

Short Stories - 3.

The Rocking-horse Winner

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Q. 1 What was the reason for young Paul's restlessness at the beginning of the story? How did it find expression?

Answer:

It was his mother's unhappiness that was causing Paul's restlessness. Paul started worrying for his mother as she tells him that they were not lucky enough to have luxuries such as a car. She also tells him that she lost her luck because Paul's father was not lucky.

Q. 2 Why do you think Paul's mother was not satisfied with the yearly birthday gift of 1,000 pounds for five years?

Answer:

Paul's mother was not satisfied with the yearly birthday gift of 1000 pounds as she is never content with what she has. She always wishes to have more. She believes that she deserves more from her life. She even wishes to have the entire 5000 pounds that was to be received over 5 years, at once.

Q. 3 What was the reason for the anxiety of Paul's mother as he grew older?

Answer:

Paul's mother was worried about him getting too involved in horse racing. She therefore asks the gardener and his uncle to keep him away from it. She finds that Paul is always stressed and tensed about horse racing and she is concerned about his health. She even rushes back from a party to make sure he is safe but unfortunately, she returns to find him in an unfortunate state.

Q. 4 Paul's final bet made the family rich but cost him his life. Explain.

Answer:

Paul was determined to prove to his mother that he was lucky, and he wanted to make her happy. He constantly heard the house whispering to him that there must be more money. He therefore starts betting in horse races, which causes his health to deteriorate due to excessive stress and pressure. Towards the end, he earns 80,000 pounds in Derby by betting on Malabar but loses his life at the cost of it.

TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT

Q. 1 Discuss the following in pairs or in small groups 'Luck is necessary for success in life'.

Answer:

One might believe that luck is necessary for success while another might solely believe in working hard to achieve success. Some tend to leave everything to fate, hoping that their luck would bring them what they desire while others put in their hard work and leave the rest to fate. People's beliefs tend to differ, and it depends which one chooses to follow.

Q. 2 Discuss the following in pairs or in small groups Although Paul's mother liked to be rich she did not approve of betting on horses.

Answer:

Paul's mother desired to be rich and lead a lavish lifestyle. But she believed that she couldn't do so because of her husband's bad luck. She therefore sets out to do something about it but couldn't materialize it. She was under the presumption that she was cut out to be rich and deserved better from life. However, she was against gambling. When she finds out that Paul was engaging in betting, she makes him promise to

not think about gambling again as she saw her family members pursue it and it only led to their fall.

Q. 3 Discuss the following in pairs or in small groups. What were the voices that Paul heard? Did they lead him to success in the real sense?

Answer:

Paul's family was struggling to maintain their social position. There was always shortage of money. Paul's mother believed that her husband's bad luck was causing this, and she therefore decides to do something about it. It was then that Paul started hearing these voices. He wanted to make his mother happy and wanted to take his father position's in her life. But he was the only one who seemed to be hearing these sounds, suggesting that he was probably just imagining them. But these voices kept him motivated to help his mother earn money. He therefore starts betting in horse races. He would get on his shiny riding horse and went at it until he was sure of the horse that would win the next race. At the end, he ends up making 80,000 pounds through a race, but this costs his life.

APPRECIATION

Q. 1 Examine the communication channels in the story between

- a. Paul and his mother
- b. Paul and Bassett
- c. Paul and his uncle
- d. Bassett and Paul's uncle
- e. Paul's mother and his uncle

Answer:

- a. Paul and his mother – Paul and his mother shared an intimate relationship, although they were never seen expressing it. In the

beginning, the author mentions that only the children and their mother knew there was no love in their relationship. However, Paul wanted to see his mother happy and she too, cared for his health and well-being.

b. Paul and Bassett – Paul and Bassett were partners who shared the gains of gambling in horse races. But their relationship was also that of an affectionate one. Only Bassett knew of Paul's ability to exactly predict which horse would win the race. He would get all information regarding the races and Paul would then guide him on which horse to bet on.

c. Paul and his uncle – Paul and Uncle shared an interesting relationship. They became partners in betting after his uncle learnt of his ability to exactly predict the results of a race. His uncle also cared for Paul. He noticed that the betting was affecting Paul's health.

d. Bassett and Paul's uncle – Paul's uncle and Bassett have known each other for a long time. Although Bassett doesn't reveal to Paul's uncle about the betting, but when asked about it, he explains it all to him.

e. Paul's mother and his uncle – Paul's mother and his uncle were both concerned about Paul. When she notices that Paul's health is deteriorating, she asks his uncle to keep him away from horse races.

Q. 2 How has the author linked the symbol of the rocking-horse to Paul's triumphs at the races?

Answer:

The author uses the rocking-horse to show Paul's determination to get his mother's love. He wishes to see his mother happy and he, therefore, sets out to give her the money that she desires. Paul's mother wishes to lead a lavish life, but she blames Paul's father for his bad luck. Paul, therefore, rides the horse until he is sure of the horse that will win the race. In this way, he earns the money and proves his luck. At the end, it can be seen that he is successful in earning his mother's love too. Her

concern for his health grows and she worries about him but loses his life over the money.

Q. 3 The ending of the story is an instance of irony. Suppose Paul had not died at the end; how would you have reacted to the story?

Answer:

The ending that the author gave was rather tragic. It was touching and impactful. It showed the true price of chasing for money. But a happy ending would have done justice to Paul's efforts and his determination. He craved for his mother's love and at the end, he did receive it but was not alive to witness it with his own eyes. One would, however, agree that the tragic ending helped the author in conveying the true value of the story.

LANGUAGE WORK

Q. 1 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush'.

- a. Explain the above statement in the literal sense -
- b. Explain it in the context in which it is mentioned in the story –

Answer:

a. Explain the above statement in the literal sense - This phrase is used to say that it is better to hold onto something one has than to risk losing it by trying to get something better.

b. Explain it in the context in which it is mentioned in the story – In the story, Paul gifts his mother 5,000 pounds on the occasion of her birthday, but it was to be given over 5 years. She, however, wishes to have the entire sum at once. Paul agrees to it in the anticipation that he can earn more in the next races. This drives him to push further which takes a toll on his health. In the end, Paul's mother's desire for more money costs his life.

Q. 2 Explain the following phrases Sure as eggs; Spinning yarns; Turned to dust. Use them in sentences of your own.

Sure as eggs, spinning yarns, Turned to dust

Answer:

Sure as eggs – When one is certain that something is going to happen.
“If you don't deal with the problem now, then sure as eggs you'll have cause to regret it later”

Spinning yarns – Telling a long, interesting story. “She is a great storyteller, so she'll probably spin them a yarn about something.

Turned to dust – To completely destroy something “All her hopes were turned to dust”

Q. 3 Given below is the dictionary meaning of

Smirk: to smile in a silly or unpleasant way that shows that you are pleased with yourself. Look up the dictionary for the following words which are also related to facial expressions and write down the meaning of each

Smile, grin, grimace, sneer

Answer:

- Smile – a pleased, kind, or amused facial expression
- Grin – a broad smile
- Grimace – an ugly, twisted expression on a person's face, typically expressing disgust, pain or amusement
- Sneer – a contemptuous or mocking smile