nothingness, गायब हो जाना। **Brogans**—heavy ankled high boots with laces, ऊँची एड़ी वाले भारी जूते। **Misty**—covered with mist, धुंध से ढकी हुई। **Affection**—condition, अवस्था। **Disintegrate**—break into parts, खंडित होना। **Vestige**—signs, trace, निशान।

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Rubbish—waste, कूड़ा। **Nervous**—perplexed, परेशान। **Twitch**—pull hard, जोर से खींचना। **Idiotic**—foolish, मूर्खतापूर्ण। **Grin**—showing teeth, दाँत निकालना। **Conceal Affliction**—hide, छुपाना। **Premonitory**—(here) a foreboding, भविष्यवाणी। **Chill**—very cold, बहुत ठंडी। **Crept up**—came up, उठ खड़े। **Duckliest**—very pleasant, अति सुहावना। **Darlingest**—very lovely, बहुत प्यारा। **Bargain-sale**—(here) a good deal, फायदे का सौदा। **Lingered**—lasted longer, लम्बा चला। **Sensitive**—(here) delicate, नाजुक। **Subject to**—liable to, प्रभावित हो सकती है (आसानी से)। **Hysterics**—wild laughter/cries, जोर-जोर से हँसना/चीखना। **Gulped**—swallowed, निगल गया। **Musty**—stale and damp, बासी और सीलनभरी। **Speck of trouble**—sign of trouble, मुसीबत के लक्षण। **Awfully**—(here) extremely, बहुत अधिक। **Thrilling**—exciting, उत्तेजक। **Relief**—comfort, चैन। **So far so good**—(here) not bad upto now, अब तक ठीक है।

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Darn—to fill the holes of the clothes, कपड़ों के छेदों को रफू करना। **Devellish**—like a devil, शैतानी/शैतान जैसी। **Distinctly**—clear, स्पष्ट। **Propose**—(here) intend, इच्छा है। **Huffily**—in anger, नाराज़/क्रोधित होकर। **Cloud up**—become dim, धुंधली पड़ना। **Book keeper**—accountant, हिसाब-किताब देखने वाला। **Lumber**—dealing in wood, काठ-कबाड़ की दुकान। **Grocery bills**—bills of a grocer, पंसारी के बिल। **Piled up**—heaped up, ऊँचे ढेर लग गये। **Vanished**—disappeared, गायब हो गयी। **Tangle**—(here) not clear, उलझे हुए। **Churning**—working deeply, गहराई से काम कर रहा था। **Illuminated**—lighted, रोशनी की हुई। **Argify**—argue, बहस करना। **Stupidly**—foolishly, मूर्खतापूर्ण।

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Dimly—not bright, मंद प्रकाश वाली। **Recollections**—memories, यादें। **Chattering**—(here) gossiping, गप्पे मारते हुए। **Parlour**—sitting room, बैठक। **Peered**—looked closely, ध्यान से देखा। **Mournful**—sad, उदासी से भरा। **Squeak**—like the sound of a door, चर-चर की आवाज। **Flirtatious**—behaving in a way that shows a sexual attraction, प्रेम-खिलवाड़, इश्कबाजी का व्यवहार। **Coyly**—

pretending to be shy but flirtatious, शर्मीली होने का नाटक करने वाली परन्तु इश्कबाज। **Tugging**—pulling hard, खींचते हुए। **Suspicion**—doubt, सन्देह। **Vast**—huge, विशाल।

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Spirits—(here) ghosts, भूत। **Cooed**—spoke like a pigeon, कबूतर जैसी आवाज में बोली। **Instant**—moment, क्षण। **Hovered**—stayed in the air, मंडराने लगा। **Traitor**—a person who gives away secrets about his country, गद्दार। **Desperately**—recklessly, हताशा से। **Choked**—blocked, अवरुद्ध कर दिया। **Stuck**—unable to move, could not get out, बाहर नहीं निकल पायी/फंस गयी। **Dreadful**—horrible, भयानक। **Apparently**—outwardly, बाहरी रूप से/जैसा दिखायी दे। **Protest**—oppose, विरोध। **Corrugated**—shapes in folds like waves, लहरदार। **Groaned**—cried in pain, दर्द से चीखी। **Inexorable**—unstoppable, जिसे रोका न जा सके। **Simpered**—smiled in a silly way, मूर्खतापूर्वक हंसना।

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Manipulators—operators, कार्य संचालन करने वाले। **Plagued**—(here) hounded, परेशान किया। **Crimson**—deep red, गहरे लाल रंग का। **Peculiar**—strange, विचित्र। **Insect**—a small creature with six legs and body divided into three parts, कीड़े-मकौड़े। **Spasm**—a sudden and painful contracting of a muscle, ऐंठन, मरोड़। **Wretched**—pitiable, दयनीय। **Features**—outward looks, नकशक। **Semblance**—looking similar, एक जैसा दिखायी देना। **Sly**—(here) secretly, गुप्त रूप से। **Crawled**—moved slowly like a snail, रेंगी। **Gurgled**—made noise in the throat, गड़गड़ करने की ध्वनि। **Elapsed**—ended, समाप्त हुई। **Concluded**—reached a conclusion, नतीजे पर पहुँचा। **Communicate**—express, व्यक्त करना। **Abruptly**—at once/suddenly, अचानक। **Prickle**—unpleasant feeling on the skin, चुभन करना। **Majestically**—in a grand manner, शान से। **Gait**—a way of walking, चलने की अदा। **Sternly**—harshly, कठोरता से।

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Distinguished—recognised the difference, भेद जान गया। **Protruding**—extending outward, बाहर-निकले हुए। **Exasperated**—incited/made angry, उत्तेजित किया/क्रोधित किया। **Stung**—bitten, काट लिया गया। **Violent**—aggressive, उग्र। **Popped**—appeared suddenly, अचानक दिखायी दी। **Materialize**—to take shape, रूप धारण करना। **Hoodooos**—placing curses and charms to bring bad luck on someone, दूसरों के बुरे के लिये किये गये तांत्रिक रश्में। **Retreated**—moved back, पीछे हटा। **Leered**—looked badly, बुरी नजर से देखा। **Brassily**—rudely/insolently, गुस्ताखी से। **Unaccustomed**—not habitual, आदी न होना। **Agility**—smartness, चपलता/फुर्ती। **Sprang**—jump, छलांग लगाना। **Phantom**—ghost, भूत। **Gaze**—look intently, घूर के देखना। **Wrest**—snatch, झटके से छीनना। **Staccatoed**—spoke in an abrupt manner, झट से बीच में बोली।

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Flapping—beating sounds of wings, फड़फड़ाते हुए। **Boo**—sounds of dislike, नापसंदी से की गयी आवाज़ें। **Queerly**—strange, विचित्र। **Sniffed**—(here) smelled, सूँघा। **Skeered**—scared, डर गया। **Kindling**—wood used for burning, जलाने के लिए लकड़ी। **Coon**—(here) the one doing a menial job, हाथ से काम करने वाला। **Waspishly**—in an irritated manner, चिढ़े हुए तरीके से। **Elaborately**—in a big way, बड़े ढंग से। **Dratted**—annoyed, गुस्से में। **Hussy**—a woman behaving in a morally wrong manner, अनैतिक व्यवहार करने वाली औरत। **Above-board**—honest, true, सच्चा, ईमानदारी वाला। **Lithely**—elegantly, सुन्दर ढंग से।

Apparition—a ghost/an image of a dead person, भूत की परछाई। **Skewed**—lying at an abnormal angle, असाधारण कोण पर पड़े। **Faint**—become senseless, बेहोश होना। **Swoon**—faint, चक्कर आना। **Telescoped**—reduced in size, आकृति में छोटी हो गयी। **Briskly**—fast, तेजी से। **Fervently**—excitedly/warmly, जोश में/गर्मी से। **Shoved**—pushed rudely, रूखेपन से धकेला। **Bulliest**—best/excellent, सब से बढ़िया।

REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

Read the extracts given below and answer the questions that follow:

1. “Hallock,” he had said to me, “give us another on the supernatural this time. Something to give, em the horrors; that’s what the public wants, and your ghosts are live propositions.” (Page 35)

Questions

- (a) Who is the speaker?
- (b) What is he asking from the narrator?
- (c) Find the synonym of ‘paranormal’ in the passage.

Answers

- (a) The speaker is Mr. Jenkins, the publisher of a magazine.
 - (b) Mr. Jenkins is asking the narrator to write a ghost story for his magazine.
 - (c) supernatural
2. It had all been rather mysterious. You understand I didn’t specialize in ghost stories, but more or less they seemed to specialize in me. A ghost story had been the first fiction I had written. (Page 35)

Questions

- (a) What had been mysterious?
- (b) Why did the narrator say : ‘but they seemed to specialise in me?’
- (c) Write the noun form of ‘mysterious’.

Answers

- (a) It had been quite mysterious how John managed to write stories in the end.
 - (b) John Hallock didn’t specialise in ghost stories but they seemed to specialise in him. A ghost story was his first fiction.
 - (c) mystery
3. I sat staring at it and presently noticed something just taking shape. It was exactly like watching one of these moving picture cartoons being put together. (Page 36)

Questions

- (a) What was he staring at?
- (b) How was the figure taking shape?
- (c) Find the opposite of ‘stationary’ in the passage.

Answers

- (a) The narrator, John Hallock was staring at the shadow that started taking a definite shape.

(b) The figure was taking shape like one of these moving picture-cartoons being put together.

(c) moving

4. “Nothing,” I said. “Absolutely nothing. My dear lady, I was merely waiting for you to tell me why you had come. And excuse me, but do you always come in sections like this? I should think your parts might get mixed up sometimes.” (Page 36)

Questions

(a) Why did the narrator say : “Absolutely nothing?”

(b) What was he waiting for?

(c) Find the synonym of the word ‘completely’ in the passage.

Answers

(a) The ghost asked what the narrator was gaping at. The narrator replied that he was not doing any such thing.

(b) He was waiting for her to tell him the reason of her coming there.

(c) absolutely

5. “Going on strike. Don’t you know what a strike is? Not another plot do you get from us!” (Page 37)

Questions

(a) Who is the speaker?

(b) Why are they going on strike?

(c) What is the word for ‘subject matter’ of a story in the passage?

Answers

(a) The ghost of Helen is the speaker.

(b) The members of ‘The Writer’s Inspiration Bureau’ are going on strike because they were troubled frequently by the Ouija board fanatics.

(c) plot

6. “But that has nothing to do with my present form. It might have, but I gave it up at last for that very reason, and went to work as a reader on a magazine.” She sighed, and rubbed the end of her long eagle nose with a reminiscent finger.’ Those were terrible days. (Page 37)

Questions

(a) Who was she in the other life?

(b) What mistake did she make?

(c) Find the synonym of the word ‘horrible’ in the passage.

Answers

(a) She was a writer in another (the previous) life.

(b) She mistook purgatory (hell) for paradise.

(c) terrible.

7. I found others who had suffered similarly, and between us we organized ‘The Writer’s Inspiration Bureau.’ We scout around until we find a writer without ideas and with a mind soft enough to accept impression. The case is brought to the attention of the main office, and one of us assigned to it. When that case is finished we bring in a report.” (Page 37)

Questions

- (a) Who organised 'The Writer's Inspiration Bureau'?
- (b) What was the aim of the members of 'The Writer's Inspiration Bureau'?
- (c) Write the noun form of the word 'organised' given in the passage.

Answers

- (a) Helen and other 'sufferers' like her joined together to organise 'The Writer's Inspiration Bureau'.
 - (b) The aim of the members of the Bureau was to scout around to help a writer without ideas and with a mind soft enough to accept impression.
 - (c) organisation
8. "Oh, it isn't you," she explained patronizingly. "It's those Ouija board fanatics. There was a time when we had nothing much to occupy us and used to haunt a little on the side, purely for amusement, but not any more. We've had to give up haunting almost entirely. We sit at a desk and answer questions now. And such questions!"
(Page 38)

Questions

- (a) Who is 'you' in the first line?
- (b) Who are Ouija board fanatics?
- (c) What are men with rigid views called? Give one word only.

Answers

- (a) The word 'you' stands for the narrator, John Hallock.
 - (b) Ouija board fanatics are women friends of Lavinia who are always operating on Ouija boards to talk to spirits.
 - (c) fanatics
9. "Nothing," I said, and looked around for the ghost. Suppose she had lingered, and upon hearing what my wife had said should suddenly appear—Like all sensitive women, Lavinia was subject to hysterics.
(Page 39)

Questions

- (a) What did the narrator look around?
- (b) Who is 'she' in the second sentence?
- (c) Find the right word in the passage meaning 'wild cries'

Answers

- (a) The narrator looked around if Helen's ghost was still there in the room or not.
 - (b) 'She' in the second line stands for Helen, the ghost.
 - (c) hysterics
10. "To help you write your stories. Why, for instance, suppose you wanted to write an historical novel. You wouldn't have to wear your eyes out over those musty old books in the public library. All you'd have to do would be to get out your Ouija."
(Page 39)

Questions

- (a) Who is the speaker here?
- (b) What can help the narrator in writing his stories or historical novels?
- (c) Find one word from the passage similar in meaning to 'stale and damp'.

Answers

- (a) Lavinia, the narrator's wife is the speaker of these lines.
 - (b) An Ouija board can help the narrator in writing his stories or historical writings.
 - (c) musty
- 11.** Busy day, I left home early without seeing Lavinia. Understand, I haven't quite reached the point where I can give my whole time to writing, and being bookkeeper for a lumber company does help with the grocery bills and pay for Lavinia's fancy shopping. (Page 40)

Questions

- (a) Has the narrator reached the stage to devote himself only to writing?
- (b) What was the narrator doing to earn a living?
- (c) Give the opposite of 'late'.

Answers

- (a) The narrator has not reached that stage where he could devote himself only to writing.
 - (b) He was working as a bookkeeper for a lumber company.
 - (c) early
- 12.** My wife is never so pretty as when she's doing something she knows I disapprove of, "John, dear I know you'll help us out. Mrs. William Augustus. (Page 41)

Questions

- (a) When does the narrator's wife look most pretty?
- (b) What does the author disapprove of?
- (c) Give the antonym of the word 'approve'.

Answers

- (a) The narrator's wife looks most pretty when she does that thing deliberately which her husband has forbidden to do.
 - (b) The narrator disapproves of buying a Ouija board.
 - (c) disapprove
- 13.** And the first thing I knew she had taken my hands and was coyly holding them in the position desired. She released them presently, and the little board began to slide around in an aimless sort of way. (Page 41)

Questions

- (a) Who is 'she' in the first line?
- (b) Why was she holding John's hands 'in the position desired'?
- (c) Find the word for the expression 'in a shy and flirtatious manner' in the passage.

Answers

- (a) She is Miss Laura Hinkle.
 - (b) She is holding John's hands in the position desired for operating the Ouija board.
 - (c) coyly
- 14.** And then from different parts of the room other manipulators began to report. Every plagued one of those five Ouija boards was calling me by name! I felt my ears grow crimson, purple, maroon. (Page 43)

Questions

- (a) Who were the other manipulators?
- (b) Of which 'room' is the narrator talking about?
- (c) Find the antonym of 'same' in the passage.

Answers

- (a) Besides Miss Laura Hinkle, there were four other pairs of ladies who were manipulating Ouija boards.
- (b) The narrator is describing Lavinia's room downstairs in his house.
- (c) different

15. My wife was looking at me as though I were some peculiar insect. The squeak of Ouija boards and the murmur of conversation rose louder and louder, and then I felt my face twitch in the spasm of that idiotic grin. (Page 43)

Questions

- (a) Why was the narrator looking like a peculiar insect?
- (b) Why was the narrator's wife behaving in such a way?
- (c) Find the synonym of 'foolish' in the passage.

Answers

- (a) The narrator was highly embarrassed when all the five Ouija boards started calling him by name. The changing complexion of his ears made him look like a peculiar insect.
- (b) The gossips of women associated her husband's name with Helen, the ghost. She grew angry at the prospect of John flirting Helen on the Ouija board.
- (c) idiotic

16. "I am going back to my grandmother. My lawyer will communicate with you later." (Page 43)

Questions

- (a) Who is the speaker here?
- (b) Why is she going back to her grandmother?
- (c) What is the antonym of the word 'ahead' in the passage?

Answers

- (a) Lavinia, the narrator's wife is the speaker here.
- (b) She is disgusted at the alleged flirtatious behaviour of her husband John at the Ouija board with Helen, the ghost.
- (c) back

17. "How should I know! I wish to heaven I'd never seen you!" I cried. "Look what you've done! You've lost me my wife, you've lost me my home and happiness, you've—you've—" (Page 44)

Questions

- (a) What is he supposed to know?
- (b) Why does the speaker wish so?
- (c) What is the noun form of the word 'lost'?

Answers

- (a) The narrator is asked to ensure that his wife was going to get rid of the Ouija board.

(b) The speaker wishes he had never seen the ghost of Helen. She has created so many problems for him.

(c) loss

- 18.** “Sure, yes—right away! Change of air will do you good. I’ll join you presently!” If only she would go till Helen could depart! I’d have the devil of a time explaining afterward, of course, but anything would be better than to have Lavinia see a ghost. Why, that sensitive little woman couldn’t bear to have a mouse say boo at her—and what would she say to a ghost in her own living-room? (Page 45)

Questions

(a) What does the narrator want his wife to do and why?

(b) How will it help him?

(c) Find a word in the passage similar in meaning: ‘sounds of dislike’.

Answers

(a) The narrator agrees that Lavinia should go back to her grandmother immediately. Change of air will do her good.

(b) John will get time to explain the situation to his wife coolly after Helen’s ghost departs.

(c) boo

- 19.** I only waved denial and gurgled in my throat. She went on, “It’s bad enough to have you flirt over the Ouija board with that hussy—” (Page 45)

Questions

(a) Why does the narrator wave denial?

(b) What is the charge Lavinia brings against John?

(c) What is a woman behaving in a morally wrong manner called? Give only one word.

Answers

(a) The narrator waves denial to say that he is not hiding anybody behind him.

(b) Lavinia blames that her husband, John has been flirting on the Ouija board with Helen.

(c) hussy

- 20.** Lavinia looked at that apparition, that owl-eyed phantom, in plaid skirt and stiff shirtwaist, with hair skewed back and no powder on her nose. I threw a protecting husbandly arm about her to catch her when she should faint. But she didn’t swoon. A broad, satisfied smile spread over her face. (Page 46)

Questions

(a) Who was that owl-eyed phantom?

(b) Was the phantom quite attractive?

(c) Find the synonym of the word ‘ghost’ in the passage.

Answers

(a) The owl-eyed phantom was the apparition or ghost of Helen.

(b) No, the phantom was owl-eyed and dressed in unattractive plaid skirt and stiff shirtwaist. She had no powder on her nose. Helen didn’t at all look pretty or attractive.

(c) apparition

QUESTIONS FROM TEXTBOOK SOLVED

Q1. Given below is a list of words related to ghosts and ghost stories with their jumbled up meanings against them. Match the words/expressions with their correct meanings:

Apparition	a feeling of anticipation of or anxiety over a future event
Poltergeist	a reanimated corpse that is believed to rise from the grave at night to suck the blood of sleeping people
Clairvoyance	a conjurer who expels evil spirits by conjuration
Crystal Ball	a spelling board device intended to communicate with and through the spirit world, obtaining answers to questions
Eerie	beyond the range of normal experience or scientific explanation
Medium	any of a set of 22 playing cards bearing allegorical representations, used for fortune telling
Transmigration	a supernatural appearance of a person or thing, a ghost, spectre or phantom
Psychic	so mysterious, strange, or unexpected as to send a chill up the spine
Ouija Board	the supposed power to see objects or events that cannot be perceived by the senses
Exorcist	a person through whom the spirits of the dead are alleged to be able to contact the living
Premonition	a globe of quartz crystal in which images, believed to portend the future, are supposedly visible to fortune tellers
Paranormal	to pass into another body after death: going from one state of existence or place to another
Tarot Card	capable of extraordinary mental processes, such as extrasensory perception and mental telepathy
Vampire	German word, meaning “noisy ghost”-a troublesome spirit that announces its presence with unexplainable sounds and the creation of disorder

Ans.

Words/Expressions	Correct Meanings
Apparition	a supernatural appearance of a person or thing, a ghost, spectre or phantom.
Poltergeist	German word, meaning “noisy ghost”-a troublesome spirit that announces its presence with unexplainable sounds and the creation of disorder.
Clairvoyance	the supposed power to see objects or events that can not be perceived by the senses.
Crystal Ball	a globe of quartz crystal in which images, believed to portend the future, are supposedly visible to fortune tellers.

Eerie	so mysterious, strange, or unexpected as to send a chill up the spine.
Medium	a person through whom the spirits of the dead are alleged to be able to contact the living.
Transmigration	to pass into another body after death: going from one state of existence or place to another.
Psychic	capable of extraordinary mental processes, such as extraordinary perception and mental telepathy.
Ouija Board	a spelling board device intended to communicate with and through the spirit world, obtaining answers to questions.
Exorcist	a conjurer who expels evil spirits by conjuration.
Premonition	a feeling of anticipation of or anxiety over a future event.
Paranormal	beyond the range of normal experience or scientific explanation.
Tarot Card	any of a set of 22 playing cards bearing allegorical representation, used for fortune telling
Vampire	a reanimated corpse that is believed to rise from the grave at night to suck the blood of sleeping people.

Q2. The title of the story is A Shady Plot. The dictionary defines the words as:

shady adjective

- (a) Full of shade; a shaded.
- (b) Casting shade: a shady grove.
- (c) Quiet, dark, or concealed; hidden.
- (d) Of dubious character or questionable honesty.

plot noun

- (a) (i) a small piece of ground, generally used for a specific purpose: a garden plot.
(ii) a measured area of land
- (b) a ground plan, as for a building; a diagram.
- (c) storyline-the plan, scheme, or main story of a literary or dramatic work, as a play, novel, or short story
- (d) a secret plan to accomplish a hostile or illegal purpose; a scheme.

Q3. Based on the definitions above can you predict what the story will be about? Make a brief note of your prediction in your notebook.

Ans. Shady: adjective

- (d) The correct meaning of the word 'shady' in the title is: anything that is of dubious character or questionable honesty.

Plot: noun

- (c) The correct meaning of the word plot in the title is: a storyline-the plan, scheme, or main story of a literary or dramatic work, as a play, novel, or short story.

The narrator doesn't have a definite plot for writing a ghost story. He was not a specialised writer for ghost stories but somehow he managed to write them. He had to wait for inspiration for long to commence writing. The appearance of ghost of Helen and the subsequent events provide material to the narrator. He gets the best plot for writing a ghost story.

Q4. Based on your reading of the story above, answer the following questions by ticking the correct options.

1. The narrator earns his living by
(a) writing ghost stories (b) working as a reader for magazine
(c) working as a stenographer
(d) working as an accountant in a lumber company
2. The writer was overconfident about his ability to write stories because.....
(a) whenever magazines wanted a ghost story, they got in touch with him
(b) he was always able to write a ghost story whenever he had to write one
(c) the readers appreciated his ghost stories
(d) he knew the ghost lady would help him write a good ghost story
3. The sight of the ghost materialising in his room filled the narrator with.....
(a) fear (b) excitement (c) joy (d) anticipation
4. The ghost wanted John to
(a) stop his wife from using the Ouija board
(b) stop using the Ouija board himself
(c) stop his guests from using the Ouija board
(d) stop people from using the Ouija board
5. John wants the ghost to disappear before his wife enters the room and waves his arms at the ghost with something of the motion of a beginner when learning to swim. His movement shows his
(a) fear (b) amusement (c) desperation (d) anxiety
6. When the narrator says his wife is never so pretty as when she's doing something she knows he disapproves of, his tone is.....
(a) amused (b) ironic (c) angry (d) irritated
7. The ghost says "It's all your fault. 'It' here refers to.....
(a) the narrator's wife's anger (b) the ghost's anger
(c) the narrator's wife leaving him (d) the ghost materialising in sections.
8. Gladolia wishes to leave the narrator's house as.....
(a) she does not like the Ouija boards
(b) she is afraid of the ghost (c) she is afraid of magic and hoodoo
(d) she likes Ouija boards and hoodoo.

- Ans.** 1. (d) working as an accountant in a lumber company
2. (b) he was always able to write a ghost story whenever he had to write one
3. (a) fear 4. (c) stop his guests from using the Ouija board
5. (c) desperation 6. (b) ironic
7. (d) the ghost materialising in sections
8. (c) she is afraid of magic and hoodoo

Q5. Answer the following questions briefly.

- (a) What genre of stories does Jenkins want the narrator to write? Why?
- (b) Does the narrator like writing ghost stories? Support your answer with evidence from the story.
- (c) What makes Helen, the ghost, and her other co-ghosts organize The Writer's Inspiration Bureau?
- (d) Why had Helen, the ghost been helping the narrator write ghost stories? Why was she going on strike? What condition did she place for providing continued help?

- (e) How does the ghost undermine the narrator's faith in his ability to write ghost stories?
- (f) Why does John want the ghost to disappear before his wife appears on the scene? What impression of his wife's character do you form from his words?
- (g) Why does the narrator hesitate to be a partner to Laura Hinkle during the Ouija Board Party?
- (h) What message does the ghost convey to the group that had assembled in the narrator's house? What is their reaction to the message?
- (i) Do you agree with the narrator calling the assembly of women "manipulators?" Give reasons.
- (j) Why is John's wife angry? What does she decide to do?
- (k) Why does John wish he were dead?
- (l) When confronted by Lavinia about his flirtations over the Ouija Board, John insists that 'the affair was quite above-board, I assure you, my love'. Bring out the pun in John's statement.
- (m) John's apprehensions about his wife's reaction to her encounter with the ghost are unfounded. Justify.

- Ans.**
- (a) Jenkins wanted the narrator to write a ghost story for his magazine. He wanted the narrator to give the readers a story based on the supernatural. He wanted him to give his readers really 'horror' stories. They should not be live ghosts which were presented in his earlier stories. He should write what the public wants.
 - (b) The narrator honestly confesses that he doesn't 'specialize in ghost stories'. But 'they' seemed to specialise in him. He writes ghost stories at the request of Jenkins. Jenkins wants him to write 'horror' stories based on the 'supernatural'. That's what public wants. Whenever Jenkin wanted a ghost story, the narrator couldn't refuse it.
 - (c) Helen, the ghost and her other co-ghosts organised, The Writer's Inspiration Bureau. In her previous life she used to write and couldn't have judged things rationally. After attaining the present form, she decided to do something with the help of those spirits who suffered similarly like her. They wanted to help those writers who were without ideas and with minds soft enough to accept impression.
 - (d) Helen, the ghost had been helping the narrator write ghost stories. She was assigned this job by the main office of The Writer's Inspiration Bureau to help him. Helen and other ghosts were going on strike because of Ouija board fanatics. They kept them busy with their questions. She put a condition that he was to make his friends and acquaintances stop using the Ouija board. Only then she would start helping him.
 - (e) Helen, the ghost undermines the narrator's faith in his ability to write ghost stories. She threatens going on strike with other ghosts. He will not get any help from The Writer's Inspiration Bureau to get another plot for writing a ghost story. Helen thinks that the narrator can't write without their help and inspiration.
 - (f) John wants Helen, the ghost to disappear before his wife appears on the scene. Seeing Helen with the author, his wife could create troubles for him. His wife Lavinia was subject to hysterics. She would start laughing and crying loudly on seeing the ghost with her husband. These words tell that Lavinia was a dominating wife. She could burst into hysterics if things don't happen to her liking.

- (g) John was requested by his wife Lavinia to help Laura Hinkle work on an Ouija board. Laura was without a partner. She couldn't work on Ouija by herself. John was reluctant to be a partner to Laura Hinkle. She was 'flirtatious crocodile'. She leaned forward and held his hands coyly. John didn't feel comfortable with a flirtatious lady like Laura Hinkle.
- (h) Miss Laura Hinkle asked, "Ouija, dear, won't you tell us something?" In an instant the Ouija-board spelled: "T-r-a-i-t-o-r". Miss Laura asked what that meant and it pointed out towards John. Then Laura asked who was talking on the board. The answer came "H-e-l-e-n. Helen!" Helen had been calling for John on all the five Ouija boards. John was suspected of flirting with a woman on the Ouija board.
- (i) The narrator rightly calls the assembly of women "manipulators". The word 'manipulators' here means two things. The women were 'manipulators' in the sense that they were operating or manipulating Ouija boards. The other meaning is equally appropriate. Ladies like Miss Laura Hinkle are skilful at influencing people or situations in order to get what they want. They are flirtatious and manipulating.
- (j) All the five Ouija boards start calling John by name. John feels his ears grow crimson. Lavinia thought John was flirting with Helen. His wife looks angrily at him as though he were some peculiar insect. She decides to go back to her grandmother. She threatens that her lawyer would communicate with him later.
- (k) The ladies at the Book Club created a very awkward position for John. His wife suspected that he was flirting with Helen on the Ouija board. She looked at him as if he were some peculiar insect. Next morning Lavinia left a message that she was going back to her grandmother. She also threatened that her lawyer would communicate with him later. He felt that he had lost his wife, his home and happiness. He wished he were dead.
- (l) Elsie Brown makes a beautiful use of 'pun' in John's statement. Through the clever or humorous use of the word 'above-board' the author explains John's stand. When confronted by Lavinia about his filtrations over the Ouija board, John insists that the affair was quite 'above-board'. It means that he didn't hide or conceal anything and he played *above* the board. The second meaning is that he was not flirting with Helen on the Ouija board and actions and motives were honest and legal.
- (m) John's apprehensions about his wife's reaction to her encounter with the ghost are mostly unfounded. Repeatedly he asks Helen, the ghost to disappear before his wife comes. He believes that his sensitive wife 'can't bear to have a mouse say boo at her'. The sight of a ghost in her own living-room would be unbearable for her. But Lavinia finds the 'Owl-eyed phantom' quite harmless. She finds that she is not the beautiful 'Helen of Troy'. She doesn't swoon but a satisfied smile spreads over her face.

Q6. Answer the following questions in detail:

- (a) After her reconciliation with her husband, John Hallock, Lavinia writes a letter to her friend expressing how her relationship with him had almost been on the verge of breaking and what saved it. Write her letter.
- (b) John Hallock reflects upon his experience with Helen's ghost and in retrospect he finds it quite amusing. All the same he is relieved that he is no longer plagued by it. Ironically, the self same ghost inspires his creativity and he writes a diary entry reflecting upon the comical aspects of his experience. Write his diary entry.

Ans. (a) 12, Hudson Avenue
New York

20 September, 20××

Dear Pamela

You never know what is in store for you in life. It can throw unexpected surprises at any time. O God, what a party it was! It was Ouija board party. All the lady members were sitting in couples. And in between each couple was an Ouija board. I persuaded my husband to help Miss Laura Hinkle. She was without a partner. John didn't like the idea. However, flirtatious Laura took his hands. She was coyly holding them to operate the Ouija board. A strange thing happened. The board spelled "T-r-a-i-t-o-r". The board was pointing an accusing finger at John. When Laura Hinkle asked who was talking from the Ouija board, the reply came. "Hellen". Soon all the five boards started calling my husband's name. The ladies were amused. The rumour in the room was that John was flirting with someone named Hellen. I looked angrily at John and he looked miserable. Next morning, I left a note for John that I was going back to my grandmother. I threatened that my lawyer would communicate with him later. The end of our family peace and bliss seemed to have come.

Then the most unexpected happened. I entered in the room to tell John that I was going. He seemed to be hiding something behind his back. I accused him of flirting on the Ouija board with Helen. And lo! The hussy was standing there. I looked her owl-faced unattractive figure. Certainly she was not the Helen of Troy. Soon she disappeared leaving us alone. I didn't have to worry about such a woman. I felt satisfied and fell into John's arms. He kissed me passionately twice. Now I realised that John and Hellen's affair was quite above-board. The relationship which was on the verge of breaking, was saved.

Yours sincerely

Lavinia

(b) New York

18 March, 20××

Jenkins had asked me to write a real ghost story on supernatural. It may give people the 'horrors they want'. I had chased inspiration in vain for months! So I went home and sat down before my desk waiting for the inspiration. I heard a voice at the other end. It was Helen's ghost. She told me that she had come from 'The Writer's Bureau'. She told me that I would not get any help in future from her. The spirits have gone on strike. The reason was the trouble created for the ghosts or spirits by Ouija board fanatics. She warned that she would not help me till my friends and acquaintances stop using the Ouija board.

A shocking incident in the Ouija board party brought my relation with my wife on the verge of breaking. My wife asked me to become a partner of Miss Laura Hinkle. I was reluctant but the flirtatious lady took my hands and started operating the Ouija board. Shockingly the board spelled 't-r-a-i-t-o-r' and pointed an accusing finger towards me. The ghost disclosed her identity as 'Helen'. Soon all the five boards were calling my name. There were rumours going around among ladies that I was flirting with Helen on the Ouija board. Next morning, Lavinia left a note for me. She wrote that she was going back to her grandmother. Her lawyer would communicate with me later. That seemed to be the end of my married life. However, the shocking situation turned into a

comic ending. She smelled that I was trying to hide someone behind my back. She accused me of flirting with Helen. Then appeared Helen's ghost before her. But my wife didn't faint. She saw the owl-faced unattractive ghost of Helen. She smiled with satisfaction and Helen's ghost disappeared. I got my loving wife back. She fell in my arms and I kissed her passionately twice. I was finally relieved. I was not be plagued by Helen's ghost anymore. And in the bargain I got an excellent plot for a ghost story.

Q7. The narrator and his wife reveal something about their characters in their words and actions. We also learn about them from what other people say. Can you pick out the words that describe them from the box given below? Also, pick out lines and instances from the story to illustrate your choice.

shy arrogant loyal clever overconfident manipulative
 protective self-disparaging suspicious sceptical jealous fearless
 firm shrewd strong gullible sly creative
 loves novelty and thrills

Q8. Gladolia, the narrator's cook, is an African. The language she speaks is different from the others. This is known as Dialect. A dialect consists of words or phrases that reflect the regional variety of a language. An author often uses a regional dialect to make the dialogue more authentic. Initially a dialogue may seem a little difficult to understand. However, as you continue reading, the language will become more comprehensible.

Person	Extract from story	What it tells us about the character
John Hallock	1. ...in the end things had always come my way..... somehow I'd always been able to dig one (plot) up for him, so I'd begun to get a bit cocky as to my ability (to write stories). 2. "But my ghosts aren't a bit like you....". 3. We scout around until we find a writer without ideas and with a mind soft enough to accept impression. 4. _____ _____ _____ 5. _____ _____ _____	1. _____ 2. sceptical 3. gullible 4. creative 5. protective
Lavinia Hallock	1. _____ _____ _____ 2. _____ _____ _____	1. loves novelty and thrills 2. spendthrift

	3. _____ _____ _____	3. suspicious
	4. _____ _____ _____	4. jealous
	5. Buys the Ouija board but says it is for John's research	5. manipulative
	6. Does not flinch when she meets the ghost but talks to her casually.	6. strong

Ans.

Person	Extract from story about the character	What it tells us
John Hallock	1. ...in the end things had always come my way..... somehow I'd always been able to dig one (plot) up for him, so I'd begun to get a bit cocky as to my ability (to write stories). 2. "But my ghosts aren't a bit like you....". 3. We scout around until we find a writer without ideas and with a mind soft enough to accept impression. 4. "I've got the bulliest plot for a ghost story!" I cried. 5. I threw a protective husbandly arm about her to catch her when she should faint.	1. overconfident 2. sceptical 3. gullible 4. creative 5. protective
Lavinia Hallock	1. "You know I bought the loveliest thing this afternoon. Everybody's wild over them!" 2. '...being bookkeeper for a lumber company does help with the grocery bills and pay for Lavinia's fancy shopping.' 3. "I will see who's behind you". _____ _____ 4. "It's bad enough to have you flirt over the Ouija board with that hussy....." 5. Buys the Ouija board but says it is for John's research 6. Does not flinch when she meets the ghost but talks to her casually.	1. loves novelty and thrills 2. spendthrift 3. suspicious 4. jealous 5. manipulative 6. strong

Q8. Gladolia, the narrator's cook, is an African, The language she speaks is different from the others. This is known as Dialect. A dialect consists of words or phrases that reflect the regional variety of a language. An author often uses a regional dialect to make the dialogue more authentic. Initially a dialogue may seem a

little difficult to understand. However, as you continue reading, the language will become more comprehensible.

working in groups, write what Gladolia's words mean as shown.

Column A	Column B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misto Hallock • de Missus • sho t'inks you's lost! • she done 'phone you dis mawnin' • fo' de lawd's sake • not to stop to argify now • I's gwine t' quit. • I don't like no hoodoos. • I'se done lef' displace • I is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mister Hallock

Ans.

Column A	Column B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misto Hallock • de Missus • sho t'inks you's lost! • she done 'phone you dis mawnin' • fo' de lawd's sake • not to stop to argify now • I's gwine t' quit. • I don't like no hoodoos. • I'se done lef' displace • I is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mister Hallock • The Mrs. • so thinks you have lost! • she did phone you this morning • for the Lord's sake • not to stop to argufy now • I am going to quit. • I don't like any hoodoos. • I have decided to leave this place • I am/I have

Q9. Read and understand the following ghost phrases and expressions:

- To give up the ghost**—to die or to stop trying
- A ghost of a chance**—a poor chance, not likely to happen
- The ghost at the feast**—something or someone that spoils your enjoyment by reminding you of something unpleasant
- Ghost town**—a town where most people have left-abandoned and deserted
- Ghost-write**—to write for someone else
- Lay the ghost of something/somebody (to rest)**--to finally stop being worried or upset by something or someone that has worried or upset you for a long time
- Ghost image**—secondary image, esp. one appearing on a television screen as a white shadow, caused by poor or double reception or by a defect in the receiver
- the ghost of a smile**—faint trace of a smile
- As white as a ghost**—very pale or white in the face

Now complete the following story by using the appropriate phrases in the blanks given below:

I was alone in place that bore a deserted look like that of a (a) _____. I increased the pace of my footsteps as I walked through the dark forest. I felt someone walking behind me. I turned immediately and spotted the contour of a figure in the form of a (b) _____. It smiled at me wickedly. I started shaking with fear and perspiring profusely when I felt its skeletal hand upon my neck. I woke up with a start, relieved that it was only a nightmare.

This was not the first time I had had one. It had all started when I had watched the horrendous horror film with a eerie ghost character that had a scary ghost of a smile on its face. It had been almost a month. The strange thing was that I saw a similar face at the station the next morning. That was uncanny.

I was to attend a dinner at my friend's at Northanger Abbey that night. I had decided to narrate my experience to the group that would assemble there although I knew there was (c) _____ that they would be convinced.

After everyone had finished pouring their drinks to themselves, I cleared my throat and started narrating my spooky experience. However, every one of the group started accusing me of being (d) _____ and held me responsible for spoiling the spirit of revelry. I gave up the ghost and sat quietly waiting for the party to be over. Back at home, the fears returned. I knew I had to talk about my experience to somebody to feel better. I have now decided to (e) _____ and publish my experience under a pseudonym. Only then can I (f) _____.

- Ans.** (a) ghost town (b) ghost image (c) a ghost of a chance
(d) the ghost at the feast (e) ghost-write (f) lay the ghost.

Q10. SPEAKING

Ghosts and haunting have fascinated the public for centuries. Although many doubt the existence of ghosts or other paranormal entities, many people dedicate their lives to searching and recording paranormal activity. Ghost tours, support groups, and research societies, to name just a few, permeate our society and seek to answer questions about paranormal activity.

Interview your friends, relatives and people in your neighbourhood about whether they believed in the existence of ghosts. Ask them to tell you of any specific experiences they might have had in this context. In your groups identify the most fascinating anecdote you gathered on the basis of your interactions. Narrate it to the class.

Ans. Attempt yourself.

Q11. WRITING

Do you think a story has an atmosphere? Complete the following blanks to make up your ghost story by choosing the correct options.

A Ghost Story

She opened the _____ (secret door/spaceship's hatch/door of the cottage/cemetery gate/door of the castle/cockpit) _____ (brashly/loudly/silently/stupidly/fearfully/joyously).

Standing in front of her was a _____ (terrifying/handsome/smelly/anonymous/tiny/huge/bossy) _____ (policeman/spy/apparition/witch/prince/wizard) with a _____ (wand/rose/rod/knife/scythe/coded message) in his/her (its) _____ (ghoulish/bony/beautifully/fair/manly/gloved/magical) hand.

Ans.

A Ghost Story

She opened the secret door of castle fearfully.

Standing in front of her was a handsome prince with a rose in his/her manly hand.

Now that you have shared a ghost story/anecdote as well as completed a guided story in the class, create your own Ghost story on the basis of the starters given below:

- (a) Stephen knew he would never sleep. The noises, those horrid sounds, would keep him awake...
- (b) Tap, tap, tap. Was it the branches of the nearby tree, or fingernails against the window?
- (c) People often say, 'There's no such thing as ghosts...

You are familiar with the key elements of a short story viz setting, plot, conflict, character and point of view. Given below are specifics to be kept in mind while writing a Ghost story. Also make use of the vocabulary that you have learnt from the story A Shady Plot.

See Literature Reader Pages 52–53

Ans. A Ghost Story

People often say that there are no such things as ghosts. This is exactly what I used to say before the ghost of Helen. She made me think otherwise. It was a chilly night. The howling wind and the fog created quite an uncanny atmosphere. I found myself totally confused and unprepared for the examination the next day. I couldn't remember when the sleep overpowered me. I needed some help from the heaven to clear the examination. Suddenly I saw the room glow with a faint light. I woke up to see a cherubic face with the locks flowing over her shoulders. I was frightened and cried 'ghost ghost!' The apparition smiled gently. "Don't be frightened. I have come to help you." She was so young and beautiful. I don't know what overpowered me, romance or fear. Anyway, she waved the magic wand, muttered something and disappeared. I heaved a sigh of relief. The lovely ghost meant me no harm. But I was certain to fail in the next paper. I had prepared only ten questions—that covered not even one-fourth of the course.

Next day, a miracle happened. All the ten-questions that I had prepared were there in the paper. I was confident and was the first to finish the paper. I was assured of 85 marks that I could not have imagined even in my dreams. Was she my good angel? Who was she that came to save a drowning ship? Perhaps I'll never be able to answer it.

SPEAKING

Q12. While conventional Ghost stories are scary and gruesome, several modern versions are humorous. The Canterville Ghost, by Oscar Wilde, is one of the best ghost stories written in the vein of laughing satire. The story that you just read is another example in case. Humour arises out of the narrator's ability to laugh at himself, clever use of language as well as comic situations. Discuss within your groups what makes the Shady Plot humorous. Share your views during a whole class discussion.

Ans. Attempt yourself.

LISTENING TASK

Q13. Listen to the extract from The Canterville Ghost by Oscar Wilde and complete the following tasks as directed.

1. Answer the following questions:

1. The Ghost loved the stormy weather because ... (Complete the statement by ticking the correct option)

- (a) he liked the rain
 - (b) he liked the strong wind that shook and rattled all the windows and doors in the old house
 - (c) his plan would fail otherwise
 - (d) such weather was ideal for frightening the people in the house.
2. The Ghost was particularly angry with Washington and wished to frighten him because (Complete the statement)
 3. The Ghost did not wish to frighten Virginia because (Complete the statement)
 4. The Ghost was most angry with (Complete the statement by ticking the correct option)
 - (a) Mr and Mrs Otis (b) Virginia (c) Washington (d) The Twins
 5. Write two striking qualities of the Ghost as are revealed in this extract.
 - (a) _____
 - (b) _____

Ans. Attempt yourself.

MORE QUESTIONS SOLVED

I. SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS (30-40 words)

Q1. Justify the title of Elsie Brown's story 'A Shady Plot'. [V. Imp.]

Ans. Elsie Brown very appropriately titles her short-story 'A Shady Plot'. The adjective 'shady' means anything of dubious character or of questionable honesty. The writer John Hallock was struggling to write a ghost story. However, the elusive dubious plot took a concrete shape after a series of strange incidents. Ironically, Helen's ghost inspires his creativity. In the end, what the writer gets is not a 'shady' but the 'fullest' or the best plot for the story.

Q2. Describe the use of humour, satire and irony in 'A Shady Plot'. [Imp.]

Ans. We get a judicious fusion of humour, satire and irony in the story. The writer satirises Lavinia's 'craze for taking up new fads' and her 'fancy shopping'. It is quite funny that she buys a Ouija board to help John write short stories. Elsie Brown's humour and irony find best expression when John says, "My wife is so pretty as when she's doing something she knows I disapprove of." Laura Hinkle is humourously called 'a flirtatious crocodile'. The ladies operating on Ouija boards are called 'manipulators.' In the end ironically, the ghost of Helen inspires John's creativity to write a short story.

Q3. Do you consider Elsie Brown's story 'A Shady Plot' an ideal ghost story. Describe the supernatural and the paranormal atmosphere in the story? [V. Imp.]

Ans. Elsie Brown's 'A Shady Plot' is an ideal ghost story based on a supernatural theme and atmosphere. The first sighting of Helen's apparition is a classical example of a ghost story. 'First an arm came out _ _ _ , then a leg _ _ _ , until at last there she was complete'. The Ouija board 'fanatics', or the manipulators are seen receiving answers from the ghost of Helen on the board. But the story is unlike other horror stories. Ironically, the ghost of Hellen inspires John's creativity to write a story.

Q4. What did Jenkins ask John Hallock to do and why?

Ans. Jenkins asked the narrator to write another ghost story based on the supernatural theme. He points out that John's ghosts are more life-like and are "live

propositions". He should give the readers "the horrors" that's what the public wants. Actually, Jenkins expected something more sensational and hair-raising stuff this time.

Q5. Why couldn't John Hallock contradict or refuse Jenkins? Give two reasons.

Ans. John Hallock was not in a position to contradict Jenkins. His magazine had been the only magazine to print his stories. Secondly, Jenkins had an uncanny knowledge as to when the landlord or the grocer was pestering him. John needed some extra money to pay for the bills. Hence, it was difficult to contradict Jenkins.

Q6. Why did John say sarcastically. "This writing business is delightful, isn't it?"
[Imp.]

Ans. Jenkins wanted a ghost story from John Hallock for his magazine. John chased the inspiration but in vain. He was finding it difficult to dig up a story. He sat down before his desk and waited, but nothing happened. His mind began to 'wander off on other unghostly and material things'. In despair he burst out, "This writing business is delightful, isn't it?" These sarcastic words reveal his utter helplessness.

Q7. Why did the narrator, John Hallock begin to get a 'bit cockey' to his ability?

Ans. John Hallock didn't specialise in ghost stories. But more or less they seemed to specialise in him. A ghost story had been the first fiction he had written. Strangely he had no idea to write a story. But the idea for a plot had come to him out of nowhere. He was able to write a ghost story. Somehow whenever Jenkins wanted a ghost story he was able to dig one up for him. So, John had become over confident or a bit cockey as to his ability.

Q8. Describe the first appearance of Helen's ghost before the narrator.

Ans. When John sarcastically called writing a 'delightful' business', a voice at the other end called, "I should say it is." The narrator jumped in surprise and looked around. He sat staring at it and presently noticed something just taking shape. First an arm came out, then a sleeve leg and at last there 'she' was complete. 'She' was long, angular with enormous fishy eyes behind her big bone-rimmed spectacles. She looked so solid that for a moment John began to doubt at his own senses. He believed she was real after all.

Q9. What does Helen's ghost tell about the aim of her appearance?

Ans. John felt sorry that he kept Helen, the ghost waiting for long. Helen, the ghost replied that she just came to tell him to stop bothering them (spirits or ghosts) for any help. John would not get any help from the spirits. They were going on strike. It meant that he would not get creative inspiration for another plot for writing a story from them.

Q10. Why and how did Helen, the ghost organise 'The Writer's Inspiration Bureau'?

Ans. Helen, the ghost revealed that she was a writer in the other (previous) life. But she was confused in thinking and ideas. When she attained her present stage of being, she made up her mind to do something. She found others who had suffered similarly. They organised 'The Writer's Inspiration Bureau'. Their aim was to find a writer without ideas and with a mind soft enough to accept impression. The aim was to help such a writer and report to the main office when the case was finished.

Q11. Why were they (spirits/ghosts) on strike? How was that to affect John according to Helen, the ghost?
[Imp.]

Ans. The ghost of Helen told John that all the spirits would go on strike. They had been called out of their beds too often in recent years. It was the fault of “those Ouija board fanatics.” They were always busy manipulating on their Ouija boards. The spirits had to sit at their desk and answer their questions. They were awfully busy and didn’t have time haunting for fun. She told that John would get no assistance in future from them.

Q12. What did Helen, the ghost ask John to do if he wanted their help in future?

Ans. Helen, the ghost made it clear that they would go on strike. Actually, they were going on strike because of the troubles that “Ouija board fanatics” were creating for. They had to work a lot. That would mean that John would get no assistance from them. Helen asked John to persuade his friends and acquaintances to stop using Ouija boards. If he was successful doing that, they could start helping him to write again.

Q13. Why did John not allow his wife Lavinia to come before the ghost?

Ans. John knew his wife was subject to hysterics. She could not bear even ‘a mouse say boo at her.’ If she had seen the phantom in her room, she would have started crying loudly. Therefore, John took all pains not to allow the meeting of Lavinia and the ghost of Helen.

Q14. What was the ‘duckliest’ and ‘darlingest’ thing that Lavinia bought? Did that please John? [V. Imp.]

Ans. Lavinia was quite excited. She bought an Ouija board. She called it ‘the duckliest and darlingest’ thing in the world. John considered it just another foolish act of Lavinia. However, Lavinia told John that he could talk to Napoleon and Helen of Troy on the Ouija board. The board will make writing his ghost stories easier.

Q15. How according to Lavinia the Ouija board could help John in writing stories?

Ans. Lavinia defended her act by saying that the Ouija board could help John write his stories. Suppose he wanted to write a historical novel, he would not have to read old books. He could take his Ouija and could talk to Napoleon, or William the Conqueror, or Helen of Troy. In this way, the Ouija board could help him in writing stories.

Q16. Lavinia considers Ouija boards “awfully thrilling but why does she call them positively devilish?” [V. Imp.]

Ans. Lavinia thinks that Ouija boards are “awfully thrilling.” She was very much excited after buying an Ouija board. Her husband John agreed that they were “thrilling all right.” That was just it. “They’re positively devilish.” After all they were a medium of communicating with ghosts and spirits. He wanted her to get rid of that thing as soon as she could. She must take that back and get something else.

Q17. Why did Lavinia not want to return the Ouija board?

Ans. John considered Ouija boards “positively devilish.” He asked his wife Lavinia to get rid of that devilish thing as soon as she could. But Lavinia didn’t want to return the Ouija board she had bought. In the first place they wouldn’t exchange as it was bought at a bargain sale. Secondly, if John was not interested in the other world or ghosts, she was. Saying this she walked out in a huff.

Q18. Why couldn’t John Hallock give his whole time to writing. What did he do to earn a living?

Ans. John had many responsibilities. He had not quite reached a point where he could give his whole time for writing. He was doing the job of a book-keeper in a lumber company. He had to pay for grocery bills and Lavinia’s fancy shopping.

Q19. Describe Lavinia's Ouija board party.

[Imp.]

Ans. Lavinia's Ouija board party consisted mainly of elderly women. They were sitting in couples. There was an Ouija board between each couple. They were manipulating Ouija boards to have communication with spirits. John was forced to become a partner of flirtatious Laura Hinkle. They could get answers of their questions from the spirits on the boards.

Q20. Why did John say ironically that his wife was never so pretty as when she was doing something she knew he disapproved of? Give two examples to prove it.

Ans. Ironically, Lavinia's face started glowing with pleasure when she did a thing not liked by her husband. She was never so pretty when she was doing something he disapproved of. She bought "the duckliest, darlingiest" Ouija board which John hated so much. She asked him to be a partner of flirtatious Laura Hinkle whom he disliked.

Q21. What did Laura Hinkle spell loudly after reading them on the Ouija board? How did those spellings on the board affect John Hallock?

Ans. Laura Hinkle was bending over the Ouija board and manipulating it. She spelled out loudly. "T-r-a-i-t-o-r." When she wanted to know its meaning, then came as answer. "A-s-k-h-i-m!" Laura's finger stuck to the board and she asked, "Ouija, won't you tell us who is talking?" Laura spelled out "H-e-l-e-n." John felt miserable and wanted to run away immediately.

Q22. What was the gossip among ladies and how did Lavinia and John react to it?

[Imp.]

Ans. Flirtatious Laura at once told Lavinia that some Helen had just been calling her husband on the Ouija board. Soon the rumour spread that John was flirting with some Helen on the Ouija board. All five Ouija boards were calling him by name. Lavinia looked at him angrily as if he were some peculiar insect. John felt miserable and his face showed an idiotic grin.

Q23. How did the Ouija party affect John and Lavinia's relationship? [V. Imp.]

Ans. John had to leave the party quite humiliated. He was suspected of flirting with Helen on the Ouija board. He got up and fled from the room. At the breakfast table next morning there was no sign of his wife. He heard a tap at the door and a white slip of paper slid under it. Lavinia had written that she was going back to her grandmother. Her lawyer would communicate with him later. Their relations were on the verge of breaking up. He wished, he was dead.

Q24. Why did John say to Helen, the ghost. "I wish to heaven I'd never seen you!"

[V. Imp.]

Ans. John Hallock held Helen, the ghost responsible for all his present miseries. On the Ouija board she pointed an accusing finger at him. John was suspected of flirting with Helen on the Ouija board by the women manipulators of the boards. Lavinia was very upset and angry. She threatened to go back to her grandmother. Her lawyer would communicate with him later. John felt losing his wife, home and peace for ever.

Q25. Why did Gladolia want to go away and how was she persuaded to stay back?

Ans. Gladolia, the cook wanted to go away. The reason was the Ouija board and hoodoos. She didn't want to stay at a place where there were those damned Ouija boards and hoodoos. She was scared of them. Lavinia could persuade her to stay. She asked Gladolia to use the Ouija board for making a fire.

Q26. Why did Lavinia give a satisfied smile after seeing Helen, the ghost?

Ans. John Hallock thought that after seeing the ghost, Lavinia would grow hysteric. But when Lavinia saw the owl-eyed phantom she was delighted. Certainly this Helen was not the Helen of Troy. She was rather unattractive. She posed no danger to her. Nor could John flirt with such a woman. So didn't faint as John had thought. On the other hand, a satisfied smile spread over her face.

Q27. How did John get the bulliest plot for a ghost story? Where is the irony in it? [V. Imp.]

Ans. John had blamed Helen, the ghost that she was responsible for destroying his home and peace. Ironically, the same ghost brought a broad smile on his wife's face. The ghost of Helen became a source of inspiration for John. The story had all the ingredients of a good ghost story. It also provided the 'bulliest' and best plot for writing a ghost story. He shoved Lavinia aside, for he felt a sudden strong desire to write.

II. VALUE-BASED LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS (80-100 words)

Q1. Describe John Hallock as a ghost story writer. Ironically, Helen, the ghost whom he blamed for disturbing his domestic bliss and peace gave him the 'bulliest' plot for a ghost story. Justify. [V. Imp.]

Ans. John Hallock didn't specialise in ghost stories. But they seemed to specialise in him. His very first fiction was a ghost story. John worked as a book-keeper in a lumber company to earn a living. However, writing gave him some additional income that helped him to pay for the landlord or the grocer. Jenkins asked him to write another ghost story. This time he wanted something really sensational and full of horror. Something that the public wants. John couldn't contradict Jenkins as his magazine had been the only one to print his stuff.

John was not particularly gifted for writing ghost stories. He just managed to write them. Even he didn't know how and why. Sometimes he had to chase inspiration for months. Even, Helen, the ghost undermined John's ability to write a ghost story.

John's creative inspiration as a writer of ghost story has strange links with Helen, the ghost. After Lavinia threatened to leave him, John felt that the end of his domestic bliss and peace had come nearer. However, the encounter of Helen and Lavinia proved a blessing in disguise. Lavinia was now sure that a very unattractive ghost like Helen posed no danger to her. He not only got the love of his estranged wife but also the best plot for writing a ghost story again.

Q2. Give a character-sketch of Lavinia highlighting her love for fancy shopping, craze for Ouija boards and her relation with John. [V. Imp.]

Ans. Lavinia, the volatile wife of John Hallock, is a colourful character. She is fun loving and extravagant. John is scared of her fancy shopping. He remembers her craze for taking up new fads. John can't devote his whole time to writing. He has to work as a book-keeper to earn a living and 'pay for Lavinia's fancy' shopping. One afternoon she buys 'the loveliest' and duckliest, darlingest Ouija board at a bargain sale. However, her husband thinks that it is a "foolish thing" to buy. She considers Ouija boards "awfully thrilling" but John considers them "positively devilish." She is quite excited and interested in the "other world." She even says that the Ouija board can help him in writing his stories. Through his Ouija board he can talk to Napoleon or Helen of Troy. He need not wear his eyes over books.

The rumour about John in the Ouija party upsets Lavinia. The idea of John flirting with Helen on the Ouija board is unbearable. Lavinia doesn't excuse her husband. The next day she threatens to go back to her grandmother. Once John feels that it was the end of his domestic bliss and peace. She suspects that John is hiding Helen in the room, and flirting with her. Only when she encounters Helen her doubts are laid to rest. The unattractive 'owl-eyed' ghost can't be her rival. She can't pose any danger to her. In the end, she fell forgivingly in John's arms. A satisfied smile spreads over her face.

Q3. What is Ouija-board? Describe Lavinia and other manipulators of the Ouija board and their party. How did the Ouija-board party affect the domestic life of John and Lavinia? [V. Imp.]

Ans. Ouija board is a spelling board. It is marked with letters of the alphabet and other signs. It is intended to communicate with and through the spirit world. At the Ouija board people try to make contact with and talk to the spirit of the dead people. They also obtain answers to their questions.

John's wife Lavinia buys a Ouija board at a bargain sale. She calls it the "loveliest" and "duckliest, darlingest Ouija board." Lavinia considers Ouija boards "awfully thrilling but John considers them "positively devilish." He asks her to get rid of the damned thing as soon as possible. However, Lavinia doesn't budge from her stand.

The Ouija board party was quite a disaster for John. He was to be a partner of flirtatious Laura Hinkins at the request of Lavinia. All the Ouija boards start calling his name. A rumour spreads around that John is flirting with someone named Helen on the Ouija board. His wife threatens to leave him for ever. He thinks that the end of his domestic bliss and peace has come quite near. Lavinia suspects that he is flirting with Helen in the room. Only when she encounters Helen, the ghost, she is finally relieved. Helen is not the Helen of Troy but an owl-eyed unattractive woman. She poses no danger to her. A smile of satisfaction spreads over her face. Their relations which were on the verge of breaking up are cemented again.

Q4. Describe the salient features of Helen, the ghost highlighting her job and role in the story. How did she influence John and Lavinia in different ways?

Ans. Helen, the ghost was long and angular. She had enormous fishy eyes. She wore big bone-rimmed spectacles and put her hair in a tight wad at the back of her head. When John saw her for the first time, she looked so solid that for a moment he believed she was real. She appeared in sections. First an arm came out, then a sleeve, then a leg and at last, she was standing complete there.

Helen, the ghost undermined John's ability as a story writer. She declared that all his plots and creative inspiration came from spirits like her. She claimed to be a writer in 'the other world.' However, she had no ideas and direction. With many others like her she organised the Writer's Inspiration Bureau. They scouted around until they found a writer without ideas and with a mind soft enough to accept impression. But Helen declared that John would not get any creative inspiration or plot from them. They were on strike. The reasons for their strike was the troubles they suffered from 'those Ouija board fanatics.' They were always manipulating on their Ouija board's talking to spirits. Spirits like Helen were

always busy in answering their questions on Ouija boards. They had no time for rest or fun. Helen, the ghost asked John to persuade his wife, friends and acquaintances to stop using Ouija boards. Only then they (spirits) would start helping him in writing.

Helen really brought John and Lavinia's married life on the brink of break-up. Lavinia suspected John of flirting with Helen on the Ouija board. She threatened to go back to her grandmother. John thought the end of his domestic bliss and peace was over. However, the encounter of Helen and Lavinia saved the situation. Lavinia didn't think that an owl-eyed unattractive Helen could pose any danger to her.

Q5. Describe 'A Shady Plot' as a ghost story, describing the supernatural and the atmosphere round which it is woven. Is it a different kind of ghost story? Give reasons to prove it. [V. Imp.]

Ans. Elsie Brown's 'A Shady Plot' is a ghost story with a difference. All the elements of a ghost story are there in it. An owl-eyed ghost, Helen plays an important role in the story. The story has Ouija boards. Ouija boards are spelling board devices. They are intended to communicate with the spirits of the dead. In the story, Lavinia buys the "loveliest" and "duckliest, darlingest Ouija board." The manipulators like Laura Hinkins operate on the boards to communicate with the ghosts or spirits. They even get answer of their questions.

However, 'A Shady Plot' is a different kind of ghost story. We don't have 'horror' or spine chilling scenes in the story. Even the atmosphere is different. No dark castles or forests or horrible and shocking ghosts and spirits. Even the appearance of the ghost of Helen doesn't send a chill down John's spine. No doubt, Helen appears in sections. But it is not a frightening ghost but she is 'so real' that John doubts his own senses. Helen is no Helen of Troy but an owl-eyed unattractive ghost. Even Lavinia doesn't faint to see her. Here, the ghost doesn't threaten but provides creative inspiration and the best plot for writing another ghost story.

Q6. John Hallock writes a letter to his friend Byron describing him how the answers given by Helen, the ghost on the Ouija board had almost ruined his domestic life. Ironically, the same ghost provided him the best plot for writing a ghost story. [V. Imp.]

Ans. 12, Picadally Circus
London

20 March, 20xx

Dear Byron

We know little about the working of this universe. It's absolutely true. Frankly, I was not specially gifted for writing ghost stories. Thanks to Jenkins. His magazine was the only magazine that printed my ghost stories. Somehow I managed to write a short story whenever Jenkins asked me to write one.

The appearance of the ghost of Helen was an important incident. She appeared part by part till she stood there as a complete woman before me. She had come to warn me that I would not get any help or creative inspiration from spirits like her. They had gone on strike because of the troubles they faced by Ouija board fanatics. She asked John to persuade his wife, friends and acquaintances to stop using Ouija boards. If he succeeded in it, he could get help in writing from them again in future.

The unpleasant incident at the Ouija board party almost brought my relationship with Lavinia on the verge of breaking. She suspected me of flirting with Helen on the Ouija board. However, her encounter with Helen, the ghost solved all my problems. She didn't faint but a satisfied smile spread over her face. The owl-eyed unattractive Helen could pose no danger to her. It saved our relations and I got a wonderful plot to write a ghost story. Ironically, it was due to Helen, the ghost.

Yours sincerely

John

TEST YOUR SKILLS

I. REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

1. I was not in a position to contradict Jenkins.

Questions

- (a) Why was the narrator not in a position to contradict Jenkins?
 - (b) Who was Jenkins?
 - (c) What had Jenkins asked the narrator to do?
2. I had often been like that before and in the end things had always come way—I didn't in the least know how and why.

Questions

- (a) What had often been like that before?
 - (b) How did things come the narrative's way in the end?
 - (c) What is the narrator talking about?
3. You see, I had reached the stage of imbecility when I was talking to myself.

Questions

- (a) What is the stage of imbecility?
 - (b) Why had the narrator reached the stage of imbecility?
 - (c) Why was he talking to himself?
4. "Look here. Haven't you been calling on heaven and earth all afternoon to help you write a story?"

Questions

- (a) Name the speaker.
 - (b) Who had been calling on heaven and earth for help and why?
 - (c) What was the narrator supposed to write?
5. But my ghosts aren't a bit like you."

Questions

- (a) Who is talking and to whom?
 - (b) Which ghosts are being referred to here?
 - (c) What does the word "You" stand for?
6. ..., and at last when I attained my present state of being, I made up my mind that something should be done.

Questions

- (a) What is the speaker's present form of being?

- (b) What was the speaker in 'the other life'?
- (c) What did the speaker decide to do and why?

7. "I groaned and clutched my hair. The very idea of that horrible scarecrow so much as touching me!"

Questions

- (a) Why did the speaker groan and clutch his hair?
- (b) Who was that scarecrow?
- (c) How did the narrator like that scarecrow touching him?

8. "I am going back to my grandmother. My lawyer will communicate with you later."

Questions

- (a) Who is going back to her grandmother?
- (b) Why is she going back to her grandmother?
- (c) What will her lawyer do?

9. My Lavinia fell forgivingly into my arms. I kissed her once or twice fervently, and then I shoved her aside, for I felt a sudden strong desire to write. The sheets of paper on my desk spread invitingly before me.

"I've got the bulkiest plot for a ghost story!" I cried.

Questions

- (a) Why did Lavinia fall into her husband's arms 'forgivingly'?
- (b) Why did the narrator shove his wife aside?
- (c) What had the narrator gained?

II. SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

1. What did Jenkins want from John Hallock and why?
2. Why couldn't John say no to Jenkins?
3. How could John Hallock manage to write ghost stories?
4. How did Helen, the ghost appear?
5. "Didn't you send for me?" Helen crisped. How did John do that?
6. What did "Going on strike" mean for John? How did it affect him?
7. What was Helen in the other life and what did she make up her mind to do?
8. Describe 'The Writer's Inspiration Bureau'.
9. How did Ouija board fanatics trouble Helen and other spirits?
10. Why did Helen, the spirit call John to exert his influence? On what condition did she agree to start helping him to write?
11. Why didn't John want Lavinia to see the ghost of Helen?
12. Why did John Hallock think that buying an Ouija board was a foolish thing to buy?
13. How could Ouija board help John in writing a historical novel according to Lavinia?
14. Why did Lavinia consider Ouija "thrilling" and John "positively devilish?"
15. Why did John have to work as a bookkeeper?
16. Why was John reluctant to pair with Laura Hinkle?
17. How did Laura Hinkle operate the Ouija board and with what results?
18. How was John suspected of flirting?

19. What effect did the incident at the Ouija party have on John and Lavinia's relationship?
20. How were the relations between John and Lavinia on the verge of breaking?
21. Describe the encounter of Lavinia with Helen, the ghost. What was the result?
22. Who was Gladolia and why did she want to leave Hallocks?
23. Instead of fainting, Lavinia was in high spirits after meeting Helen, the ghost. Why? Give two reasons.
24. How did John Hallock get the 'bulliest plot' of a ghost story? Do you find it ironical?

III. VALUE-BASED LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Describe 'A Shady Plot' as a ghost story with a difference. Give two reasons for your justification.
2. Helen, the ghost looks more real than the ghost. Describe Helen's role in the story.
3. Lavinia enjoyed doing things which John would never approve of. But why did she forgivingly fell into John's arms in the end?
4. Describe John's handling of Helen, the ghost and Lavinia.
5. Describe humour, satire and irony in 'A Shady Plot'.
6. Lavinia writes a letter to her friend how her relations with John were on the verge of breaking but a sudden turn of events saved them. Reproduce that letter in 80-100 words in your own language.