

### Understanding the Text

1. Did the author believe in the prophetic ability of Frau Frieda?

Answer. Frau Frieda comprehends her dreams and predicts the fate of the family members, which earned her a job in Vienna in a very religious family. She came across the author while on this job. When the author tries to ask about her whereabouts, she replies, “I sell my dreams”. Thus, the author was made to believe in the prophetic ability of Frau Frieda when she advised him to leave Vienna five years ago. But actually, the author reveals that he had to leave Vienna for some other reasons, not because she had a bad dream about him and advised him to leave Vienna. The author feels she’s just using tricks to continue her job of selling dreams to earn a living.

2. Why did he think that Frau Frieda’s dreams were a stratagem for surviving?

Answer. The author thought that Frau Frieda’s dreams were a stratagem for survival because she had revealed about herself that she sold her dreams by foretelling fate about others in the town and had made a fortune out of it. Then she was hired at a salary that covered her minor expenses to predict a religious family’s fate in Vienna. So, the author had always thought her dreams were no more than a stratagem for survival, which never surprised him.

3. Why does the author compare Neruda to a Renaissance pope?

Answer. Pablo Neruda, a friend of the author, had come to Spain for the first time. The author compares Neruda to a Renaissance pope because Neruda’s behaviour was childish. He walked through the crowd like an invalid elephant. Whenever he watched something, his mind had a child’s curiosity about its inner workings. For the author, the world appeared to him as a substantial wind-up toy. However, the author compared Neruda to a Renaissance pope as he was insatiable and refined. Thus, the author could not imagine anyone closer to the idea one has of a renaissance pope other than Neruda.

### Talking about the Text

1. In spite of all the rationality that human beings are capable of, most of us are suggestible and yield to archaic superstitions.

Answer. Though human beings are rational to outside society, they still yield archaic superstitions no matter what. All humans believe in superstitions from ancient times. For instance, the story’s author is also attracted to superstition since he obeyed the lady’s dreams and followed her instructions to leave Vienna forever and never return. The same situation arises in everyone’s life, and it has become a part of human life.

2. Dreams and clairvoyance are as much an element of the poetic vision as religious superstition.

Answer. Dreams and clairvoyance are an element of the poetic vision as a religious superstition. Dreams are the base work on any excellent poem, including assumptions and formulating events according to ourselves. Most of the poet’s dreams are the root of his poems, and clairvoyance enriches the readers with the poet’s creativity and dreams. Clairvoyance is also part of the religious superstitions of priests. Many fortune-telling priests tell their superstitious stories to the people by making them believe that they dreamt about it and easily make them believe that they know their fate.

### Appreciation

1. The story hinges on a gold ring shaped like a serpent with emerald eyes. Comment on the responses that this image evokes in the reader.

Answer. The image of the lady in the story will have different opinions from different readers. The readers can only imagine the image of a lady with varying conclusions without a proper description. The author successfully created the lady’s appearance of a traditional fortune teller who wore a golden ring shaped like a serpent with emerald eyes. The narration gains a mysterious effect as the story moves on. Readers are

left wondering about the lady and her magical ring, which might have helped the lady dream and interpret her dreams at the end of the story. This way, the author succeeds in telling the story effectively to gain the reader's interest.

2. The craft of a master storyteller lies in the ability to interweave imagination and reality. Do you think that this story illustrates this?

Answer. The craft of a master storyteller lies in interweaving imagination and reality, where storytelling impacts the readers effectively and takes the listeners to a virtual world, creating a connection with it. Storytelling should be more productive where the listeners get transferred to the actual world of the story. This story also illustrates this because the author's craft in narrating the tale is revealed through his masterpiece. The author has described the story so effectively that it has impacted the readers, transforming them into the virtual world, making them more interested and engaging in the plot.

3. Bring out the contradiction in the last exchange between the author and the Portuguese ambassador 'In concrete terms,' I asked at last, 'what did she do?' 'Nothing,' he said, with a certain disenchantment. 'She dreamed.'

Answer. The last paragraph of the story highlights the discussion between the Portuguese ambassador and the author at the place where the lady used to work. After a few months, the conversation took place, but it contained contradictions even though the author knew what had happened with the lady and her job. Still, the author puts forward a question before the Portuguese ambassador about his dead housekeeper and what the lady does. The reply from the ambassador was that she did nothing but dream, which the author already knew.

4. Comment on the ironical element in the story.

Answer. Throughout the whole story, the author uses all techniques to create ironic elements in the story. The ironic factor is seen in the superstitious beliefs in human life. Though the characters appear realistic, the author has hidden the ironic element of the story's mysterious side. The main ironic feature in the story is the appearance of a lady and superstitious beliefs. Another ironic aspect is the contradictory conversation between the Portuguese ambassador and the author highlighted in the last paragraph of the story. Even though the author knows the answer very well to what the lady does, he still raises the same question to the ambassador, which seems ironic.

### Task

Study the following sentences and underline the part which receives emphasis.

- I never saw her again or even wondered about her until I heard about the snake ring on the woman who died in the Havana Riviera disaster.
- That did not surprise me, however, because I had always thought her dreams were no more than a stratagem for surviving.
- Although she did not say so, her conversation made it clear that, dream by dream, she had taken over the entire fortune of her ineffable patrons in Vienna.
- Three tables away sat an intrepid woman in an old-fashioned felt hat and a purple scarf, eating without haste and staring at him.
- I stayed in Vienna for more than a month, sharing the straitened circumstances of the other students while I waited for money that never arrived.

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#### Stop and Think

1. How did the author recognise the lady who was extricated from the car encrusted in the wall of Havana Riviera Hotel after the storm?

Answer. The lady wearing a gold ring shaped like a serpent with an emerald eye helped the author identify the lady's similarities. He remembered from Vienna, who used to wear the same type of ring with emerald eyes. Thus, with all these crucial pieces of information, the author was able to recognize the lady who was extricated from the car encrusted in the wall of the Havana Riviera Hotel after the storm.

2. Why did the author leave Vienna never to return again?

Answer. The lady who used to dream and tell other people's fate and was superstitious told the author to leave Vienna and not return for the next five years. Thus, the author believed her words and left Vienna and decided not to return to Vienna again.

#### Stop and Think

1. How did Pablo Neruda know that somebody behind him was looking at him?

Answer. A woman with the snake ring on her index finger was three chairs away when Paulo Neruda was eating at a table. He noticed she was staring at him, and he instantly informed the author that somebody behind was looking at him. So, when the author glanced over his shoulder, it was true. He found a fearless woman in an old-fashioned felt hat and a purple scarf, eating without haste and staring at him. He could recognize her right away. She had grown old and fat, but it was Frau Frieda, with the snake ring on her index finger, staring at Pablo Neruda.

2. How did Pablo Neruda counter Frau Frieda's claims to clairvoyance?

Answer. The lady travelled from Naples along with Neruda and his wife on the same ship, but they had not seen each other on board. They invited her to have coffee at their table, and the author urged her to talk about her fantasies to surprise the poet. Pablo Neruda paid no attention, for he had announced that he did not believe in prophetic dreams from the very beginning. 'Only poetry is clairvoyant,' he said.