

The Servant

TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS ANSWERS

Q.1. Why had Gerasim been going about in vain in the village?

Ans: Gerasim had been working in Moscow under/to a merchant. Meanwhile, he had been summoned back to his village for military duty, but, unfortunately, he had not been drafted (selected). Since from early boyhood, he had been living in Moscow and obviously, he was not used to the country life (village life) and it seemed dull to him in the village. Though he looked for some job there he could not get it, so, when he had nothing to do in the village he felt that he had been going about in vain in the village.

Q.2. Where had Gerasim been working? Why did he return to his village?

Ans: Gerasim had been working in Moscow to a merchant. He returned to his village because he had been called back to his village for military duty. So, he had to give up his job but later he was not drafted for military duty. When he again approached his old employer, he too refused to take him up again for the job as the place was already filled up.

Q.3. What did the coachman tell Gerasim when he narrated his story?

Ans: When Gerasim narrated his story, the coachman started giving him a long speech of honesty and sincerity. He told him that people do not serve their masters wholeheartedly and that is why they are not being taken back to work. He also advised him that he should serve his masters so that they would think a lot of him. In addition to it, he told him that he would speak to his master for his employment if he wanted to.

Q.4. How did the coachman persuade his master to employ Gerasim?

Ans: The coachman had a glib tongue and he knew how to wag it. At first, he tried to get a position for his friend, Gerasim by persuading his master that Polikarpych had become so old that he could not do his job in a good manner and it was no longer a need to keep him as a servant. He told him many lies about Polikarpych and it was the right time to dismiss him. Finally, the master and the coachman agreed to send Polikarpych away and adjust

Gerasim in his place because the master had been motivated by the coachman that he was a good boy from his village and was without a job who could prove himself dutiful and punctual if he was given some job.

Q.5. Why was the master reluctant to disengage the old servant?

Ans: The master was reluctant (unwilling) to disengage the old servant because he had been with him for fifteen years. Moreover, there was no cause to disengage him. Though the master had all love and sympathy for him and was not willing to disengage him, the coachman persuaded his master to dismiss the old servant.

Q.6. What did Gerasim hear while crossing the yard?

Ans: Gerasim heard the voices of a man and a woman coming from a room who were undoubtedly Polikarpych and his wife. At first, he heard a woman who was cursing herself and her fate. In fact, the couple had been dismissed by the master and they were wailing over it. The woman said that they had nowhere to go and there was nothing left for them except the begging. She said that though they had served their master honestly, sincerely and faithfully but in their old age, they had been asked to go. He also heard her husband, Polikarpych, saying that the master was not so much to blame. It was the coachman to blame who motivated their master to dismiss them.

Q.7. What did the couple think about the master?

Ans: The old couple said that their master was so mean and he did not think of anyone but cared only for his own advantage. They said that their master had no sense of justice and sympathy for them though they served him honestly and faithfully for years. But Polikarpych said that it was the coachman who was the real culprit as he told many lies against them.

Q.8. What was the effect of the old couple's conversation on Gerasim?

Ans: The old couple's conversation rented Gerasim's heart and it stabbed him like a dagger. He was full of pity and sympathy. He realized what misfortune he would be bringing the old couple, so, he finally decided not to work at their place and it would not be fair and just to be the cause of ousting the old couple.

Q.9. How does the story reflect the humility of Gerasim?

Ans: There is no doubt in Gerasim's humility which reflects all through the story. He was really kind-hearted and had truly a human heart that throbbed full of sympathy for the old couple. When he heard Polikarpych's wife cursing herself and also her fate for dismissing them from their job for no cause, it rented his heart. He decided not to work there because he did not want to become the cause of their oust.

Language Work

1. Use these words in sentences to show the difference in their meaning:

1. I cannot convince everyone.

Every one of the brothers was listening there.

2. Anyone can go and talk to them.

They can have any one of those things.

3. He dived deep into the river.

They came in to talk to me.

4. Who ever thought this?

Whoever need it - bag is ready.

5. You are indifferent to your parents.

They took admission in different schools.

WRITING WORK:

Q. Compare and contrast the characters of Gerasim and the coachman.

Ans: Gerasim and the coachman could be considered as the two faces of the same coin in the sense that they belong to the same village but with different nature, attitude and calibre.

They have different characters. The coachman was working under a merchant who was wealthy while Gerasim was working as a servant for some other merchant. Meanwhile, he was summoned to his village for military duty but, unfortunately, he was not drafted for it. When he again approached his old employer, he refused to take him back as the place was already filled. He was then jobless. In this regard, he wandered place to place in search of a job but could find nothing.

Gerasim was an honest and humble fellow and was very sincere but the coachman was clever, proud and dishonest. Gerasim was simple, kind-hearted and loving while as the coachman was cruel, cunning and stone-hearted. Gerasim was self-sacrificing and straight forward who gave up the job when he needs it desperately while as the coachman was selfish and had a glib tongue who knew how to wag it. Gerasim didn't want to be praised but the coachman did. Though he managed to get Gerasim employed in the old servant's place by telling so many lies against the old couple but when Gerasim heard the painful story of the couple, it made him sick at heart and being humble and sympathetic, he refused to work there.

Q. What are the major themes of the story "The Servant"?

Ans: The story has at least two major themes. One, how unworthy a man feels of himself when he is without work. Gerasim had almost descended to snatching the bread of the old man when he could not find a job otherwise.

The second theme is that human conscience must lead the man in his daily course of life. When Gerasim was awakened by his inner voice, he could realize how sinful it was to snatch somebody else's position to satisfy his own need.

Q. What is irony? Bring out the elements of irony in the story, "The Servant".

Ans: Irony is the figure of speech which consists of a statement that appears to be praise but is really a condemnation. In a general sense, the irony of a situation could be when honest efforts are left unrecognized while as dishonesty is acclaimed as merit.

The story "The Servant" Produces much of irony when the coachman flatters his master for keeping himself in his good books. He keeps on gratifying his loyalty for his master. He reveals his master

everything that he notices in other servants and poisons his ears against them. The master did never cast any doubt in him and he would, instead, value his efforts. This way the hard-working servants would go unnoticed while as the glib tongued coachman made merry.

The irony in the story is again created when the same coachman levelled many charges against the old servant. The master yielded quite comfortably and replaced the old man from his job.