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Reading with Insight

1. There are moments in life when we have to make hard choices between our roles as private individuals and as citizens with a sense of national loyalty. Discuss with reference to the story you have just read.

Answer.

The story revolves around human values that motivate a Japanese doctor, the protagonist, to help an enemy during war. The story is about a doctor who encounters a severely wounded enemy soldier. Being a doctor and as a human being, he observes the white man in critical condition who badly requires the doctor's help. However, he is afraid of assisting him as the man belongs to the rival country. If he treats the white man, it will make him feel disloyal towards his country. But when he decides to hand over the man to the cops, he feels he is not capable of keeping up his job professionally.

2. Dr Sadao was compelled by his duty as a doctor to help the enemy soldier. What made Hana, his wife, sympathetic to him in the face of open defiance from the domestic staff?

Answer.

Dr. Sadao and his wife Hana knew that everyone would question their decision to save the enemy soldier. Hana felt sympathetic to him because she completely understood what Sadao was feeling at that time, as she had known Dr. Sadao for a long period of time. She was aware that his duty compelled Dr. Sadao as a doctor but simultaneously felt it might be considered a lack of patriotism on his part. He was hiding the foe in his home, and their domestic staff had also left the job, making the condition even worse. This helpless situation of her husband made her feel sympathy towards him.

3. How would you explain the reluctance of the soldier to leave the shelter of the doctor's home even when he knew he couldn't stay there without risk to the doctor and himself?

Answer.

The story says that the white man named Tom was very young, nearly seventeen years old, and he was admitted into the army. When the American war prisoner became conscious and understood that he had been rescued by a Japanese family, he worried that he would soon be handed over to their army. When he walked inside the doctor's home, the treatment he got from them made him feel affectionate towards them. He knew that although he was a threat to Dr Sadao's family, his life might be saved there. Overwhelmed with thankfulness towards them, he finally decided to comply with what the doctor planned for him to escape.

4. What explains the attitude of the General in the matter of the enemy soldier? Was it human consideration, lack of national loyalty, dereliction of duty or simply self-absorption?

Answer.

The general was governed by total self-absorption. He was a patient of Dr Sadao, and when it came to his health, he trusted no one else but him. He couldn't risk going unprotected if the doctor was executed for treason. He had personal assassins whom he vowed to use to eliminate the wounded soldier. But he sadly 'forgot' about his promise to help the doctor. He was not swayed by humane considerations.

5. While hatred against a member of the enemy race is justifiable, especially during wartime, what makes a human being rise above narrow prejudices?

Answer.

It is very natural to hate one's enemies, but more challenging is to accept them and to show love towards them. While hatred against the enemy is logical, particularly during wartime, the sense of humanity makes a

human being rise above narrow preconceptions. It is obvious that countries at war are enemies, and hatred is a part of this enmity. It becomes essential to break the chains and stand aside from the crowd. Here in this story, when the doctor observed the injured enemy, he was unable to resist his natural impulse to help the man. It is the best example to describe the situation that makes a human being rise above conventional biases.

6. Do you think the doctor's final solution to the problem was the best possible one in the circumstances?

Answer.

The doctor attempted his best to save the injured soldier as a part of his service. But the final question was what to do next. It cannot be said that he betrayed his land as he told the truth to the General. The final decision he made was advantageous to both the white man and the doctor's family as he treated him very finely. He also presented him with attire and food and asked him to leave for his native place. By doing this, he saved himself too. However, when the general remarked that the injured soldier was to be killed not for the advantage of the country but only to save the doctor's life, he decided to help him flee. In such a condition, the doctor's final solution to the problem was the best possible one.

7. Does the story remind you of 'Birth' by A. J. Cronin that you read in Snapshots last year? What are the similarities?

Answer.

Yes, the story reminds me of "Birth" by A.J. Cronin. There are many striking similarities between Birth and The Enemy. Both stories show the gentle character of the doctors towards their patients, irrespective of other circumstances. "Birth" describes the very practical nature of the doctor when Morgan calls him for his child. In "The Enemy", the doctor helps the white man because of his injury, although he is his enemy. "Birth" shows the patient nature of a doctor. Though the baby is lifeless at birth, the doctor continues to hope to save it. And in "The Enemy", the doctor takes care of white sailors for many days till the white man securely goes through the boat. In both stories, the doctors treat their patients with devotion towards their job, whatever the situation. For Dr Sadao, the risk was to let the white man stay, and for that, they could get arrested, while Dr Andrew risked giving a new life to the 'stillborn' baby. Consequently, both stories deal with humanity's love, affection, selflessness, and a strong sense of duty.