

The Letter

2016

Short Answer Type Questions [2 Marks]

Question 1.

Ali in the story, 'The Letter', is a lonely man. How does the writer bring out his loneliness?

Answer:

Ali lived all alone after his only daughter Miriam had got married and left him. He was passing his days waiting for a letter from his daughter. Ali walks his lonely way to the post office. The whole town is wrapped in deathly silence.

Question 2.

"For now the postmaster understood Ali's heart and his very soul." Explain.

Answer:

The postmaster understood Ali's heart and soul when his daughter lay ill in another town, and he was anxiously waiting for news from her. This worry and anxiety for her daughter changed the postmaster. He understood Ali's heart and soul and his yearning for his daughter.

2015

Extract Based Question [3 Marks]

Question 3.

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

The old man, shivering at times but fixed of purpose, plodded on till he came out of the town-gate on to a straight road. Along this he now went at a somewhat slower pace, supporting himself on his old staff.

- Who was the old man and why was he shivering?
- Where was he going so early?
- What does the phrase, 'plodded on' mean?

Answer:

- The old man was Coachman Ali. He was going to the post office early in the morning. It was winter and he was wearing limited torn clothes.
- He was going to the post office so early with in the hope of receiving the letter of his daughter.
- 'Ploded on' means walked laboriously.

2014

Extract Based Question [3 Marks]

Question 4.

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

The whole universe is built up through love and that the grief of separation is inescapable.

- When did the speaker acquire this philosophy?
- What pain has the speaker gone through?
- What does the word 'inescapable' mean?

Answer:

- The speaker acquired this philosophy when his daughter went to the Punjab with her husband.
- The speaker has gone through the pain of separation from his dear daughter.
- The word 'inescapable' means 'that can't be escaped or avoided'.

Short Answer Type Question [2 Marks]

Question 5.

What was the reason behind Ali's unshakeable faith that he would receive a letter from Miriam one day?

Answer:

Ali had immense love and affection for his daughter. He was also aware of the fact that his daughter loved him so much. He had faith in Allah. All this brought conviction in him that he would receive the letter of his daughter Miriam one day.

2013

Extract Based Question [3 Marks]

Question 6.

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

The old man got up, raised his eyes to heaven in gratitude and stepping forward put his hands to the door.

- Who was the old man?
- Why did he raise his eyes to heaven in gratitude?
- Why had the clerk called out his name?

Answer:

- The old man was Coachman Ali.
- When the clerk called out his name, he felt that his long cherished desire of getting the letter of his daughter had been fulfilled.
- To make fun of Ali and to make the staff of the post office laugh, the clerk called out Ali's name.

Short Answer Type Question [2 Marks]

Question 7.

Describe the early morning scene when Ali visited the post office.

Answer:

It was early dawn of the winter season. The stars were still glowing in the grey sky. The sound of grinding mills and sweet voices of women singing at their work were coming from some houses. The occasional bark of a dog and the screech of a bird could be heard. The whole town was wrapped in deathly silence but Ali was going to the post office.

Long Answer Type Question [4 Marks]

Question 8.

One feels other's pain only when one goes through it himself/herself. Explain the postmaster's change of heart in the story 'The Letter' and why it took place.

Answer:

Coachman Ali used to go to the post office regularly in the hope of receiving the letter of his daughter. He used to sit on the verandah of the post office. The staff of the post office began to make fun of him. They also told the postmaster that Ali was an insane old man who had been coming to the post office for several months without any reason. One day, Ali lost his patience and went to the postmaster to enquire about the letter of his daughter. The postmaster lost his temper for this simple reason and began to reprimand Ali. Neither did he bother about Ali's age nor did he realise the significance of love and affection that Ali had in his heart for his daughter. He called Ali a pest. He scolded Ali so badly that Ali's eyes were filled with tears of helplessness.

One day, trouble came to the postmaster when he began to wait for the letter of his own daughter, who was ill in another town. Seeing an envelope of the colour and shape he had expected, he eagerly snatched it up. But it was the letter of Ali. It was then that he realised the significance of letter. Till he did not undergo the same affliction himself, he could not know the grief of a father.

2012

Short Answer Type Questions [2 Marks]

Question 9.

What were Ali's reasons for giving up hunting?

Answer:

After marriage Ali's daughter went to the Punjab with her husband. Ali felt pangs of separation from his daughter. Then he realised that he must not kill any bird or animal as they would have the same grief of separation.

Question 10.

Why could Ali not enjoy a sportsman's pleasure of hunting any more after Miriam left him?

Answer:

After the departure of Miriam, Ali began to live in utter solitude. Having felt the agony of separation, he began to imagine the grief of separation in the life of birds and animals that his hunting caused. He became kind and sympathetic towards animals and left the grim business of hunting.

Long Answer Type Questions [4 Marks]

Question 11.

Rebuked by the postmaster, Ali walks away from the post office with a heavy heart. That night, he writes his diary expressing his feelings about the day's events and his approaching end.

Answer:

Monday, 24 August

9 p.m.

What will be the fate of the posterity? Every member of the society is becoming furious. I did not harm the postmaster by simply inquiring about the letter of my daughter. But he began to rebuke me as if I had committed a crime. I began to weep. But I did not reply. Allah gave me courage to tolerate. But he himself is a father. Why couldn't he realise the love and affection of another father that he had in his heart for his daughter. I will never go to the postoffice. I have been badly humiliated. I am nearing my death. Very soon I will depart from this world. But I am worried about deteriorating human values. Elderly people must be respected in society. I am hopeful that good sense will prevail and elderly people will get the same respect as they would get in ancient India.

Question 12.

Imagine you are Ali's daughter Miriam. Write a letter to a friend expressing your feelings on learning about your father's life and death.

Answer:

23 A Model Town

New Delhi 1100XX

27 August 20XX

Dear Nilufa,

Hope this letter finds you in the best of your health and spirit. I am writing to you to share my grief which I feel after knowing about the passing away of my father. My father was indeed an epitome of love and sacrifice. After the death of my mother, he played, in my life, the dual role as mother and father. He left no stone unturned to bring happiness in my life. But after marriage, I forgot him for a long time. He went on waiting for my letter and tolerated all sorts of humiliation in the post office. I feel ashamed for remaining selfish. My father had to struggle a lot and he dragged his cheerless existence to know about me before his departure from this world. But my letter reached there only after the death of my Abbu. I am repentant and confess my guilt.

I hope that his soul will forgive me.

Convey my regards to elders.

With love.

Yours sincerely

Miriam

Short Answer Type Questions [2 Marks]**Question 13.**

In the story, 'The Letter' the postmaster called Ali 'a pest'. Do you find his comment justified? Explain.

Answer:

No, the postmaster is not justified. Ali was indeed an epitome of love and affection. His fatherly love is applaudable. He went to the postmaster to enquire about the letter only when he felt that he would not be able to come to the post office the next day. The postmaster failed in measuring the depth of love in Ali's heart of hearts.

Question 14.

'Ali displays qualities of love and patience.' Give evidence from the story to support the statement.

Answer:

Being ignited by the feeling of love and affection, Ali would go to the post office regularly. He never bothered about the heat or cold caused by others. His love for his daughter gave him courage to tolerate all sorts of scolding and humiliation. He used to sit on the varandah of the post office waiting for the letter. He never became impatient.

Question 15.

How did the postmaster's attitude towards Ali eventually change?

Answer:

The postmaster humiliated Ali as he failed to realise the fatherly love of Ali. In the course of time, he got the news of the illness of his daughter. He became impatient and snatched a letter from a clerk thinking it to be the letter of his daughter. But it was the letter of Miriam. Then he confessed his guilt and decided to handover the letter to Ali himself.

Long Answer Type Question [4 Marks]**Question 16.**

Imagine, Ali writes a letter to one of his friends about what he does before his death. Write that letter on his behalf.

Answer:

26C Muradabad
Uttar Pradesh 20XXXX
29 August 20XX

Dear Karim

I hope you are hale and hearty by the grace of Allah. I am trying to justify the last decision of my life.

I used to go to the post office to receive the letter of my daughter. One day, the postmaster scolded me badly and humiliated publicly. But he could not kill my desire to receive the letter of my daughter. When I felt that my death was approaching nearer and nearer, I decided to adopt another way of receiving the letter of my daughter. In the postoffice, there is a descent clerk named Laxmi Das. I gave him five golden guineas and asked him to forward the letter of my daughter to me if it came after my death. I have faith in Laxmi Das. He will certainly forward the letter to me. I think that the letter is more important than the golden guineas. So my decision is judicious. Now I will depart from this world with satisfaction. Hope that you will take care of my daughter as you are my most faithful friend.

The rest is OK.

Yours lovingly

Ali