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**Understanding The Text****1. Indicate the details that tell us that the narrator was not very financially comfortable during his stay in London.****Answer:**

The details provided show an uncomfortable picture of life which is faced by a financial crisis. The author had travelled in a third class cabin. He talks about the struggle to earn a living and establish oneself abroad. The author along with three or four friends stayed together and were sharing an ice cold washroom. Along with his friends, the author took turns to cook pots of curry and ate with their hands on a table covered with newspapers. The things he had faced in his life could be well understood by events such as watching the cricket match at Lord's or listening to Mukesh. Some habits like smoking, walking barefoot, drinking tea and roaming around on weekends shows that he wasn't all set in his life. The term 'penniless' shows the financial crisis which he faced when he was studying at LSE.

**2. How did the narrator adjust to the ways of life first in London and then in Cambridge, U.S.A.?****Answer:**

The narrator had experienced different phases of life. During bachelorhood, he cleverly adjusted a good deal while surviving under an uncomfortable and absurd condition. In order to meet his expenses, he worked in a library while attending the lectures at LSE. He finally got an accommodation with people like him who shared toilets, food, etc. He led a reckless life soaking dirty dishes, eating with hands, walking barefoot and doing things which were expected from lazy and aimless people. The next phase of his life was when he got married and found a full time job in America. He moved there as he got a permanent job in the processing department of the library at MIT. He did not begin to live his life lavishly. His budget was the same from when he was a college student. The pace of life in America is the main aspect which changed drastically. Every human being was in a hurry to reach the top. In his accommodation, he got adjusted to different noises like a movement of buses which were rumbling all night, flashing sirens which were suffocating and distracting him. Life was not calm and peaceful as he had wished with no "breeze to cool" his face or no "glittering ocean to thrill" him. The change in his schedule was depicted at various events such as buying milk, etc. At the YMCA building, his life turned intolerant and stifling with the uncomfortable conditions of living and intolerable noise due to which he suffered with disturbed sleep.

**3. What do you understand of the character of Mrs Croft from the story?****Answer:**

As seen in the beginning of the story, Mrs Croft was very demanding with an authoritative tone in her voice. She could be depicted as a hypocrite when she questioned the author if he was a Tech or Harvard, based on which she would be renting her flat. When it came to following the instructions, she was very strict. She was very traditional with strong ideals which should be followed without any queries. As the time passed, her character was revealed. She looked hard from the outside but was a soft hearted person from the inside. When it came to restricting lady visitors at her place, she was very strict even though the author mentioned that he was a married man. With the passage of time, her character was moulded which made the author develop an affection for her. She was kind and grateful according to the demand of the situation. She seemed to be vulnerable some times, mainly when the author got to know that she was one hundred and three years old. In this way, there are different shades of light thrown while describing her character.

**4. What kind of relationship did Mrs Croft share with her daughter Helen?****Answer:**

The relationship between Mrs Croft and her daughter Helen was not that of affection and love. They normally shared a practical life based on logic and strong decisions. She looked like a realistic person who did not get emotional on things. Her responsibilities for Mrs Croft were carried on by her as a schedule. She lacked care and empathy and clearly knew the weakness of her mother. It is visible when she states 'She slips sometimes.' The huge gap between both the generations was shown when they varied on their opinion on women who wore miniskirts on the streets. Helen was calm about the main fact that Mrs Croft was three year older than a century and required constant supervision, assistance and love.

**5. How does the narrator bring out the contrast between the Indian way of life and American society? Do you think his wife Mala adjusted comfortably to the new way of life?****Answer:**

The Indian way of life and American society have a very noticeable difference. It was difficult for the author's wife Mala to adjust to the American lifestyle.

**6. How does the bond of affection between Mrs Croft and the narrator evolve?****Answer:**

The bond of affection between Mrs Croft and the narrator evolves when he prepares soup for dinner for the old lady and takes good care of her. The bond is also clearly visible when he introduces his wife Mala for the first time to the old woman and she appreciates him for being a responsible man.

**Talking About The Text****Discuss in pairs or in small groups****1. Living abroad is challenging in many ways.****Answer:**

A few things which one should consider while shifting abroad to settle are -

1. Shifting abroad becomes difficult as identity crisis is one among the various important concerns. The person would always be treated as a second hand citizen. People from England, France or Australia would never accept the Asian people to reside there. The feeling of multiculturalism and diaspora exists even if one gets citizenship and settles there forever.

2. Violence could harm an individual both at psychological and physical levels. Most recent cases of Indian students being beaten up, bullied or killed in a few countries could be taken into consideration while discussing violence. The difference in the ethnicity hits the people of other nations. There are very few hospitable nations like India who believe in accepting their guests as God as per the Sanskrit slogan - "Athithi Devo Bhava."

3. Stability is very necessary in a human life. A few people live on very uncertain grounds. Various issues like recession could strike the economy anytime. Other sources of income are not found or provided to people who immigrate from other countries.

4. The variations in food, climate and standard of living play an important role. People often face financial crunch as there is a huge gap between the earned income and the type of life they wish to lead. Health, education, etc. are also costly which makes the people unsuitable and hence, unwelcome in a nation.

5. The system of law and order varies from one country to another. It is difficult for people to cope with differences. Hence, even when someone is caught with an issue, people will be unable to find a solution.

**2. The Indian family system offers more security to the aged than what is found in the West.**

**Answer:**

In the Indian family system, the basic values which are followed are taking care of parents in their old age, respecting elders, contributing towards mankind and society, respecting teachers and passing spiritual, cultural and ancient heritage to our future generations. It is a known fact of Indians to take good care of their parents in their old age. The concept of assisted living and senior citizen homes has just started. They are prominent and usually practised in other countries though not in India. It is considered taboo in India and is not considered dutiful to send our relatives or aged parents to old age homes. So taking care of aged parents is a basic duty of the child and as believed in India, he/she gets a lot of 'sukarma' points by doing it and equal negative karma for not doing it.

In India, the elderly people are reserved, obedient, considered to be knowledgeable and treated with dignity and respect by the family members unlike the way old people are treated abroad. A person is expected to relax and enjoy their solitude during their old age and spend time peacefully with their grandchildren without worrying about the household and finances. The oldest son takes care of the family and finance matters and the oldest daughter in law runs the household. In most cases, the old age people care for their grandchildren and help with cooking and household chores. The grown up children even continue to consult their parents on most of the aspects of life.

**3. The eccentricities of the old are often endearing.**

**Answer:**

The different eccentricities of the aged people might sometimes look more adorable. The way they forget small small things evokes laughter. The innocence in their speech creates amusement in the entire family. They have an urge for different things such as chocolates and grow similar to that of a child. They disobey sometimes whenever they are asked not to do a few things. This creates a subtle amusement among the family members. These might look annoying sometimes but one shouldn't be disturbed by it. They are the main source of endearment and one should embrace these lifestyles and habits with a smile and grace.

**Appreciation**

**1. Discuss the manner in which the author interweaves details of the narrator's family with the flow of the main narrative.**

**Answer:**

The details of the narrator's family are important for the readers to know the personality of the narrator. He went through a rough childhood and grew up among disturbed situations at home. It is necessary for the readers to get a clear idea about the relationship between Mrs Croft and the author. The words which the author used explains the love which he had for his mother, which made him to fulfill his role

as an elder son till she died. He very badly missed his mother and recollected incidents about how she forgot to drape her head with a cloth before going in front of her husband. When he got to know about the age of Mrs Croft, he remembered how his mother was not able to adjust to the death of his father and turned insane which led her health to deteriorate. The death of his mother broke him but he cared for her till the last moment even before her funeral. This depicts the reason for the empathy which grew towards Mrs Croft due to her age. Hence, his concern towards Mrs Croft can be seen in the line - "I was mortified. I had assumed Mrs Croft was in her eighties... that this person was a widow who lived alone and mortified me further still."

**2. 'Mrs Croft's was the first death I mourned in America, for, hers was the life I had admired; she had left this world at last, ancient and alone, never to return' - how do these lines encapsulate the bond that is possible between two strangers?**

**Answer:**

A person feels detached from the people staying around him in other countries. Here arises the diaspora feeling. The same thing occurred to the narrator. He was far from his family and home but never grew any affectionate feelings towards anyone in America. He felt unfriendly with the people of America. The course of action justifies the emotional bonding and attachment which grew between the author and Mrs Croft. In the foreign country, his affection towards the old woman grew due to different reasons. When he found that he was older than a century, he had a sense of responsibility towards her. He was quite awestruck and amazed at the picture of a widow of that age living all alone without having anyone to take care of her. Taking up responsibilities like preparing soup every evening and providing her eight dollars in an envelope every month made him satisfied. All these events clear the fact that a strong bond was created between the narrator and Mrs Croft.

**3. Examine the pieces of conversation in the story. How do they reflect the worldview of each of the speakers?**

**Answer:**

The different conversations that took place in pieces during the course of action shows a lot about the perception of people on the issues and their attitude towards each other. We see a hypocritical and firm attitude which exists in Mrs Croft's tone when the narrator reaches her place for the first time. He got to know that belonging to a high standard place was very important to her, such as Harvard or Tech. The biases and greatness of Americans to be the first to step on the moon, consider it as impossibly splendid and unattainable. For the first time she becomes mild when she gets eight dollars in an envelope from the narrator. Her orthodox ways become visible when she objects to a man and a lady talking privately without a chaperone. Her traditional ways are quite visible by keeping in mind the fact that she had already crossed a century. The path followed by the people in the western world is in contrast to ours when we see Helen, Mrs Croft's daughter, being indifferent towards the meals and health of her mother. Her normal tone when she states - "She might have slipped" would disturb the readers. Even with the variations in opinions, norms and perceptions, the relationship between the American widow and the narrator is worth appreciation.

**4. There are many instances of gentle humour in the story. Point out some of these and state how this contributes to the interest of the narration.**

**Answer:**

Some instances of gentle humour which contributed to the interest of narration were:



1. When the old lady, Mrs Croft conveyed with delight and disbelief after meeting the narrator's wife Mala - She is a perfect lady. The laugh shared by the couple at this moment was important although it was quite subtle.
2. The old woman repeatedly asks everyday - "A flag on the moon! Isn't that splendid?" and the force with which the author answered - "Splendid!"
3. In the story, there was a point when Mrs Croft expressed that she did not accept the physical closeness between a female and a male. She thought that it was improper for a male and a female who are not married to each other to hold a conversation privately without a chaperone! The situation which was portrayed here seemed amusing.

### Language Work

**1. 'Don't expect an English cup of tea' - how does this phrase bring out the contrast between the English and American attitudes?**

**Answer:**

Britishers are more hospitable and polite to their guests than the Americans. The path in which the American people move is different and faster than the people who reside in Britain. The competitive feeling is deep that 'Everybody feels he must get to the top.'

**2. How did the narrator learn to distinguish between 'a flask' and 'a thermos'?**

**Answer:**

There was a time when the narrator had to buy a flask and tea bags. This is when he got to know that he was actually looking for a thermos and a flask was something in which people stored wine. The main reason behind the limited knowledge of the narrator is that he had not consumed whisky till then.

**3. It took the narrator quite some time to understand that what he heard as 'piper', in fact, meant 'paper' and the phrase 'mind the gap' in the Tube. What do you think caused the problem?**

**Answer:**

The narrator had mentioned the issues with his language when he moved to the US as it was a new language for him. He was not able to speak any other language fluently apart from his mother tongue, Bengali. His pronunciation was varied from how it was spoken in London, where he resided before shifting to the US.

**4. Make a list of items that are referred to differently in British and American English, for example, 'lift' (BE) 'elevator' (AmE).**

**Answer:**

Some of the words which are spelt differently in British and American English are -

The cinema (BE) - The movies (AmE)  
Holiday (BE) - Vacation (AmE)  
Lift (BE) - Elevator (AmE)  
Wardrobe (BE) - Dresser (AmE)  
Windscreen (BE) - Wind shield (AmE)  
Barrister (BE) - Attorney (AmE)  
Flat (BE) - Apartment (AmE)

Lavatory (BE) - Bathroom (AmE)

Favour (BE) - Favor (AmE)

Barrister (BE) - Lawyer (AmE)

**5. See if you understand what the following words that are parts of a house mean. Look up the dictionary if you don't.**

<b>parlour</b> <b>lobby</b>	<b>foyer</b> <b>attic</b>	<b>lounge</b> <b>portico</b>	<b>porch</b>
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**Answer:**

Parlour - A room for guests which is away from the public in a club, inn, etc. In old English, in a house, parlour means the living room which is kept neat for welcoming the visitors.

Foyer - It is an entrance hall or vestibule in an apartment or house. It also refers to the entrance of a hotel, theatre or apartment.

Lounge - A living room or lobby in a house can also be called a lounge. It also means a sofa which is backless for reclining and has a headrest.

Porch - A porch also refers to a verandah. It is an extended space which is enclosed in the front or sides of a house.

Lobby - It is a room for waiting or a hall at the entrance of a building. It is also a vestibule or corridor which serves as a space to enter into a large room.

Attic - It is a part of a building, mainly of a house which is directly under the roof. It is a roof or story which is below the roof of a building.

Portico - A structure which has a roof supported by piers or columns, which is attached to a building as a porch is known as portico.