

A Shady Plot

2016

Extract Based Questions [3 Marks]

Question 1.

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

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.

- Who does 'it' refer to?
- How was 'it' taking shape?
- What is meant by the word, 'presently'?

Answer:

- 'It' refers to the ghost of Helen.
- 'It' was appearing in bits and pieces.
- Presently means 'at that time only'.

Question 2.

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

"Well, you needn't be, because I just came to tell you to stop bothering us for assistance; you ain't going to get it. We 're going on strike! "

- Who is the speaker?
- How is 'you' bothering 'us'?
- What does the word, 'assistance' mean?

Answer:

- The ghost of Helen is the speaker.
- 'You' refers to the aspiring writers who needed help from the ghosts to write their entires.
- The word 'assistance' means 'help'.

Question 3.

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

So I went home and set down before my desk and ... waited, but nothing happened. Pretty soon my mind began to wander off on to other things.

- Who is T?
- What did T wait for?
- What does the phrase, 'wander off' mean?

Answer:

- 'I' is the protagonist, John Hallock, of the story 'A Shady Plot'.
- 'I' waited for an idea of a ghost story to strike his mind.
- 'Wander off' means 'roam around aimlessly'.

Short Answer Type Questions [2 Marks]

Question 4.

What made the writer believe that he was good at writing ghost stories?

Answer:

The narrator thought that he was good at writing ghost stories because his publisher Jenkins always wanted him to write ghost stories. He told the narrator that his ghost stories were very well-received by the audience.

Question 5.

Why did the ghost of Helen come to see John Hallock?

Answer:

The Ghost came to see Hallock because the people on earth were making the lives of ghosts a hell by calling them every now and then using Ouija Boards and forcing them to answer their questions. The people had robbed them off all their joy and amusement and they couldn't go haunting people.

Question 6.

Why did the spirit in the Ouija Board call Hallock a traitor?

Answer:

The spirit of Helen had come to Hallock with a request. She wanted him to convince all his friends and relatives to stop using Ouija Board and there he himself was using Ouija Board in the party. So, she called him a traitor.

Question 7.

Why is John's wife angry and what does she decide to do?

Answer:

John's wife was angry when all the Ouija boards in the party called him a traitor and another name which was called was Helen. Lavinia thought that her husband was cheating on her and was going around with a woman named Helen. She decided to leave him and said that her lawyer would talk to him.

Question 8.

John Hallock could never displease Jenkins. Why?

Answer:

Jenkins was the only publisher who published John's books. He wanted John to write books which had supernatural elements in them. All his ghost stories were liked by the public. So, John could never annoy Jenkins.

Question 9.

Why didn't John want to partner Laura Hinkle at the Ouija Board party?

Answer:

John didn't want to be partner with Laura Hinkle during the Ouija Board Party because he had been asked by the ghost to not only stop playing but also dissuade others. The ghost made it very clear that only then it would help him write his ghost story.

Question 10.

What is 'The Writer's Inspirational Bureau' and what was its protest?

Answer:

It was a bureau which was started by all the ghost writers to help the aspiring authors. The main task of this organisation was to scout around until a writer without ideas was found. They would then plant an idea into their inspirational mind.

Question 11.

Why were Helen and other ghosts unhappy with the use of Ouija Boards?

Answer:

Helen and other ghosts were unhappy with the use of Ouija Boards because they had to be always on their toes for the Ouija Board fanatics called them too often to answer their questions. This did not leave them with any time to amuse themselves by haunting others.

Long Answer Type Question [4 Marks]**Question 12.**

How does Helen's appearance in the party make Lavinia get rid of her superstitious belief in Ouija Boards?

Answer:

Helen was quite superstitious and she bought an Ouija Board from the sale and organised an Ouija board party. The author was also forced to participate in the party. All the boards in the party screamed the author's name and called him a traitor. Everyone in the party believed that the narrator was having an affair with a woman called Helen. Lavinia was very angry and she made up her mind to leave the author. But when Lavinia entered the author's room and saw Helen, the ghost, she forgave her husband. She then told the ghost, she forgave her husband and told her maid to burn the Ouija Boards in the kitchen fire.

2015

Extract Based Questions [3 Marks]**Question 13.**

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

"Well, you needn't be, because I just came to tell you to stop bothering us for assistance; you ain't going to get it. We're going on strike!"

- Who speaks these words and to whom?
- What was the 'bothering' that was denied?

- What does the word 'bothering' mean?

Answer:

- Helen, the ghost, speaks these words to John Hallock.
- Assistance for providing ideas for writing ghost stories was denied.
- The word 'bothering' means 'worrying' or 'troubling oneself'.

Question 14.

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow: "

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—. "

- What was John denying?
- What does the word 'hussy' mean?
- Why did Lavinia think that John was flirting?

Answer:

- John was denying his love affair with Helen.
- The word 'hussy' means an impudent or immoral girl or woman.
- Every Ouija board was telling that John was a traitor who had deceived a lady named Helen.

Question 15.

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

And I had never found it healthy to contradict Jenkins. Jenkins always seemed to have an uncanny knowledge as to when the landlord or the grocer was pestering me, and he dunned me for a ghost. And somehow I'd always been able to dig one up for him, so I'd begun to get a bit cocky as to my ability.

- Why couldn't John contradict Jenkins?
- What did John 'dig up' for Jenkins?
- What does the word 'cocky' mean?

Answer:

- Jenkins was the only publisher who used to publish whatever was written by John. Moreover, John was in dire need of money at that time.
- John dug up ideas for writing ghost stories.
- The word 'cocky' means 'overconfident'.

Short Answer Type Questions [2 Marks]

Question 16.

How did 'The Writer's Inspiration Bureau' function?

Answer:

Those writers who faced difficulties in gathering ideas for writing ghost stories organised 'The Writer's Inspiration Bureau'. They moved around until they found a writer without ideas and with a mind soft enough to accept impression. Then, the case was brought to the attention of the main office, and one of them was assigned to it. When that case was finished they would bring in a report.

Question 17.

What does the ghost mean when it says, 'It is all your fault'?

Answer:

The ghost means to say that she requested her to persuade the people to stop the use of the Ouija board. But in his own house his wife has arranged an Ouija party. The ghost remains busy answering the questions asked by the people using Ouija boards. It is the violation of the promise and John is bound to suffer.

Question 18.

Why had John forgotten about Lavinia's message?

Answer:

At that moment John wanted to conceal Helen from Lavinia because he knew that Lavinia was too sensitive to bear the presence of a ghost in her house. So he gave priority to the act of concealing Helen.

Long Answer Type Question [4 Marks]**Question 19.**

How does the lesson. 'A Shady Plot' remind us that man has no right to invoke supernatural powers through Ouija boards, Tarot cards, etc. to solve his problems and that one should face life boldly and overcome difficulties using wit and intelligence. Write in 80-100 words.

Answer:

Man must honour the balance between earthly creatures and supernatural power as it has been made by Nature. He has no right to intrude into the placid world of the ghosts. Compelling the ghosts to answer the questions using Ouija board is an immoral activity. They don't get time to take rest, nor do they get time for recreation. In this scientific world man is not supposed to believe in ghosts. God has given man immense power of thinking and made him next to Him. Man must have confidence of solving all sorts of problems instead of hankering after superstitions and antiquated ideas. Using his wit and courage he himself can do wonders.

2014

Extract Based Question [3 Marks]**Question 20.**

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

"I hadn't the shade of an idea, but at the time that didn't worry me in the least. You see, I had often been like that before "

- Who is 'I'? What did he not have an idea about?
- Why was he not worried?
- What had actually happened earlier to make things right for him?

Answer:

- There stands for John Hallock. He had no idea about writing a ghost story
- He was not worried because he was overconfident that idea would come to him mysteriously as it had come to him on a previous occasion.
- While he was struggling for an idea for writing a ghost story it came to him abruptly and mysteriously. Then he became successful in writing a ghost story for the magazine of Jenkins.

Short Answer Type Questions [2 Marks]

Question 21.

Why did John's wife get angry with him? What did she decide to do?

Answer:

John's wife came to know that her husband had fallen in love with a lady named Helen. She decided to leave John's house and take legal action against him using her lawyer.

Question 22.

At one stage in the story, John wishes that he were dead. Why?

Answer:

John found himself in a vicious cycle. His publisher was putting pressure to write the ghost story as soon as possible. Helen was not going to help him in writing the story. His wife had the confusion that her husband had fallen in love with Helen. She had warned him that she would divorce him. The maid servant was going to leave the house of John. Under this situation, John wished that he were dead.

Question 23.

What made the writer believe that he was good at writing ghost stories and how was it disproved?

Answer:

A ghost story had been the first fiction that the author had written. As it was liked by the readers, Jenkins called on him whenever he wanted a ghost story for his magazine. It was disapproved when he felt that idea had not been coming to him despite his incessant endeavour.

2013

Extract Based Question [3 Marks]

Question 24.

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

"I have come to tell you that I am leaving," she staccatoed.

"Oh, yes, yes!" I agreed, flapping my arms about to attract attention from the corner.

- Who is the 'she' referred to here?
- Why had she decided to leave?
- Why did her husband behave in a strange manner?

Answer:

- The word 'she' here refers to Lavinia, the wife of John Hallock.
- She came to know that her husband had love affair with Helen. She could not tolerate it and decided to leave John's house.
- At that time Helen was in his room. He did not want Lavinia to see Helen. Moreover, Lavinia was going to leave his house.

Short Answer Type Questions [2 Marks]

Question 25.

Why does Lavinia feel that the Ouija board would help her husband?

Answer:

Lavinia has seen her husband struggling for getting ideas for writing a ghost story. She thinks that her husband will be able to talk to ghosts using an Ouija board and then he will have sufficient ideas for writing a ghost story.

Question 26.

Who formed the 'Writer's Inspiration Bureau'? Why was it formed?

Answer:

In her previous life, Helen was confused as a writer she hardly got ideas to write stories. In her ghost life she found others who had suffered similarly and they together formed 'the Writer's Inspiration Bureau'. It was formed to help a writer without ideas and with a mind soft enough to accept impression.

Long Answer Type Questions [4 Marks]

Question 27.

What does Helen, the ghost, demand from John Hallock? Why does she do so?

Answer:

Helen was the member of 'The Writer's Inspiration Bureau'. She had to go to the writers with no idea of writing ghost stories to help them. For this purpose only, she came to John. She explained her problem saying that she and other ghosts had to respond to the questions asked by the people using Ouija boards. All the ghosts had to work even at odd times and for longer time. They had no time for their own entertainment. Expressing her problems, she began to weep.

Helen requested the author to persuade the people to stop using Ouija boards using his own influence. If he did so, she would help him by providing ideas for writing a ghost story. If Helen succeeded in her mission, she and other ghosts would lead a peaceful life. So for getting rid of her problems as well as the problems of the other ghosts, she showed her eagerness to help John and get his help.

Question 28.

What problems did Helen, the ghost, cause in John Hallock's life?

Answer:

Helen came to John to get rid of her own problems. So she showed her eagerness to help John in writing a ghost story. In return, she wanted John's help. John had to persuade the people to stop the use of Ouija boards. So John and Helen promised to help each other. But John's wife arranged a Ouija board party in her house. It was the violation of the promise made by John. So when the party was going on Helen appeared and called John a traitor. It was wrongly interpreted by everyone and John felt humiliated as everybody blamed that he had fallen in love with Helen. His wife warned John that she was going to leave his house and divorce him very soon.

The maid servant was also going to leave his house. John was already in extreme stress as the publisher was putting pressure on him to write the ghost story and John was unable to have any idea for writing the same. So we can say that Helen was the root cause of the various problems being faced by John Hallock.

Question 29.

As Lavinia, John Hallock's wife, write a letter to your sister on Helen, the ghost and how you misunderstood your husband.

Answer:

New Delhi
15 June 20XX

Dear Robinia

Hope this letter finds you in the pink of health. I am going to explain how I misunderstood my gentle husband who has been so loyal to me since our marriage.

Recently, I arranged an Ouijaboard party and invited many couples. When it was going on a lady appeared on all the Ouija boards and started calling my husband a traitor. I felt so bad as I was publicly humiliated. All the couples were saying that my husband had fallen in love with a lady named Helen and he deceived her later on. The ignominy became so intolerable for me that I decided to leave the house of my husband and divorce him.

My eyes were opened the next day when the reality came before my eyes. I saw that Helen was so ugly. She was a ghost. So there was no question of love affair between her and my husband. As he knew that I would be extremely afraid to see a ghost he always hid her from me and never told me about her arrival. So I was mistaken and doubted my loyal husband.

Now I am repenting for what I did.

Convey my regards to elders and love to children.

With heaps of love.

Yours lovingly

Lavinia

2012

Extract Based Question [3 Marks]

Question 30.

Read the following extract and answer the question that follow:

"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. "

- Who is the speaker? Who is being addressed?
- What is the speaker's complaint?
- What is a Ouija board?

Answer:

- Helen is the speaker. She is explaining her problems to John.
- The speaker complains that the ghosts don't get time for amusement as they have to respond to the questions of the Ouija board fanatics.
- It is a board on which the letters of the alphabet are marked. Answers to questions are spelt out by a pointer or glass held by the fingertips of the participants and are supposedly formed by spiritual forces.

Short Answer Type Questions [2 Marks]

Question 31.

Why did the ghost want people to stop using the Ouija board?

Answer:

The number of the Ouija board fanatics had increased alarmingly. The ghosts were facing a lot of problems. They had to answer the questions of the people anytime. They had no time for their amusement. Previously they had sufficient time to haunt people. Their life had

became so pathetic that Helen began to weep while she was explaining her miseries to John.

Question 32.

Why was John surprised at Lavinia's reaction on seeing the ghost?

Answer:

John was of the view that Lavinia would faint after seeing a ghost. But when John saw that Lavinia was looking at the apparition, he became surprised. Lavinia also fell forgivingly into the arms of John though she had warned John that she would leave his house and divorce him. The drastic change in Lavinia was indeed a startling fact for John.

Question 33.

Why was John not worried when Jenkins asked him for a ghost story?

Answer:

John had been writing ghost stories for several years. It was an easy piece of work for him. He impressed Jenkins first time by writing a ghost story. Since then whenever Jenkins assigned John the task of writing a ghost story, ideas for writing the same would come to him without making much effort. Like previous occasions he was sure that he would have no difficulty in writing a ghost story.

Question 34.

'We're going on strike!' Explain the context.

Answer:

When John was facing problems in writing a ghost story, Helen was sent to him by 'The Writer's Inspiration Bureau' to help him. But she explained the problems of the ghosts and said that the ghosts were fed up with the excessive use of the Ouija boards by the people. They were going on strike and they would not help anyone in writing ghost stories. So she requested John to persuade the people to stop the use of Ouija boards. She warned further that the ghosts would go on strike if the use of the Ouija boards continued.

Question 35.

Why did John Hallock's wife decide to leave him?

Answer:

Lavinia, the wife of John Hallock, came to know from the users of the Ouija boards that John had fallen in love with a lady named Helen. When the Ouija party was going on in the house of Lavinia, she felt very much humiliated and took it as a severe offence on the part of John, she could not tolerate the ignominy and decided to leave John for good.

Question 36.

Why did John want his wife to get rid of the Ouija board she had bought?

Answer:

John had to write a ghost story for Jenkins. He had been facing problems in getting ideas for writing the same. One evening, Helen came and promised to help him in writing a ghost story on one condition. The condition was that John had to persuade the people to stop the use of the Ouija board. John promised Helen that he would persuade the people. Then if John's wife used an Ouija board it would be the violation of the promise made by John.

Question 37.

Why did John Hallock try to prevent Lavinia from seeing the ghost?

Answer:

John was well aware of the nature of Lavinia. According to him, Lavinia was very sensitive who would say boo even on seeing a mouse in her room. It would be a very terrifying and

shocking experience for Lavinia, if she saw a ghost in her house. So John thought that Lavinia would faint on seeing a ghost. Under this situation, John thought it his moral duty to prevent Lavinia from seeing the ghost.

Question 38.

John's apprehension about his wife's reaction to the encounter with the ghost is unfounded. Justify.

Answer:

John was of the view that Lavinia would faint on seeing a ghost. Whenever Helen came to John, he tried to prevent Lavinia from seeing her. When Helen came last time, Lavinia managed to see Helen but she didn't faint. She began to smile. Later, she talked to Helen. So she was quite normal. Hence, the apprehension of John was indeed unfounded.

Question 39.

Why did the ghost come to meet John and what did she announce?

Answer:

When John was facing problems in writing a ghost story, Helen was sent to him by 'The Writer's Inspiration Bureau' to help him. But she explained the problems of the ghosts and said that the ghosts were fed up with the excessive use of the Ouija boards by the people. They were going on strike and they would not help anyone in writing ghost stories. So she requested John to persuade the people to stop the use of Ouija boards. She warned further that the ghosts would go on strike if the use of the Ouija boards continued.

Long Answer Type Question [4 Marks]

Question 40.

How did the 'Ouija board party' prove disastrous for John Hallock?

Answer:

In the Ouija board party, several couples had been invited by Lavinia. As Mrs Laura Hinkle was without her husband, Lavinia requested her husband to use the Ouija board along with Mrs Hinkle. All of a sudden, a piece of news spread in the party that Mr. John had fallen in love with a lady named Helen. As he deceived her, she was calling him a traitor. Some ladies in the party tried their level best to make Lavinia know the rumor that had spread. It was a very humiliating experience for John. Lavinia doubted the loyalty of her husband and warned that she would leave his house and divorce him. Gentle and loyal John was unable to prove himself innocent. He was of the view that Lavinia would faint if she came to know that Helen was a ghost. Later, the maid servant also announced that she was going to leave the house. On the other side, Helen was angry thinking that John had not kept his promises as the Ouija party was organised in his house. So she would not help John in writing a ghost story. His publisher Jenkins was putting pressure on him to write the ghost story as soon as possible and John was unable to get ideas for writing a ghost story. So the Ouija board party proved so disastrous for John.