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Understanding The Text

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

Answer:

In the beginning of the story, young Paul is restless since his mother had told him that they were not lucky as they didn't have sufficient money to own a car and luxuries. Deep down young Paul had a feeling that his mother was not as happy as she looked. She blamed the father of young Paul for being unlucky and making her unlucky too as she was married to him.

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 1,000 pounds for five years as she was very unsatisfied with her life. She always felt that she should receive a good treatment from life, which resulted in less interest for Paul's birthday gift. However, Paul heard whispers for more money from the house.

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

Answer:

It can be implied from the story, The Rocking-horse Winner, that Paul was a child who suffered autism and also Oedipus-complex. This story pictures Paul who is at the beginning of his teenage years and is anxious to stop the sounds that were whispered in his house that "there must be more money". Paul was eager to bring happiness and joy to his mother through money and wished to take the place of his father in her life. As he grew up, he betted on racing horses in order to earn more money by gambling. When Hester found that Paul was involved in horse racing, she asked her brother and gardener to keep him away from it. She understood how much stress Paul must have undergone while he grew up. She did not know the worry which was consuming and eating him was his mother. With more eagerness to win, he lost in many of the races. Before Derby, Paul grew worried about making more money for his mother and showing his luck to her. As she was worried, she quit the party in the middle in order to see her son healthy and safe. But it was the last time she saw her son with senses.

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

Answer:

In this story, Paul was considered to be an unfortunate child. He had some indications of his disintegrating health, which implies his mental condition. He suffered from autism and needed more care and attention from his family. All the time he heard his house whispering that there must be more money. Paul was also schizophrenic as he was listening to sounds which did not exist and was also oedipal. All these factors were leading him to the inevitable, even though he had no knowledge of what he was actually going through. He strived hard to make more money for the sake of his mother. He was eager to show her that he was lucky enough to earn and the one who deserves all of her love. In the Derby, he earned about 80,000 pounds by guessing that Malabar would win, using his sixth sense. Further, it worsened his health so badly that he died after a few days.

Talking About The Text

Discuss the following in pairs or in small groups

1. 'Luck is necessary for success in life'.

Answer:

Many people believe that luck is important whereas many others believe in hardwork. All the people who believe in luck also work hard. They believe that by doing our best God will provide us with good things in life. Similarly, there are a few people who blame their fate for things which happen in their lives and do not take any steps to change it. People who believe that hard work is more important than luck have the power to change their future. So, people may come across many beliefs around them but it completely depends on what they believe in.

2. Although Paul's mother liked to be rich she did not approve of betting on horses.

Answer:

Hester foolishly wished to be richer but was not able to materialise or achieve her dreams. She blamed her husband for being unlucky. She was one among the humans who do not tread in a specific path. She used to live a lavish life and blamed her husband for the low income. One appreciable thing about her is that she was not interested gambling. In her conversation with her brother, she remarked that she had seen family members running after it and how it had led to their downfall. She asked Paul not to be involved in it and made him promise that he would not think about betting on racing horses anymore.

3. What were the voices that Paul heard? Did they lead him to success in the real sense?

Answer:

Even though the house that Paul and his family members lived in was a calm place, the money they possessed was not sufficient to support their social position. Hester realised that her husband had no luck to earn more money so decided to do something on her own. After this, the house started whispering that there must be more money from every corner. These sounds started to haunt the place which made Paul distressed, uncomfortable and disturbed. Even though there were costly gifts coming at Christmas, behind the shining rocking horse he could hear that "there must be more money". Here it is understandable that Paul was schizophrenic and heard voices as he was stressed because of this misery. It is mentioned in the text that no one said it out loud and there is no mention of anybody else hearing such whispers, it is understandable that Paul started to imagine his fears by giving them voice. The fear was transferred into him by his mother, continuously haunted him which later became his driving force. Paul was oedipal and wanted to take the place of his father in his mother's life. The autistic boy, Paul, drove his horse ferociously until he reached the racing course and would be confident of the horse which would win in the next race. He was not sure at the beginning, so he would be extra careful. Bassett, the gardener, was his partner throughout. Even uncle Oscar joined as the conviction with which Paul declared the winning horse's name used to win. The sheer luck or sixth sense which he had proved to be worthy of his mother's luck. By betting on horses, he made money and finally left 80,000 pounds for his family by losing himself.

Appreciation

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 shared intimate conversations through their eyes. As they were not love bound to each other according to the first paragraph, the author conveys that it was the child and the mother alone who understood that there was no love in their relationship. They knew it as they were able to read it in each other's eyes.
- b. Paul and Bassett had a partnership or friendship which was an affectionate relationship between them. Bassett understood even the small things which others even failed to notice. All the news of racing horses was brought to Paul by Bassett and using the clairvoyant Paul decided on who was the winner.
- c. Paul and his uncle Oscar become good partners as soon as he finds out that Paul has good knowledge which makes him determine the winning horse. He later realises that betting on horses makes Paul more nervous and hampers his health. Oscar Creswell questions Paul on how to win by betting on racing horses, to which he innocently answers that he knows about who is going to win once he gets there.
- d. Bassett and Paul's uncle Creswell shared a good bond from long back. Bassett had promised Paul that he would never tell about his horse betting to uncle Oscar Creswell. Later Bassett explained these things to uncle Creswell and then the three of them became partners.
- e. Calling Hester a harsh lady would be totally unfair as she cared for her children after all, but gave more importance to materialistic gains. As soon as she realised her son's obsession with betting on race horses, she requested the gardener and Bassett to keep him away from Oscar as it should not affect her son's health. Her son's obsession was neurotic, so she wanted him to be healthy for which she risked her relationship with her brother.

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

The rocking-horse is one of the three symbols which Lawrence has dealt with in the entire story. The horse is considered to be a symbol of victory which Paul achieves at the end. It proves how materialistic gain and money are important in our lives over love. The whispers that "there must be more money" that Paul keeps hearing and the rocking-horse are interrelated to each other. The need of money to get the love of his mother which he never got, leads him to bet on racing horses and earns more to prove his luck. When the boy questioned his mother about what luck is, she told him that luck is something which brings money. The boy is disappointed to know that his father did not have luck and so will not be able to make money. He is sad that he will not be able to have his mother's love who is consumed by indebtedness. The autistic boy, with some extrasensory perception rides his horse till he gets there. It depicts his wish to physically win the love of his mother by winning the horse race and therefore earning more money. After the ride, Paul will stand with legs apart by facing the horse and he would look at the shining eyes and the bent head of the horse. These make it clear about the wanting, the determination and the need of money which Paul had. For him, it is all about love, money, success and winning which is more important. Paul finally wins and gets his mother the money through the difficulties he faced in the races. He finally found the love and concern of his mother though his obsession with the horse races which killed him.

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:

Then a happy ending, it is real that tragedy causes a deeper mark. This causes sentimental catharsis in the audience. It would have been better if there was a happy ending in the story, though the reader would not have understood the passion and emotions which drove Paul to his sad end. Some may find it not justified to have killed the boy at the end as it went so well with Paul achieving both love and money. Finally he gave his life to provide his mother with what his father was not able to, which proved that he was worthy of her love and affection. No one in this world can have all the happiness. God is considered to be cruel when he gives us something, he gives us one thing while taking away our cherished possession. It cannot be justified that the death of Paul was correct at the end or the other way round as it is ironical. Post Derby win if he had lived, who knows what would have occurred in the story. Everything which occurs happens for good yet it would have provided a happy ending, if Paul had lived.

Language Work**1. 'A bird in 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. The proverb arises from the falconry tradition, which conveys that no matter how many falcons are present in a bush, what really matters is the falcon in the possession, even if it is one single falcon.
- b. Both Oscar and Paul decide to give 5,000 pounds to Hester, by providing her 1,000 pounds on every birthday. She gets more curious and requests the lawyer if she can have all the 5,000 pounds at once. Paul decides to give it all at once to his mother to free her from debt and says that he can make more with the amount which is left. The uncle cautions the boy that it is not good to give what he had right now, as the possibility of winning in the next race would depend on luck. Anyways, Paul was confident to know about one of the three upcoming races and gave the money to his mother.

2. Explain the following phrases

- Sure as eggs
- Spinning yarns
- Turned to dust

Use them in sentences of your own.

Answer:

- When a person is very certain about something.
If you do not deal with the problem now, then sure as eggs you will have to regret later.

- To tell an imaginary or interesting story.
He was spinning a yarn about his employee gambling all of his money.

- Worthless or useless.
After I was passed over for that promotion, it was like my two-year plan just turned to dust.

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
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Answer:

Smile - It is a facial expression which indicates happiness.

Grin - It is a broad smile which indicates pleasure.

Grimace - It is an expression which shows disapproval.

Sneer - It is a facial expression which indicates that one has no respect for somebody.

